

To Catch A Wolf

By Tom Remington

To be frank, there exists today very few people who have first hand knowledge on how to hunt a wolf. Wolf hunting many years ago became quite popular for a myriad of reasons, from the thrill of the adrenaline pumping danger to a matter of survival.

Today in America we talk of when the day comes, if ever, that the wolf we be taken off the list of protected species and man will once again be able to hunt this animal. We, including myself, often speak of the "Disneyesque" perception people today have of the wolf. I think the same can be said, at least to some degree, about how sportsmen are going to "hunt" the wolf when the time comes.

As a game management tool, specifically a population control measure, hunting has been a socially acceptable and scientifically viable means of accomplishing that task, however, I'm not so sure that we understand the difficulties we will be presented with in hunting this intelligent and highly adaptable beast.

I have been spending a considerable amount of time lately reading many accounts of methods used to hunt and kill wolves. Some of those I have already shared with you and other I've not. In a multi-part series I would like to take a little time and share with you some of the ingenious methods and sometimes comical tactics (you have to have a sense of humor) employed by hunters and trappers over the years from around the world.

In a book written by Will N. Graves, "Wolves in Russia: Anxiety Through the Ages", the author shares with readers an entire chapter on successful and not so successful methods used in Russia for centuries to hunt and or capture wolves. In an article I wrote last month, I told of those methods and how they might compare to the rules the state of Idaho has laid out for wolf hunting as being effective.

In short, Idaho will prohibit using any method to trap a wolf. There are restrictions on weapons that will be allowed, no electronic calls, no baiting and no use of hounds. In other words, it is man against beast. (Update: From the time of this original publication, methods of hunting, including trapping of wolves, have changed due to the realization that as first laid out, wolves can't be controlled by treating the animal as a big game species.)

Teddy Roosevelt wrote quite extensively about his experiences with wolves in the U.S. during the late 1800s. He tells of the difficulties in being able to hunt the wolf. He also sheds light on the fact that the Indians and the old hunters bred dogs, often with wolves, in order to create a mean wolf

fighting/hunting machine.

"The true way to kill wolves, however, is to hunt them with greyhounds on the great plains. Nothing more exciting than this sport can possibly be imagined. It is not always necessary that the greyhounds should be of absolutely pure blood. Prize-winning dogs of high pedigree often prove useless for the purposes. If by careful choice, however, a ranchman can get together a pack composed both of the smooth-haired greyhound and the rough-haired Scotch deer-hound, he can have excellent sport. The greyhounds sometimes do best if they have a slight cross of bulldog in their veins; but this is not necessary. If once a greyhound can be fairly entered to the sport and acquires confidence, then its wonderful agility, its sinewy strength and speed, and the terrible snap with which its jaws come together, render it a most formidable assailant. Nothing can possibly exceed the gallantry with which good greyhounds, when their blood is up, fling themselves on a wolf or any other foe. There does not exist, and there never has existed on the wide earth, a more perfect type of dauntless courage than such a hound. Not Cushing when he steered his little launch through the black night against the great ram Albemarle, not Custer dashing into the valley of the Rosebud to die with all his men, not Farragut himself lashed in the rigging of the Hartford as she forged past the forts to encounter her iron-clad foe, can stand as a more perfect type of dauntless valor."

I have written more about Teddy Roosevelt's experiences with wolves. However, if you would like to read Roosevelt's accounts in (<http://www.fullbooks.com/Hunting-the-Grisly-and-Other-Sketches3.html>) *Wolves and Wolf-Hounds*, this link will take you there. I will warn you though that some of his accounts of hunts with these dogs might be a bit gruesome, however factual.

In Russia, as well as many other places in Europe, I am discovering, that for centuries they have had to learn to deal with wolves. The peasants, or common folk, couldn't hunt for wolves because either guns were prohibited or they couldn't afford a gun or the ammunition to use in it. Centuries of wolf encounters gave the Russians ample time to devise ways of controlling the animal.

I would like to point out however that even though I am going to share accounts of some of these methods, Russia for the most part did a lousy job of controlling wolves. In places there were too many causing the ungodly loss of life and property as historic documents now available from that country are more readily available, point out.

"Sketches of Russian Life Before and During the Emancipation of the Serfs" By Henry Morley, gives us a couple accounts of how Russians dealt with wolves. Take note that in these writings, the "barons" end up utilizing the crafty ingenuity of the peasants in order to bag their "trophies."

The first method utilizes a pig as a decoy. What I have discovered is that this was common across much of Europe as well, as I will relate in later articles. In this case, the hunters took a pig and transported it in a "strong canvas sack" on a horse drawn sleigh.

Upon reaching their hunting destination, the pig, kept in the canvas bag, was made to squeal hoping to attract the attention of wolves. Hunters would wait at a distance to shoot the wolves when they came out after the pig. (I assume that using the "strong canvas sack" not only prohibited the pig from running away, it also protected the pig from the hungry wolves to some degree. The wolves approached the bag with a squealing pig in it but didn't know quite what to make of it.)

Two wolves emerged from the forest and after having both been killed by the hunters, the remainder of the entire pack - about 15 wolves - came out of the woods. Dragging the two dead wolves behind the sleigh and retrieving the pig and canvas bag, the hunters took off down the road luring the wolves behind.

Much as one might suspect how the aerial shooting of wolves today is done, the horses, driver and hunters coordinated their efforts and managed kill a few more of the pack.

As you can see in this case there were few restrictions placed on the hunters.

But the ingenuity gets quite interesting. Being the idea of the sleigh driver, it is decided to send the hunters ahead to a filthy retreat of many crusty trappers, where a palisade has been built to trap wolves. The palisade is a construction of poles, staves and whatever of quite large size. If wolves, or any other animal for that matter, can be lured or tricked into entering the palisade, it is then trapped. The method is almost laughable.

