

Predatory Bureaucracy: The Extermination of Wolves and the Transformation of the West. By Michael J. Robinson. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005. xviii + 473 pp. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00, cloth; \$24.95, paper.)

This book chronicles how the federal government exterminated western wolf populations and how wolves have recently been reintroduced under the Endangered Species Act. The author states that his work is "effective advocacy" and acknowledges his close association with pro-predator organizations. One of the book's main premises is that the West teemed with wildlife and wolves before being despoiled by Europeans. To support this assertion, the author uses selective quotes from early narrative accounts and other sources, including the journals of Lewis and Clark. In this he made two critical mistakes.

First, narrative accounts are questionable since they were written to conform with accepted social myths and second, selective quotes are invariably biased. Instead, if the author had systematically evaluated first-person journals, he would have reached an entirely different conclusion. For example, between 1835 and 1876, twenty-six different expeditions spent 765 days in the Yellowstone ecosystem on foot or horseback, yet they reported seeing elk only once every 18 days, bison once every 255 days, and no one saw or killed a single wolf. Today there are an estimated 100,000 elk, 6,000 bison, and 500 wolves in that ecosystem, but historical and archaeological sources suggest that is an entirely unnatural situation. Similarly, if it had not been for buffer zones between tribes at war, Lewis and Clark would have found little wildlife anywhere in the West because native hunters kept wildlife populations at exceedingly low levels, or even local extinction.

At no point in the book does the author make it clear that the wolf is not an endangered species, as thousands freely roam

Canada and Alaska. However, under the Endangered Species Act, subspecies, and distinct population segments (DPS), can also be afforded federal protection. Thus, as the author explains, we have northern gray wolves, the Mexican wolf, the eastern gray wolf, and the red wolf all classified as subspecies, or DPS's, depending on which taxonomist you believe. This, though, raises a problem ignored by the author. If as he contends, the country historically was awash with wolves and wildlife how did wolf subspecies arise? Reproductive isolation is mandatory if subspecies are to develop, but wolves commonly disperse 50 miles or more, and some animals have moved up to 600 miles from where they were born. Since all wolves readily interbreed, subspecies could only have evolved if large areas were devoid of wildlife, and hence wolves, for long periods of time—which is not the message conveyed in this book.

Other errors are equally annoying, but harder to excuse. The Sheldon Antelope Refuge is in Nevada not Wyoming, and Jasper National Park is not 200 miles from where recolonizing wolves first entered Montana. The author's discussion of ungulate population ecology, and especially the Kaibab Deer Incident, is equally confused. If the author is correct that wolves and other predators are necessary to control ungulate numbers and to prevent range damage, then federal wolf recovery, which is based on the exact opposite assumptions, must be a scientific fraud. Certainly not the point the author intended to make. Similarly, the author claims that wolves historically turned to killing livestock only after Europeans had decimated wildlife populations. Yet today, every wolf pack in the northern Rockies with livestock in its territory has, sooner or later, turned to killing cattle or sheep, despite an abundance of elk and deer. Every absolute one.

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