

Red Wolves PowerPoint Presentation

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The following is background information to support the PowerPoint slides. It is not intended to be a script – presenters should use what information suits their audience and modify the document as needed.

Slide 1 Red Wolves: Red Wolves are one of the most critically endangered animals in the world. 40 years ago they were in severe danger of becoming extinct. Without the intervention of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, it is very possible that red wolves would not exist today.

Slide 2 Wolf Habitats: Wolves are the most widely distributed land mammals in the world. They can be found in forests, tundra, prairie, deserts, swamps and mountains. In order to survive in all of these diverse environments, wolves must also be extremely adaptable – wolves that live in the deserts of Israel can weigh as little as 29 pounds, while wolves that live in the arctic tundra can weigh over 172 pounds!

Slide 3 Wolves: This slide depicts gray wolves (2 pictures), coyote, red fox, maned wolf, German Shepherd dog and a red wolf (upper right picture). Maned wolves live in South America and are not considered to be wolves – they resemble large, tall foxes. The red wolf is similar in appearance to the coyote, but is larger with longer ears, longer legs, larger feet and a more massive head. All of these animals are in the dog (canid) family.

Slide 4 At the zoo we have: The only wolf species at Pt. Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is the red wolf. They are intermediate in size between a coyote and a gray wolf. Red wolves are comparable to a German Shepherd dog in size. Red wolves are shy and usually avoid human contact.

Slide 5 Where are the red wolves: Historically, red wolves inhabited much of eastern North America. By 1966, there were isolated populations only in southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana. In 1969 the first red wolf was placed into captivity at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma, Washington, beginning the captive breeding program. From this point the program has grown to 38 breeding facilities, an island propagation project and a wild experimental

population centered at the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern North Carolina.

Slide 6 What do wolves need: The same things as every other animal! The wild red wolf menu consists of about 50% white-tailed deer, 30% raccoons, and 20% small mammals – including rabbits, nutria and rodents. Red wolves travel in small packs and will defend their range (or space) against other canids (other wolves, coyotes, foxes and dogs). This range requirement in the wild is indicated to be between 25 – 50 square miles. In their habitat they also need adequate amounts of water and areas for shelter. To sum it up, red wolves need a habitat with plenty of food, water, shelter and space to be successful.

Slide 7 Why are they endangered: Red wolves are one of the most critically endangered species in the world. Wolves in general have been feared by humans throughout history, and they are negatively depicted in culture – movies, stories, etc. These attitudes lead to aggressive predator control programs, which combined with human population expansion and the resulting habitat loss, nearly eliminated the red wolf species. There has not been a single documented case of a red wolf attacking a human in the past 500 years of coexistence. However wolves are wild animals – they should be treated with caution and respect.

Slide 8-9 Why are they important: Red wolves were top predators in the ecosystems they inhabited. Predators help keep ecosystems healthy by controlling populations of prey species. The wild population centered at the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern North Carolina helps control the population of white-tailed deer, raccoons and small mammals, which in turn helps keep the forest healthy. Without red wolves as top predators, prey animal population would expand, to the detriment of the forest (example – deer are notorious browsers of saplings – the more deer, the more saplings eaten, which can affect the ability of the forest to regenerate). Red wolves are also a critically endangered species, which requires the government under the Endangered Species Act to implement a recovery plan. Finally, red wolves are worth saving simply because they are a magnificent animal.

Slide 10 Helping red wolves: In the 1960's it was determined by the federal government that if nothing was done to intervene, red wolves would become extinct. In 1969 the first red wolf was placed into captivity at the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma, Washington. In 1973 the Endangered Species Act

became law and the first red wolf recovery plan was completed. In 1977 the first litter of red wolves were born in captivity at PDZA. By 1980 all red wolves had been removed from the wild and declared extinct. In 1984 the red wolf was incorporated into AZA's Species Survival Plan. In 1987 the first red wolf reintroduction into the wild took place at the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern North Carolina. There are now approximately 100 red wolves in the wild and approximately 150 in captivity at 38 SSP cooperator agencies.

Slide 11 – What else can we do: What needs to be done now? The US Fish and Wildlife Service has done an excellent job maintaining and monitoring the wild population through the Adaptive Management Plan. This program was first instituted in 1999 with the goal of reducing the threat of wolf-coyote hybridization. The principle of this plan calls for the management of red wolf populations on 4 different levels – population, family group (pack), individual and gene pool. The red wolves in the recovery area are managed to increase numbers by optimizing reproduction. Examples of how this is accomplished are the establishment of new breeding pairs, fostering and removing or sterilizing coyotes and hybrids. The ultimate goal of all recovery efforts is to have a self-sustaining wild population of red wolves. So, what can people do to help save red wolves? Support agencies that participate in the Red Wolf SSP – Zoos, Centers, the US Forest Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Red Wolf Coalition. Support does not only mean financial donations, it means visiting these agencies and taking part in educational programs. Let your political representatives know how important this issue is to you – public support is one of the most important factors in addressing these issues.

Slide 12 A beginning: Red wolves have survived because people care about them and are determined to prevent their extinction. The Red Wolf SSP is committed to partnering with agencies and NGOs, promoting education through awareness and utilizing sound science and professional wildlife management to prevent the extinction of this magnificent species. However, none of this can be done without public support – YOUR efforts are crucial to the future of the red wolf. Remember, the red wolf is depending on us, and with your help we can ensure a bright future for these amazing animals.



