ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Ferocious Hatred or Reverent Coexistence: Disparate Human Ontologies of the Wolf
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ABSTRACT: For millennia humans have coexisted with wolves, often hunting the same prey, and inhabiting shared territories. Myriad cultures have unique ontologies of the wolf, and many of them share a reverence and respect for the wolf as a sacred animal or totem. In sharp contrast, the Euro-American colonists and settlers generally displayed a pernicious hatred of the wolf leading to the mass extermination of wolves and ultimately their near-extinction from the United States by the early twentieth century. My research examines the roots of why the Euro-American's espoused such a pathological hatred of the wolf, juxtaposing it to the many cultures who revere the wolf. While much of the hatred and misconceptions towards wolves continues to persist in this country, there are many people now shifting to more of an appreciation and respect for the wolf. To trace this shift, I document how some scientists, government agencies, organizations, groups and individuals are beginning to recognize the fundamental significance and values of the wolf and are making steps to protect and return wolves to US wilderness areas. I review the current research that explains how reestablishing wolf populations can cause significant positive effects throughout the food chain of an ecosystem, through a process known as trophic cascades. I also provide an overview of recent legislative changes in regards to the protection/reintroduction of wolves and look at the grassroots work being done to protection of the wolves. My research is informed by a 3 month internship at Wolfwood Refuge, working with wolves and wolf/dog mixes that have been illegally bred and/or mistreated resulting in them being brought to the refuge for a better life and to educate the public about wolves. The goal of my research is to reflect on ways we can continue to transform our perspectives of wolves and relearn to coexist with them for the benefit of the ecology of the earth.