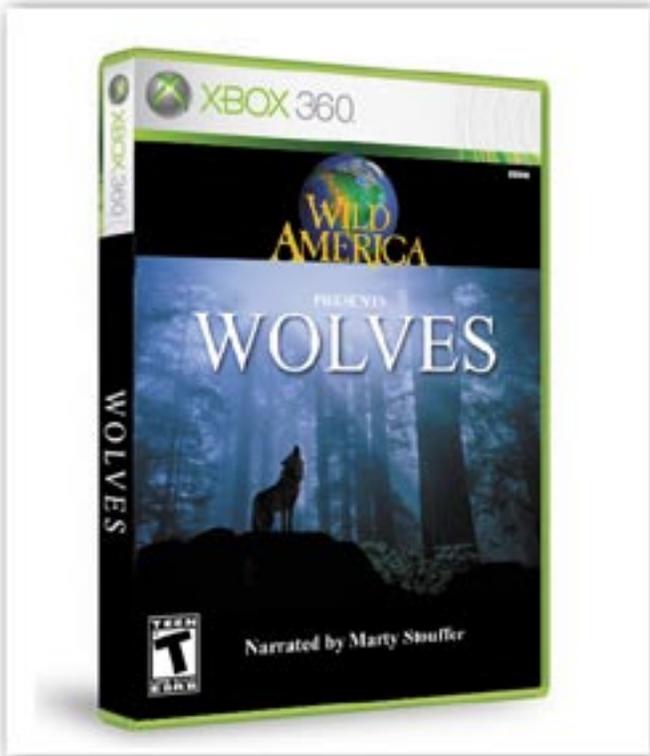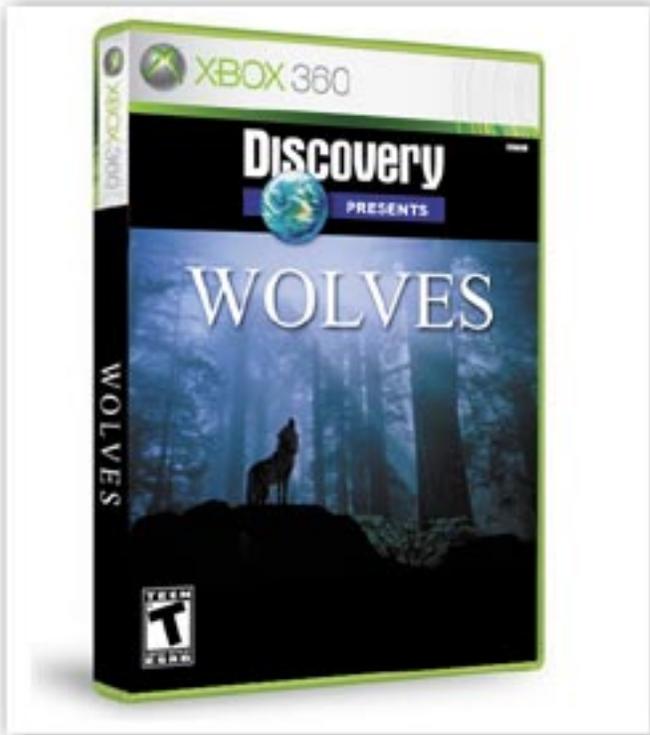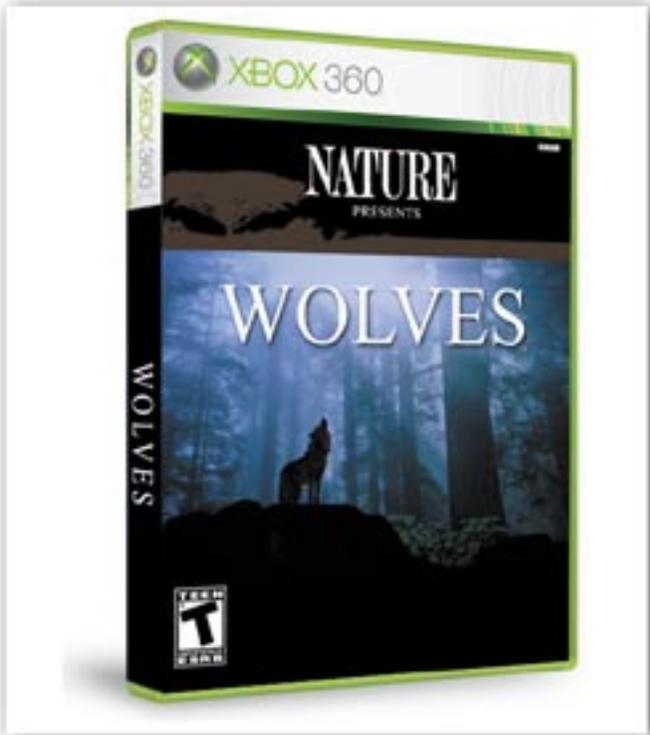# WOLVES