"In a short time all was quiet and every necessary preparation made. Then came the howling of wolves and the screaming as of a pig (the driver of the sleigh, Mattvic, now riding the horse and being chased by wolves, is howling like a pig), the gallop of a horse over the hard crisp snow, the rush of many small feet. The outer door in the palisade was dashed open, and Mattvic, followed in half a minute by the whole pack, rushed in. The half-minute was just sufficient to enable Mattvic to vanish through the outer door into the trap. Then, as the last pressure on the door was removed, it closed with a loud sharp sound, and some five-and-twenty wolves were snared in a space not larger than twelve feet by twenty. We did not at first close the inner gateway, but, levelling our pieces at the mass of wolves now huddling themselves up in a corner, poured in two volleys in rapid succession, then closed the gate, and reloaded for another charge. The change from the air of ferocious savage daring which the wolves had displayed in pursuit of a single horseman, to abject terror when they found themselves caught in the narrow trap, was instantaneous. They were like sheep in a pen, crushing up in a corner, riding on the top of one another, lying down on their bellies, crouching and shivering with fear. It is not necessary to describe the scene of mere slaughter. Two staves were chopped out of the gateway, that -we might fire through. The drop-panels were opened, and two or three were admitted at a time to the next division; there dogs were let in on them through the adjoining trap, or they were killed

by men with great hars of wood or axes; and at length, when only six or seven remained, three of the men went in amongst them, and with perfect safety despatched them. They say that a worm will turn on the heel that treads on it, but wolves caught in a trap like this, from which there is no escape, have less courage than a worm. They crouch, shiver, and die, as I saw, without one effort at self-defence or one snap of retaliation."

I am not suggesting in this article or any of the others that will follow, that I am advocating for this kind of wolf slaughter in Idaho or any other state that may in the future hunt wolves. But please don't miss the point that I'm trying to make.

We don't know how to hunt wolves. Even the experiences Americans have had in dealing with wolves dates back several decades now and it seems the only talk of these wolves involves only the fact that the wolf was driven to near extinction for several reasons, the biggest finger being pointed at man. We have been taught that the wolf is "misunderstood" and needs protecting.

With wolves growing at a rate of as high as 30% a year in some places and no indications that wolves will be removed from protection anytime soon, should that day come, we may need at our disposal more methods of hunting wolves other than one man and one rifle, lest we be forced into mass killings.

Using Russia as an example, there appeared to never be any consistency in wolf population control measures. Efforts would go out to reduce wolves in some areas and then left alone only to allow the regrowth of wolves to overgrown numbers again. When culling was needed, maybe that is what triggered the creation of ways to mass kill wolves. Better management and control methods might have prohibited this kind of action.

As I mentioned earlier, wolves are not easy game to hunt. As I surmised also, had Russia been interested enough or financially capable to employ a steady dose of decent wolf management, perhaps some of the tactics used by wolf hunters wouldn't have become necessary. I'm referring to tactics that resulted in mass killings of wolves.

Needless to say, some day into the future, I'm sure that one way or another, the United States is going to be faced with a dilemma on what to do about too many wolves. Initial plans are being made in some states (I mentioned Idaho) as to what rules will govern the wolf hunts if they are ever removed from protection. As in Idaho's case, the rules essentially ban every means of hunting except for a man and his rifle. Historic documents tell us that this will not work. Initial wolf hunts may see some results but once the crafty canine discovers he is being hunted, one man and one rifle will not be any challenge to the wolf.

Previously, we discovered that in Russia, the wealthy (barons) people undertook wolf hunts utilizing pigs in canvas bags as decoys. We also read in great detail how the barons teamed up with the peasants, who had crafted a great palisade (elaborate trap) in order to kill several wolves

at one time.

Let's move our journey westward into France. In 1814 the state granted the *Louvetiers* permission to hunt wolves. Louvetiers were public officers appointed as superintendents in the "wolf districts." Their job was to "encourage" the destruction of the wolf.

Roderic O'Connor writes in "*An Introduction to the Field Sports of France*" that the most difficulty realized by wolf hunters was finding a way to get them out in the open so they could be killed.

I should remind readers that in writings about wolves and wolf dogs of Teddy Roosevelt's he says the only way to hunt wolves is with the use of hunting dogs.

"The wolf is one of the animals which can only be hunted successfully with dogs. Most dogs however do not take at all kindly to the pursuit. A wolf is a terrible fighter. He will decimate a pack of hounds by rabid snaps with his giant jaws while suffering little damage himself; nor are the ordinary big dogs, supposed to be fighting dogs, able to tackle him without special training."

O'Connor says that the only way to get wolves out of the thickets is with a "powerful and well-appointed pack of hounds." As a matter of fact, it is suggested that no fewer than 100 - 120 hunting hounds are necessary. Still the challenge is daunting.

"In wolf hunting, they enter the forest as quietly as possible, and thus endeavour to get near the wolf before he starts, which is a matter of considerable difficulty, as he is always on the alert, and has so quick a perception of their approach that he generally steals off before they come up with him. If the forest is large and sufficiently dense to afford him protection, he can seldom be forced to quit it: he then twists and doubles through all its intricacies with which he is thoroughly acquainted, and exerts all his subtlety to baffle his enemies. The hunters have no remedy but to press on the hounds, and thus endeavour to overpower him and compel him to bolt, or to hunt him down in the forest: but if he is found in a less extensive forest, or one which does not afford him sufficient scope to play off his cunning dodges, he saves them all trouble on that score, at once decides on starting for some distant forest, perhaps some 15 or 20 miles off, where he knows he will find ample protection, and dashes away like lightning; they then come in for a splendid run,"

We learn that having 100-120 "powerful and well-appointed" hounds was rare and so other methods were employed. For instance, the hunters may gather as many hounds as they can get and head into the forest to find the wolves much in the same manner as is described above. The hunters set themselves up in ambush.

