



This bulletin is produced by the collection department of the Musée de la nature et des sciences with the aim of making our objects and specimens better known to the public. These specimens are particularly interesting and are carefully preserved in the Museum's collections. They are not always presented during our various exhibitions.



A Wolf in the Townships: An Event to Remember!

Even though the specimen captured in Lingwick was definitely more wolf-like than coyote-like, expert opinion was required to confirm the species. The similarities between the two canine species, as well as several different genetic crosses between wolves and dogs, often make it difficult to confirm an individual's identity without resorting to more in-depth studies. Hélène Jolicoeur, biologist and canine specialist with FAPAQ, Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec, carried out the initial studies. The front and hind legs, claws, fangs, and 14 different skull angles were measured and compared to those from other wolf and coyote specimens on record and in museums. All of the measurements were larger than those of coyotes.

In February of 2003, the Museum acquired a wolf - and not just any old wolf! It was the first wolf to be formally captured and identified in southern Quebec in over a century. This unique specimen had of course attracted the attention of specialists, who promptly gave him the nickname "Estrie", the French word for our area of the Eastern Townships.

On January 22, 2002 in Sainte-Marguerite-de-Lingwick, trapper and Wildlife protection officer, Laurent Cloutier trapped an animal that had all of the characteristics of a wolf. This was a surprise to say the least, because coyotes are far more common in the region. In fact, not a single wolf had been spotted south of the St. Lawrence River in over 100 years!

Besides the effects on wolf habitat due to agricultural expansion and urban sprawl, several extermination efforts had been undertaken in the mid-19th century to deliberately rid the region of wolves. These factors were all responsible for the disappearance of wolves from several regions in Canada. During the second half of the 19th century in Quebec, wolves were ousted from the south shore of the St. Lawrence River and from part of the agricultural plain north of the river between Montreal and Quebec City. At one time, wolves had been numerous in these areas. Eyewitness reports dating back to 1831 that were given audience in the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada confirmed the frequent presence of wolves in the "townships" and their compromising effect on farming of domestic animals. The disappearance of wolves in this region naturally paved the way for coyotes, who migrated into the area from the United States.



Photo: Wildlife protection officer Laurent Cloutier proudly displays the captured wolf.
La Tribune, January 23, 2002
Photo credit: Jocelyn Riendeau, Imacom



Samples from the body were sent for DNA analysis to Dr. Paul Wilson, genetics identification specialist for canine species at Trent University in Ontario. Dr. Wilson's final report was issued on January 24, 2003, confirming that the specimen is definitely a wolf, an Eastern Grey Wolf, *Canis lupus lycaon*. Its genetic profile is very similar to that of the wolves that inhabit Algonquin Park in Ontario and parc Papineau-Labelle in Quebec. The genetic proximity does not necessarily mean that the wolf named Estrie came from these regions; instead it shows that there is a high level of similarity with the wolves living in the parks. It is a small wolf that inhabits mixed and deciduous forests, and preys on white-tailed deer. It is possible that this is the same type of wolf that could be found 100 years ago south of the St. Lawrence River.

How did this particular wolf come to live in the forests of the Townships? Several hypotheses have been put forward, such as migration from Ontario, the Outaouais region via the St. Lawrence, or from central regions of the United States. However, none of these hypotheses can be confirmed.

One thing has nevertheless been confirmed: "Estrie" is a wolf.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Accession number: 2003.2

Date of acquisition: February 7, 2003

Latin name: *Canis lupus lycaon*

Common name in English: Eastern Grey Wolf

Common name in French: Loup de l'est

Collection date: January 22, 2002

Collection place: Sainte-Marguerite-de-Lingwick

Sex: Male

Age: Adult

Weight at capture: 29 kilograms (64 lbs.)

Name of collector: Laurent Cloutier

Name of donor: Laurent Cloutier

Taxidermist: Denis D'Amours, Cap-Saint-Ignace

FOR MORE INFORMATION

LAROCHELLE, Luc. 2002. *Le loup est-il réapparu en Estrie? La Tribune*, January 23, 2002, pages A1 and A2.

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LAROCHELLE, Luc. 2002. *La thèse du loup gagne du poids. La Tribune*, January 24, 2002, page A2.

LAROCHELLE, Luc. 2002. *Loup ou coyote? L'enigme durera au moins six mois. La Tribune*, January 25, 2002, page A2.

JOLICOEUR, Hélène, 2003. *Rapport d'identification de canidés atypiques – « Estrie »*. Société de la faune et des parcs, Québec. Direction du développement de la Faune.

HÉNAULT, M. et J. Jolicoeur. 2003. *Les loups au Québec, Meutes et mystères*. Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec, Direction de l'aménagement de la faune des Laurentides et Direction du développement de la faune. 129 pages.

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