

Isle Royale Wolf Study



The accompanying chart on population fluctuations of wolves and moose at Isle Royale National Park over the last 23 years is a graphic illustration (literally) of the need to continue research until meaningful time frames for the particular research have been established.

In an article entitled "Long-Term Research: An Answer to 'When Are You Going To Quit?'," Rolf Peterson describes in the Autumn 1981 issue of the *George Wright Society FORUM*, the totally different understandings (and their attendant implications for wise management) that have emerged in the latter years of research into wolf-moose relationships at Isle Royale. Whereas the early research showed a wolf population of remarkable stability, the 1970s research was, in Peterson's words, "a real eye-opener." The apparent stability of wolf and moose populations was replaced by drastic fluctuations, dramatically underlining the essentiality of long-term research for true scientific understanding of wolf-prey interaction and population regulation.

In addition to describing the long-term research, Peterson's article makes a strong case for the preservation of pristine areas such as national parks and for the use of these areas "to improve our imperfect knowledge" of how best to manage these trusts.

Peterson, who succeeded Dr. Durward Allen as the project director in 1975, is assistant professor in the biological sciences department of Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI 49931.



Figure 1. Population fluctuations of wolves and moose at Isle Royale National Park over the past 23 years.