"They are obliged to observe the strictest silence, and to conceal themselves with the utmost caution, for the wolf, who is peculiarly quick sighted, proceeds with great circumspection, and carefully examines every object before him."

If hunting dogs are not available and the louvetiers need to rid the community of the wolves, they commandeer as many "chasseurs" (chasers) as possible and head for the woods.

"When it is ascertained that a wolf is lurking in a particular locality, the louvetier of the district assembles as many chasseurs as possible, and, assuming the command of the party, proceeds to the cover, stations his chasseurs in the best positions he can select, and then enters the wood with a few beaters.

"As soon as the wolf perceives them advancing, he endeavours to steal off unobserved, finds all the passes guarded, and meets with a warm reception from his concealed enemies. They generally aim at his shoulder, but if there is any bungling, and he returns into the wood, it is quite hopeless to think of forcing him out a second time. It would be easier to hunt a rabbit out of an acre of furze, (which is no easy matter, I can assure you), than to compel him to break cover again: he must then be dealt with in some other manner, and the difficulty of getting at him, is considerably increased."

As you can now well see, when wolves became a problem in certain communities, depending upon the urgency of the situation, depended somewhat on what methods were used to kill the wolf or wolves. When too many wolves became a real problem, serious tactics were used. This one is called the wolf battue.

"The most effectual method of destroying these detestable animals, when a neighbourhood is infested with them, is the general wolf battue: it is called traque in many parts of the country, from the word traqueur; the synonyme of our word beater. This wolf battue is conducted by the louvetier of the district, and is a very formidable and curious proceeding. He assembles several hundred persons armed with guns, staves, pitchforks, swords and all manner of destructive weapons; and, after disposing a long train of shooters and placing them so that nothing can escape without coming under their fire; he then forms his traqueurs into lines, placing them sufficiently near to each other to preclude the possibility of any wolves passing between them. When they are thus arranged, he gives the signal, and they immediately commence striking the trees and bushes with their sticks and pitchforks, firing oil guns and pistols, blowing horns, beating drums, and making all manner of hideous noises, advancing at the same time in a slow and regular manner, so that nothing can get through their line, and thus driving all before them. The wolves thus frightened by the din of war, lay aside their repugnance to the open country, and break cover in all directions. The slaughter then commences, and they are shot while endeavouring to make their escape."

Not always are communities so overrun with wolves but make no mistake about it, wolves are always present and looking for a quick and easy meal - goat or sheep, poultry, pet or most anything that will stave of hunger.

It was often left up to the individual farmer to devise ways to capture and/or kill problem wolves on his own. To watch a flock of sheep or protect the barn all night required a lot of man power and time, seriously putting a cramp on anyone's lifestyle.

The following ingenious description of an unattended live trap, I found quite fascinating.

"When wolves are not sufficiently numerous to demand such tumultuous proceedings; or when the forests are too extensive for the adoption of the battue system , various contrivances are set on foot to entrap them. Of these, the tour a loup which is considered very destructive, is worthy of notice: it is constructed as follows: some convenient spot is selected in the vicinity of a farm house, or in some locality where they are in the habit of committing nocturnal depredations: a circle is described, of from 8 to 10 feet in diameter; good strong stakes of, at least, 10 feet in length, are then procured; they are pointed at one end and driven firmly into the ground in the circumference of the circle, at a distance of 5 inches apart from each other, leaving one open space of 18 inches only for an entrance.

"A second circle is then described with the same centre, so that its circumference may lie within 16 inches of the outer circle. Similar stakes are then firmly driven down in the circumference of the inner circle, at a like distance from each other, and without leaving any aperture for an entrance: the circular path lying between the two rows of stakes is well trodden down to represent a beaten path: the door, which should be made of good strong timber, is then hung on easy iron hinges, and so contrived that when shut from the inside , it will remain fast, by means of a latch falling into its proper place. A goose, or a sheep, is then placed in the central space, from whence it cannot escape, and the door, (which opens inwards), is left open, and stops up the passage on one side.

"The wolf, attracted by the animal within, approaches with his usual caution : and, at length, seeing the door open, and the beaten path before him, enters. Once in, he cannot turn in the narrow path, and goes round until he comes behind the door which he pushes on and closes upon himself."

Not only do we learn of the cleverness of the farmer or whoever it was that designed this trap, we also see things that give us hints as to the intelligence of the wolf being trapped. They had to actually make the ground between the two circles look like a well worn path otherwise the wolf might become too suspicious and not enter.

The author also offers up an interesting observation, one of which I have never heard before this reading.

"When wolves once taste human flesh they become perfectly ferocious and will ever afterwards attack a man when they meet him alone. They pass by the flock and fly at the shepherd."

I have read about quite a few wolf attacks on humans in several parts of the world and this is the first reference I can recall exclaiming that wolves like the taste of human flesh and/or blood.

As I pointed out near the beginning of this book, I am not advocating for people in America to take up their staves and pitchforks and become part of a wolf drive that will force wolves into an ambush with the intent of killing every wolf possible. The point I'm making is that it has always been a very difficult task for wolves and human to live together in peace and harmony.

Historic documents from Russia, Italy, India, France, Scandinavia, America and Canada should tell us that a steady dose of good wolf management, which includes strict controls on populations will go a long way in avoiding what people had to go through years ago in order to protect their communities and personal property.

The wolf is an intelligent and highly adaptable creature. When the time comes to hunt them, I'm afraid we will learn that setting a man with only his rifle afoot to catch a wolf will make for a tedious effort with little result.

We have learned greatly from the previous writings that wolves were not only a real problem for people in many parts of the world but also the animal was despised and feared, mostly for justifiable reasons. We've discovered that often it was only the wealthy barons owning the resources to take up the hunt for the wolf, while the peasants were left to their own devices, sometimes their lives ending in death from wolf attacks against them.