## AN INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARY

# OVERVIEW

**Genre:**
3rd Person Action/Adventure

**Setting:**
Real World

**Platform:**
Wii, Xbox 360, Playstation 3, PC

**Production Status:**
Preproduction

**Number of Players:**
One

**Expected Rating:**
T (For Violence )

## High Concept
Experience the life of a wolf with Sim-like casual-yet-deep open-ended gameplay packaged as an action/adventure game in a nature documentary format.

## Design Goals:
- Create a compelling and unique action/adventure game based on the concept of living the life of a wolf.

- Channel the mystique, grace, and beauty of the wolf to create a powerful, memorable, and entirely unique protagonist.

- Develop deep, casual gameplay that appeals to all demographics, encouraging novice gamers to pick up the game and hardcore gamers to explore its depths.

- Make the player feel like they are taking part in a nature documentary by leveraging strategic partnerships with well-known nature documentary creators.

# GAME DESIGN OVERVIEW

## CORE CONCEPTS

Since before the dawn of recorded history, man has been terrified by and fascinated with wolves. They are noble and powerful creatures that have defined much of man's folklore. They embody mystery, beauty, and swift, bloody death. Games regularly use the icon of the wolf as everything from emblems to playable characters, but none focus on what it truly means to BE a wolf. *Zelda*, *Okami*, and *Shadow Hearts* – all of these games recognize that a wolf is a majestic, impressive avatar for the player, but none fully leverage the elements that have historically left man in such awe of the wolf. Superhuman senses, incredible speed and strength, grace and elegance, complex social structures; *Wolves* is a game that seeks to endow the player with the ability to explore all of these in a massive open world, designed to accentuate the natural beauty of the wolf and the ecosystem to which it belongs.

In the tradition of artistic visions like *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, *Wolves* will provide a captivating and emotional piece of gaming art, accessible to all. Strong focus on collecting, maintenance, and exploration will encourage obsessive play as in many Sim-type games, while the casual mechanics and "cute puppies" will encourage diverse demographics to play. Think of it as *Animal Crossing: the nature documentary*.

In fact, by packaging the product as a licensed "nature documentary" *Wolves* has the potential to appeal to not only core gamers but also non-gamers who enjoy *National Geographic* or the *Discovery Channel* as well as to the elusive Hunting Game demographic (*Deer Hunter*, etc).

## KEY FEATURES

### Open-World Gameplay
 – Explore a massive world consisting of varied terrain and climate, from windswept plains, to old growth forest, to frozen mountaintops filled with ancient ruins and natural wonders.

### Hypersensitive Senses
 – See scent trails for every interactive object in the world. Find water. Track prey of different types and sizes. Avoid predators stronger than yourself or your pack. Use your hearing to locate prey under the ground or snow.

### Speed and Agility
 – Navigate and explore the environment using your incredible speed and agility. Jump, run, dig, and climb to reach new areas and find rare prey.

### Hungry Like the Wolf
 – Track hundreds of different types of prey. Subsist by eating small animals. Consume marmots, ground squirrels, hares, mice and even spawning salmon. Take down larger prey, such as moose and caribou, with the aid of the pack members.

### Leader of the Pack
 – Challenge other wolves. Acquire a mate. Become the alpha. Fight other wolf packs for territory and better hunting grounds so your pack can eat and become stronger.

### Dynamic Time Advancement
 – Hunt diurnal prey during the day and nocturnal prey at night. Follow the cycle of the seasons. Mate in the spring. Raise pups in the summer. Hunt in the fall. Burrow beneath the snow in winter.

### Make Your Own Wolf
– Choose the gender, pelt, and species of your wolf.

### Documentary Format
 – In the same way that sports games license ESPN announcers and mimic the format of broadcast television, *Wolves* will replicate the feeling of watching a nature documentary by using strategic voiceover and broadcast packaging.

# DOCUMENTARY FORMAT

During development, we will partner with a well-know nature documentary distributor such as *National Geographic*, *Discovery*, *Nature*, or *Nova*. The game will be packaged in the format that these shows tend to use, with the same opening theme, logos, and voice-over.

