They're Back!

For centuries, wolves have gotten a bad rap. From werewolf movies to *The Three Little Pigs*, writers and filmmakers have portrayed wolves as big, bad killers. The truth is that humans have hurt wolves a lot more than they've hurt us.

Gray wolves once roamed North America from coast to coast. Native Americans admired and protected them. Then European settlers came to the area. They killed many of the wolves' favorite meals, such as deer and moose.

The hungry wolves began eating livestock, such as sheep and cows, instead. People became angry and turned on the wolves, hunting them almost to extinction. The government even paid people who turned in a dead wolf! The wolves were never in trouble in Alaska. But by the 1960s, hunting had nearly wiped out gray wolves in the lower 48 states. They survived only in a small corner of Minnesota.

In 1973, the U.S. government passed the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA), a law that protects plants and animals in danger of extinction. The law made it illegal to kill or harm gray wolves.

Because of that protection, the wolf population is roaring back. More than 3,000 wolves now live in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The wolves are doing so well that the government recently announced it wants to take them off the endangered species list from Maine to the Dakotas. Wolves in the West will stay on the list, but the situation is improving. In 1995 and 1996, biologists captured 66 wolves in Canada and released them in Yellowstone National Park. Hundreds now roam Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana.

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1 roam: to go from place to place without a plan

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Most people agree that the wolf's recovery is good news. But some people worry that if the government takes the eastern wolf population off the endangered species list too soon, it won't be able to make a comeback in states such as Maine.

Scientists say that **ecosystems** are healthier with wolves in them. An ecosystem is a community of plants and animals and their surroundings. By preying on animals such as deer, wolves help to keep the ecosystem balanced.
“They’re Back” Questions

1. In this passage the author seems to support
   a. farmers’ protecting their livestock.
   b. people that hunt deer and moose for food.
   c. wolves’ attacking people and their livestock.
   d. wolves’ thriving in their natural habitat.

2. Which of the following shows the author’s point of view?
   a. Wolves should be hunted because they eat farmers’ livestock.
   b. Hunting deer and moose for food is important.
   c. People should hunt wolves because wolves are dangerous.
   d. Wolves were in danger because of people.

3. The map included shows
   a. where wolves used to live and where they live now.
   b. where the wolves should be.
   c. why the wolves have decreased in number.
   d. where scientists think the wolves should be living.

4. Some people are concerned about the wolves’ being taken off the endangered species list, because they think if the number of wolves increases,
   a. wolves would be eaten by other animals.
   b. wolves would be hunted again.
   c. wolves would hurt other animal in the area.
   d. wolves would hurt people.

5. Does the author think that this topic is important? Explain how you can tell.

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