They say necessity is the mother of invention and often out of the desperate act of survival the peasants created some ingenious contraptions to capture and kill wolves.

Before we leave France and travel further north, I would like to also share from "*Saint Pauls Magazine*" as edited by Anthony Trollope (1868); specifically one chapter called "*Wolves and Wolf-Hunting in France.*"

Trollope's accounting of how locals dealt with wolves very closely follows those I shared with you previously, however the author seems to show a bit of disgust, perhaps at times pity on the despised wolf, while offering up some humor as well. What is clear is that the wolf is no one's friend, despised and abused.

In this account and several others I have read, it is often mentioned that the dogs that hunt the wolf will not touch a dead wolf after they have killed it. During the chase, as part of the hunt, the dogs will fight and bite and hold, doing whatever is necessary in order to take down and dispatch the wolf. Once the feat is accomplished the dogs will not touch a dead wolf.

Trollope describes for us certain aspects of the wolf.

"Ah! the unclean beast." "Peuh, the son of a polecat, how he stinks ! " This last compliment alludes to the wolf's offensive odour, which, as Buffon remarks, is truly disgusting, and which

issues with overpowering strength from any place he may have occupied for several successive days."

We see that people are yelling their abuses toward the wolf as they "beat" through the forest in an attempt to chase the wolf from his cover. Trollope tells us the wolf "stinks", has an "offensive odor", is "truly disgusting" and whose smell "issues with overpowering strength."

Later on, we are given a glimpse at how the hunting dogs react after the wolf is dead.

"The conduct of the dogs is peculiar; the small ones howl strangely, hiding their tails and trembling with convulsion. The large ones appear transported with a kind of rabid ecstasy, their jaws grind and chop, their eyes become wild and bloodshot, and their hair bristles on all their limbs. When once, however, the dogs have fairly killed the wolf, they refuse to touch his dead body."

What is interesting about this aversion to a dead wolf by the hunting dogs, doesn't seem to be the same in the reverse. Often I have read that wolves like the taste of dogs and in this book, the author claims that wolves will pass up an easy chance at a sheep in order to sink his chops into a dog.

Imagine if you can, which I realize may be difficult to do, after reading what you have, what wolf meat must be like. I would suppose that growing up in a time and place where encounters with wolves consumed a fair amount of your time, it wouldn't take long to build up a dislike for the animal. The wolf caused death and destruction and clearly was hated to no end. The descriptions of the wolf being "the son of a polecat", "stinks", having an "offensive odor" and the "rankest carrion in creation", among others I've shared above, leave us little hope that wolf meat would be good to eat. Combine that with the actions and reactions of the dogs who refused to touch the wolf after it was dead. All of this and the built-up resentment, fear and hatred over the years, real or imagined, how could anybody bring themselves to eat wolf meat. (rational thinking and from the perspective of a well-fed spoiled American living in the 21st century.)

Even Trollope alludes to the fact that most of this aversion to wolf meat was, "less fact than imagination." Yet through all of this, we find that people still, well at least some anyway, were able to retain a good sense of humor.

"The flesh of the wolf may be taken certainly to be about the rankest carrion in creation, not even excepting that of the common vulture and the turkey-buzzard. Yet all this in reality is less, fact than imagination. M. Charles Gauthey, a well-known sportsman in the Cote-d'Or, relates that the landlord of a country inn, himself a sportsman, and wishing to play the brethren a confraternal trick—or as it is called in French, leur jouer un tour de chasseur,—had a piece of wolf's flesh cut into small square morsels, and stewed up with veal and mutton cut into pieces of a different shape. The landlord helped the ragout himself, and being careful to serve each guest with one of

the square morsels, was enabled to inform them after dinner that they had all been eating wolf. Two of the guests were thereupon seized with horror, and one to such a degree that he was compelled to retire from the table with precipitation. The others took the joke in good part, and one an all declared they had detected nothing in the dish to excite suspicion in the least degree."

Once again, in this quest to discover the true character of the wolf, I want to make it clear I am not advocating that we Americans need to learn how to massacre wolves. We do however need to learn about them because the depth of that knowledge runs shallow. In future times as the wolf continues to expand and grow, it is most certain that we will have to deal more and more with similar wolf confrontations as those in Russia, India, France, Italy, Scandinavia, Alaska and Canada have come to know.

It is unclear whether the imported Canadian gray wolf or any other wolf for that matter, will ever be removed from federal protection. States such as Idaho have preliminary rules that will govern a wolf hunt should the time present itself. Unfortunately the rules strip the hunter of most tools needed to successfully hunt and kill a wolf. He essentially is allowed to go into the woods with only his rifle.

We have learned through several accounts that it is impossible to hunt the wolf by any means other than with "powerful and well-appointed" hounds, as Teddy Roosevelt attested. It is believed that initially there will be some success but as the wolf adapts and learns that humans want to kill him, his avoidance skills will out last that of a lone hunter.

Hunting is and has been a readily accepted tool for population control in wildlife management. When the time comes that we need to control wolf populations (which is now), hunters will need the proper tools to accomplish that task. We have learned that no management of the wolf over the years in other countries, often where guns are outlawed and only the wealthy can hunt, wolf populations were always a problem. We can't let that happen here in America.

Gaining further knowledge from these historical accounts of wolves, wolf hunting and the tactics used against them, can help to further our understanding of this creature. With better knowledge we are better equipped to properly manage this beast.

Before we venture into some of the Scandinavian countries to examine how they dealt with wolves and wolf problems, let's visit for a moment right here in the United States. It is believed that several subspecies of wolves inhabited much of the U.S. at one point in time.

Teddy Roosevelt went to great pains in some of his writings of the late 1800s in describing the different kinds of wolves he encountered all across the nation. He related colors, sizes, characteristics and habitats of any of these predators he came in contact with. One thing Roosevelt tells us is that even though he believed that man's efforts to get rid of wolves certainly had a significant affect, he was convinced there was something more than man's effort at hunting,

trapping, poisons, etc. that wiped out wolf populations.

What is different about Americans dealing with wolves and many of the other European and Asian countries we have looked at, was the fact that Americans were readily armed with guns and could not only protect themselves from large predators but they actively hunted and trapped the animal as it was part of the heritage.

In areas of France and Russia, most guns were banned and only wealthy and governmental connected people could possess a gun. In cases where the peasant population could own a gun seldom could they afford to buy the ammunition to put in it or it was just not available.

As settlers in America moved into the forests and prairies of the west, they encountered wolves. Not unlike those in Russia, France, Italy, India and any other country that had wolves, it didn't take long for people to grow to dislike the wolf, especially when it began killing off livestock and threatening the children and other settlers.

Having the weapons to do so, these settlers, turned hunters and trappers, began to kill off the wolves in many parts of the country.

We've established that the wolf was clearly despised by the people and often times their lives were controlled by the fear of getting attacked by wolves or having their livestock destroyed. People risked their lives with wolves in order to avoid starvation.

Here in America, we don't have the long and storied history of wolves like our friends across the ocean or to our north. Our experiences were somewhat different and short-lived in comparison. Our access to the tools used to kill wolves, in comparison, seems so much easier but the creativity of devising ways to mass kill wolves wasn't lacking.

In 1854, Hurst and Blackett published Thomas Chandler Haliburton's book, "*The Americans at Home: Or, Byeways, Backwoods, and Prairies.*" In that book is a chapter titled, *Wolf-Hunting on the Turkisag*. This is one account of a seemingly bizarre, daring, if not ignorant, rough and tumble wolf hunt, one that takes place under the full of the moon and putting every participant in danger of their lives.

I tried and failed to find out where the Turkisag was. Assuming it was a mapped out place or location, I searched and found nothing. I began then to look more closely at the word itself and with knowledge that this book was written in the mid-1800s, I wondered if the Turkisag was a created word of local origin.

Turk or turki relates to either the country of Turkey or the bird animal turkey. Sag used as a description could mean a depression, a valley, maybe even a hollow or some such. It is only a guess on my part but I thought maybe Turkisag came literally from the turkey sag. I might be

completely wrong and would welcome any explanations.

Regardless of what or where Turkisag was, the author Haliburton, gives us a bit of a description of the area.

"It was broad moonlight when we arrived at the place selected as the scene of operations. The Turkisag possesses a different aspect from the Blue Ridge. The latter is of a noble and magnificent description, but the scenery of the former is of a different order: there was an air of desolation hovering about it that produced feelings of awe, and you gazed around you as if in expectation of beholding something instinct with horror. Dark and gloomy caves or holes met your sight on every side; but where a level spot presented itself, it was thickly covered with trees, short, and of monstrous bulk, so that they nearly shut out the light of the moon in various places."

The stage is set for the hunt. There are around 50 men all armed with guns and ammunition and lots of it. Haliburton tells us that many times hunters/shooters can't leave their posts for several days. This is after all the time of year when *"wolves are the most ravenous, mustered in great numbers."*

This kind of wolf hunt is referred to as a *skirl*, being defined as a shrill and piercing sound. That name and description alone would be enough to send shivers up and down the spine.

One party locates a place where they will build a scaffolding, where shooters can lie in wait for the wolves. Read Haliburton's depiction of the place and the construction.

"The spot where we purposed to erect our scaffolding was in the dreariest place we could select, and, as it proved, where wolves were the most numerous. First, we all set to work with our axes, and cleared a space of about fifty feet in extent, by cutting down the smaller trees, leaving, of course, the larger ones standing. At the extreme west of this clear space, two scaffolds were erected after this wise: branches of trees were driven into the earth, six or eight inches apart, rising above the ground about eight feet; then a great quantity of brushwood was wove around them from the bottom to the top, presenting a strong basket or net-work; across the top were laid large branches, affording a tolerably firm flooring; and around the works props were placed, giving sufficient strength to the whole capable of bearing the weight of the party; a rude ladder was also made to enable us to ascend, but more particularly for the runner, whose share of the dangers of wolf- shooting was not inconsiderable. These scaffolds were built nearly on the edge of a precipice of about sixty feet in height; on the north-east, and about one hundred feet from us, arose a peak, stretching far above our heads, overhanging a gap in the mountain about twelve feet wide. The opposite point was somewhat lower than that on which we stood, making a considerable descent, leading round to the place where we were encamped. Before us appeared an interminable forest, with here and there a cave, the uncertain moonlight only adding to its repulsive appearance."

Did you pick up on the term "runner?" Frighteningly so, it is exactly as you might imagine. Two men are "selected." God knows what process that is actually used to pick who will be the runners aside from the fact that they should be young, fit and able to run fast.

Their task is to head out into the forest to find the wolves. Then the runner has to get the wolves to chase him. Utilizing only the available moonlight and a few dimly lit torches, the runner must use his blazing speed to stay just ahead of the wolves while hopefully successfully negotiating the landscape in the darkness of night. One mistake and it's toast.

The runner then must enter the scaffolding area in time to climb the ladder to safety and before the wolves catch him or the bullets hit him from when guns begin blasting at the wolves.

The author at one point writes that the runners take some kind of drug with them. Little is said about it so we can only guess as to whether it was something they thought would enhance their speed or awareness or maybe it was to quell the fear. Maybe it was even used for something else.

"Then, taking from his pouch a drug, a piece of which they placed in their moccasins, and holding the remainder between their fingers,"

Picture if you can how a shooter must be feeling. It is dark and you are stationed on a platform above an area set for ambush. You know that two men are being used as decoys and they are depending on you to kill the wolves before they get killed. Here's how it began to unfold.

"Presently a faint howl was heard, that caused the blood to rush to my heart. Nothing but actual experience can enable any one to form a correct estimate of the intense anxiety that a person labours under on such occasions. Again, another howl, more loud, then another—another, from every direction of the wood ; then simultaneously, a burst, as if from myriads, resounded through the wild, echoing from mount to mount, followed up by cries still more awful and terrific.

"Be ready!" said an old hunter beside me, in a tone that betrayed the excitement he felt, " for we shall have work to do presently; " and at that instant a wolf emerged from the wood into the open space, the torches revealing him plainly to our view. A dozen rifle balls in an instant pierced him. Another followed, glancing first at the torches, and then at us, as if uncertain what course to take.

"Be chary of your ammunition," said the same hunter, "for we may need all we've got;" and he raised his rifle, as the wolf was turning back, and instantly brought him to the ground."

The terror and the stress is building. The air is filled with blood-curdling howls, shooters are unloading on one wolf and you are reminded not to waste your ammunition. With that all dancing in your mind, along with the fact two human beings are out there streaking through the forest and running in fear for their lives, you hope you won't miss.

The first runner appears.

"We could not discover the least sign of their proximity, and the awful howls now came thick upon our startled senses, borne upon the breeze that whistled past us. Suddenly we heard footsteps, and could detect the quick breathings of a person, followed close by the rush of multitudes of those ravenous beasts, and presently the form of Ralph was seen, darting like a winged bird towards the goal. Close upon his track are seen the wolves—they press upon him, their eyes gloating at the prospect of his becoming their victim—lie looks not behind—he gains the open space—already they clutch at his legs—he eludes their fangs, and with a spring reaches the ladder—the next moment he falls breathless upon the scaffold—he is Safe !"

As the guns crack and the dead wolves begin to pile up, Haliburton's description of what is taking place sheds some light on what the runners used the drugs they took with them for.

"The gleam of the torches threw a fitful light on their protruding tongues and glaring eyeballs, as they ran to and fro, rendered frantic by the unnatural appearance of the flames, and the exciting nature of the drug used by the runners, so that they fell easy victims to our murderous fire, which, however, in no way appeared to check their onward rush."

Did the runners use some kind of bait or food laced with this drug to first feed the wolves? Obviously it appears as though the drug was used to alter their behavior.

But what of the second runner?

Appearing from the dark, through the midst of the chaos and frantic behaviors of both men and beast, the second runner appears, surrounded by wolves on both sides and from behind. He cannot make the ladder to safety.

Hunters open fire on the wolves and the runner is yelled at and told to try to jump the ravine ahead, knowing the odds of him making it were slim but doing nothing would result in being eaten alive by ravaging wolves.

The shooters continue to kill massive numbers of wolves until they run out of ammunition. The runner is left to his own desire and willpower to live. He opts for the ravine, jumps and doesn't make it.

What possesses men that they would be driven to such extremes in order to kill wolves? Was this only about the hunt or was this something that had to be done to protect the people and their property?

Wherever the Turkisag was, make no mistake there seemed to be an endless population of wolves that night. How many got killed we know not but several and it cost one young man his life.

For several reasons, wolves in the United States were nearly wiped out. Efforts to get them back have led to great controversy and there is no end in sight to the bickering. Our knowledge and reality in dealing of wolves is so limited that some fear that the wolf populations here are growing

at a disturbingly fast rate. With endless lawsuits blocking efforts to remove the wolf from federal protection, we may someday be forced into finding ways to mass kill wolves. Proper management can prevent that from happening.

My efforts here in bringing you these historic documents of how people have dealt with wolf problems worldwide, isn't to advocate for the construction of wolf ambush slaughtering sites but only to educate people that protecting the wolf isn't the same as protecting a non-predator. History shows us the devastation wolves can cause. We should have no desire for any of that.

If ever the day arrives that we can properly manage wolves, it will be a learning process to determine what tools will be required to control wolf populations. Sending one licensed hunter into the woods with one rifle believing this will be a viable tool to control populations is foolhardy and born of ignorance. Initially there might be some success but it won't take long before the wolf figures this out. This is why Teddy Roosevelt said that the only way to hunt wolves was with a pack of well-trained hunting dogs.

If we are ever to consider "catching" a wolf, we need first to understand it. This has become a difficult task, especially here in the United States because most who advocate for wolves, seemingly those with all the money and resources to do so, aren't at all interested in telling the truth about this animal. Why is it that in efforts to discover the truth about this large and sometimes vicious predator, advocates mount bigger campaigns to counter those truths with lies, information designed to mislead the public?

In the West we love our stories about Nikki: Dog of the North and Jack London's other creation of Call of the Wild. In our romantic fantasies we want to be friends with canines that are portrayed as our best friends, cute and cuddly. The reality is wolves are none of these and there are many other myths that we have been programmed to believe as true.

Most of us will never see a wolf in the wild. Most of us will never have a desire to "catch" a wolf. Some of us are going to be forced to at some point and hopefully we'll never reach the degree of problems our ancestors faced all around the globe, the result of which was lack of wildlife management and the taking away of the God-given rights of people to self protection.

So far, we have traveled across parts of North American, Russia, France, Italy and made mention of other countries that historically have faced wolf problems. We now are going to travel to Scandinavia where we will take a look at two aspects of the wolves there - attacks on humans and methods used to kill wolves.

No matter where we traveled, we found out that wolves vary in sizes and color. We know that the characteristics of wolves also vary depending on several factors, including habitat, time of year and the influences of climate, to name a few.

One thing that I have discovered in reading the many accounts of wolves and hunting wolves is that often what and how the writer conveyed their message depended a great deal on their own experiences and perceptions of the events at hand. Let me give an example.

Scandinavian Adventures by Llewelyn Lloyd was written in 1854. It contains numerous accounts of wolf/human encounters and detailed descriptions of wolf habits and of course methods on how the people in Scandinavia captured and/or killed the beast they so much hated.

I chuckled at one point and then read on with my jaw agape, when Lloyd wrote that wolves seldom attack people.

"Though wolves are so numerous in Scandinavia, and commit such considerable ravages amongst cattle, they do not often molest man."

I will concur here with Lloyd's statement that wolves were numerous during this time in Scandinavia, having to this point already read what seems an unending accounting of the savage events involving wolves in this country and the destruction of private property.

After stating that wolves "do not often molest man", Lloyd fills many pages documenting several of at least 20 accounts of wolves killing humans just during one winter. This doesn't account for the attacks on humans that didn't result in death.

I would assume we need to conclude that it is all relative as to what we become accustomed to in our everyday lives. That one man can so boldly state that wolves seldom attack man, yet view the deaths of at least 20 people, mostly children, as somehow insignificant, certainly baffles my mind but I've never had to live with wolves on a daily basis. In all of North America we struggle to accept the death of one man in Canada (Kenton Carnegie) a couple years ago.

As with all the other countries we've visited, Lloyd tells us that the wolf is despised in Scandinavia too. He states that from the beginning of time, wolves have been hated and that they were the "plague and torment of the land."

The Scandinavian wolf is characterized as having a "most ravenous appetite" and at times when food is not available to the wolf, he will actually ingest dirt and mud in order to quell the hunger pains. If all goes well, he will regurgitate the mud once he has killed prey to eat. The author tells us of instances when a wolf howls incessantly from the pain caused by eating and puking up the dirt.

"He can suffer hunger and hardships for a long time, which is common for beasts of prey, according to the Creator's wise institution; for their provision is uncertain, and comes accidentally, and at irregular intervals. When his hunger becomes too great, he'll eat clay if it is to be had; and this, as it is not to be digested, remains in his belly till he gets flesh, and that works it off violently; and then he is heard to howl most dismally for pain;"

One farmer who killed a wolf, opened the animal's stomach up to see what it had been eating and found it full of moss and the tops of birch trees.

Lloyd tells us that Scandinavia is "exempt from rabies." I can't confirm that to actually be the case but he is quite convinced there were never any cases of rabies recorded at least up until this time in history. Part of the reason for bringing this up is that in his list of wolf encounters, all occurred with what appear to be healthy animals. This dispels the myth that only diseased wolves will attack a human.

Like with all the other accounts we've examined, wolves in Scandinavia are most dangerous during the long winter months, when food is scarce and the animals run in very large packs. People traveled most often by sleigh or horse and during these times some were allowed to have guns for protection as it was common for packs of wolves to attack and follow the travelers.

The author tells readers that when the wolf is hungry and in packs, they seem not afraid of anything, boldly entering barns and enclosed pastures taking whatever they wanted, sometimes barely reacting to the beating by farmers with clubs, sticks and rocks.

The story here gives us an indication of excess killing. In modern times, at least here in North America, we have coined the term "surplus killing" to characterize the act of wolves killing far more prey than they ever intend to eat.

"The wolf is amongst the most voracious of beasts. The slaughter he commits in the fold is at times terrible; and he frequently kills ten times more than he can devour. Hence it would appear, he is impelled rather by a mere love of destroying, than by hunger."

I read recently the account of one wildlife biologist who said that surplus killing did occur with wolves and domestic animals but rarely happened with wild animals, particularly large game animals. Even though I have had the opportunity to read accounts of and view pictures of what seem to show surplus killings of deer and elk by wolves, biologists, for whatever their motives, seem quick to come to the rescue of the wolf and state that it may appear the wolves killed needlessly but will return at a later date and clean up the mess. This brings the discussion to one that now becomes quite subjective. If a pack of wolves during one attack session kills 20 elk and then leaves without eating any of them, one can argue that the wolves will return to clean up later, yet we have no way of knowing that.

I find it a tough pill to swallow that wolves will only "surplus kill" domestic animals and not wild ones. The game manager making the statement backed his theory by saying that most livestock have had all sense of fighting back bred out of them. I have never witnessed alive any attack by wolves on deer and elk, but in most of the video I've seen, the deer and elk aren't fighting back. They may run and stand their ground for a time but are soon outnumbered or worn down to defeat.

I can concur that it would appear much easier, if I were a wolf, to enter an enclosed area housing 100 sheep and killing them all, than to run down and kill 100 elk or deer. This doesn't however dispel the idea that wolves do not "surplus kill" elk and deer. The task may be more difficult but the voraciousness of the wolf is on display no matter what animal it is attempting to kill. If a pack kills any number of game animals they don't consume or haul away, we can say there was surplus killing.

The landscape of much of Scandinavia provided excellent habitat for wolves and as a result, there were many to contend with. The habitat also prevented hunting the wolf in what is referred to as a common method - using dogs and people to drive wolves out of the thick forests into openings or fields where the wolves could be shot. There were just too many intermingled, dense forests where wolves could essentially hide forever. This brought extra challenges upon the citizenry to protect themselves and devise other means of killing wolves and killing as many as they could all at once.

The presence of wolves was an extreme burden on the people. It is described in some places as being the most difficult thing in life to deal with. Here in the West we think stories like Little Red Riding Hood were created from some fairy tale dreamed up by a fanciful writer.

Not only do our children's books relate some of the experiences people had years ago, the angst and outright hatred that grew toward the wolf had people believing the the wolf was an incarnation of Satan himself. As backwards as this may seem to the modern West, we've never really had to deal with anything so frightful and controlling, with the dominance of a vicious predator. It was as bad or even worse than any plague.

The people persevered and one way that helped was the creation of devises and methods to catch, trap and kill wolves. In the northern areas of Scandinavia, the Lapps often strapped on their skis, or skidor they were called, armed themselves with a 12-foot long pointed spear and headed into areas thought to have wolves.

The conditions needed to be right so that the snow was such that wolves couldn't run away and yet the hunters could remain on top of the snow with their skis and navigate to where the wolves were, spearing them to death. A good downhill run seemed a good opportunity.

"Sooner or later, however, he is necessitated to quit the " vantage-ground," and betake himself once more to the forest or the fjall, as the case may be. Thus the chase may continue for a day or two, until the beast is fairly worn out with hunger and fatigue, when his pursuers are enabled to close with him—generally on the long slope of a hill—and to put an end to his miseries and his life."

Seldom would enough wolves be killed to have any real affect on limiting the wolf kills on the reindeer herds. However, under the right conditions, there is a recorded event of around 70

wolves being killed in one week using this method of skis and spears.

As I mentioned earlier, hunting wolves by foot or horseback in the "traditional" manner was quite ineffective. Lloyd explains it this way.

"Little in the shape of wolf-hunting—such at least as accords with our notions of hunting—is practised in Sweden; and that little is, from necessity, always followed on foot. From the difficult nature of the ground, and the peculiar style of fence, it would be quite an impossibility to pursue that beast on horseback."

And thus the most effective means to deal with wolf populations was devised - locate the dens and kill the cubs. Lloyd goes to great lengths offering advice on how best to locate the dens. As a bonus, hunters would set a trap for the she-wolf and kill it when it returned to the den area.

"The she-wolf does not, like the fox, litter in deep holes in the ground, where it is difficult to get at the cubs; but under boulders, under the stumps of uprooted trunks, in close thickets, or beneath spruce-pine trees, the branches of which hang to the very ground; and for this reason, when the Lya is found, one can readily take and destroy the cubs."

"One of the number, however, should be retained alive, that by means of its cries the mother may be killed also. The object is best effected by erecting a screen of boughs, near to the lair, where two of the hunting party (the rest retiring to a distance) secrete themselves, and shoot her on her return home. This is hastened by the piteous lament of her offspring, who at some four feet from the ground, is suspended by the hind leg to a neighbouring tree. But the men, at such times, should face in opposite directions, so that one or the other will be sure to see her when she first makes her appearance, as she then comes much nearer to the ambush than afterwards."

The event of locating wolf lyas (lair) and destroying the cubs is a community-wide event employing large groups of people. A continued effort each year to do this seemed somewhat effective in keeping wolf populations in check.

Another method used by the Scandinavians, particularly in areas overrun with wolves was called a *Skall-platser*. Essentially, an area is located in which bait is deposited in great amounts over long periods of time. This often consisted of dead animals.

During the time of year, mostly winter, when the wolves were both hungry and packing together in larger numbers, hunters, numbering as high as 600 would surround the baited area where no wolf could escape. Canine slaughter ensued.

During a period of about 7 years, it is recorded that 35 of these *Skalls* took place, resulting in the killing of over 200 wolves, including cubs. This may have been the most effective means of killing larger numbers of wolves at one time but I believe the most effective long term was killing the cubs and she-wolves. One of the problems with carrying out the *Skalls* was the expense and the

time commitment in keeping the area baited.

Scandinavia also employed the use of live, squealing pigs on a winter sleigh to lure the wolves out while hunters riding the sleigh shot them. I covered this in more detail early on.

In all of the stories covered in this multi-part article, people resorted to the creation and use of traps. Most of them to catch an individual wolf but as we learned earlier, elaborate contraptions were designed to capture many wolves at one time.

While individual traps served the purpose of maybe taking care of one or two problem wolves that were killing livestock, it did virtually nothing to control wolf populations.

What we should have at least learned through all of this is that wolves are most difficult to "catch." We read here in Scandinavia that the terrain and habitat was such that much of it was impossible to hunt on foot or horseback. In all the stories, the authors made no bones about the fact that wolf population controls had to be done on a consistent basis and the only way to accomplish this was with the use of hunting dogs. There was nothing very scientific about any of it. They knew there were too many wolves and no matter what they did, there were always too many wolves.

I've pointed out numerous times that as the United States readies itself for a rapidly expanding population of wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains and Western Great Lakes, I have little confidence that we are prepared to handle the problem or at least take care of it in a timely matter.

Idaho, a state that is eager to get the federal government off its back and out of its state, has written up preliminary rules to govern wolf hunts. None of the rules allow for any of the methods I've described or provided for you from history. I'm not advocating for the employment of these methods but we have to use history to teach us that a hunter alone with a gun is no good.

With a wolf population growing at a rate of near 30% in some places, sending a man and his rifle into the woods to kill a wolf will do nothing to stop or slow the rate of growth. With the proper management and control of wolves, it should be known whether the state wants to reduce, maintain or grow the wolf population in certain wildlife management areas. This is readily accomplished through the issuance of tags or quotas. When the quota is taken the hunt ends. If this be the case, then why put so many restrictions on the hunter? It really makes little sense?

We have areas now where the deer and elk are being killed by wolves at a rate that some fear is approaching or has surpassed recovery. Presently our hands are tied as wildlife managers are at the mercy of the federal government and having to be in compliance with an Endangered Species Act that has morphed into a political activists' tool.

If the day comes when each state is granted permission to manage the wolf, we have to be ready,

knowledgeable about the wolf and its habits and prepared to implement the necessary tools to accomplish the needed tasks.

I hope that this article and the other four parts can serve as a means of gaining a better, more truthful understanding of the wolf. Learning about the truth shouldn't be something we fear. It is fought against only by those with hidden agendas.

Tom Remington