## Narrator

A well-known nature documentary narrator, such as Marty Stouffer of *Wild America* fame, will narrate the game experience for the player. When doing something new or important, like stalking a herd of deer or killing a new type of prey for the first time, the player's actions will be narrated by this voice. In this way, we will be able to take a format that millions of people know and make it interactive. This will be particularly useful from a gameplay standpoint since it means that we will be able to give the player hints and other information without stopping gameplay with text or menus.

## Broadcast Packaging

Wolves will also employ television-style broadcast packaging throughout its interface in order to further facilitate the player's feeling that they are taking part in a nature documentary. For instance, the TV channel's logo will be displayed in the corner of the screen and pop-up information bars will occasioanlly appear, offering the player more information in the same way that a channel might encourage the viewer to visit their website.

## Education

*Wolves* seeks to teach the player about the life of a wolf and about nature in general. Wolves are often perceived as vicious killers. This game can teach players that wolves kill only because they must, and they will usually avoid confrontation if possible. In addition, through a serachable bestiary, the player will learn about the feeding, living, and hibernation patterns of many different types of prey and predators. Overall, *Wolves* will give the player a much deeper understanding of the ecosystem in which wolves live in much the same way that a game like *Sim City* gives the player a better understanding of urban development.



Gameplay Mockup *(Copyrighted material used: Zelda, Oblivion)*

## Conservation

It might be worth it to consider donating a portion of the game proceeds to wolf conservation. This could also potentially gain a huge amount of free, positive press and hype.

# STORY

In his den, the wolf pup slumbers. His mother lies beside him, warming the small space. Suddenly, she hears a sound. Her ears prick up and she looks at the mouth of the tunnel that leads outside. There is an ominous growl and a huge bear paw reaches in. She bites it and it pulls back as the owner screams with rage. She dashes out of the den, leaving her pup behind, valiantly trying to lead the maddened bear away from her young. The pup crawls to the mouth of the den. Silhouetted against the moon, he sees the bear lift his mother in its jaws and dash her to the ground. She lies still. The bear carries its prey away into the darkness as the pup watches. He is alone. It is up to him to survive. He must track. He must feed. He must grow strong. He must challenge other wolves. Only then, with his own pack behind him, will he be able to defeat the mad grizzly that terrorizes the woods.

# STAMINA

Stamina is the main currency of *Wolves*. For all wild animals, how much stamina you have defines what you are capable of doing and whether you will survive. The best-fed and most well rested animal has a huge advantage over any other. From the moment it awakes, the most important question on a wolf's mind is how it will get food for the day. In order to find and kill prey, a wolf must expend energy. The prey that is caught must then replenish the wolf's lost energy at the minimum. Simply being alive requires a great deal of energy, so the wolf must hunt enough to replenish all the energy that is lost hunting as well as the baseline energy the wolf will need for the day, otherwise it will become weak and eventually unable to hunt, thus resulting in death.

Players will have to carefully weigh their choices in prey and hunting method. Running willy-nilly after small prey like voles all day will use up a huge amount of stamina that will be difficult to replace, considering that a vole is a tiny mouthful of food. If players become good at hunting by learning to mask their scent, staying downwind of prey, stealthily approaching it, and choosing the best time to lunge, then small prey can be worthwhile to catch as it is plentiful. But really, in order to advance, the player will need to not only learn to be a good hunter, but also hunt large enough prey to generate a stamina surplus.

Gameplay Mockup *(Copyrighted material used: Zelda, Oblivion)*

## Surplus

Stamina rolls over from day to day. Stamina unused at the end of the day will remain the next day; minus whatever was used keeping the wolf alive while it was asleep. Wolves can amass up to 10 full stamina tanks at once. In order to fill that much stamina without expending too much of it simply trying to catch food, players will have to take down larger prey. Larger prey will not only fill them up for the whole day, but they can also bury parts of the carcass

so they won't have to hunt the next day.  In the winter months this buried food can last weeks.  Taking down larger prey is difficult, since the prey can fight back and may be substantially faster than the wolf or protected in a herd.  Often, the player will require the aid of other wolves in order to take down large prey such as deer.  This is where stamina surplus comes in – a wolf will only be able to establish a pack of their own or rise in rank in an existing pack if they have enough stamina to fight for rank or recruit lone wolves.  The same goes for mating and establishing a pack by having pups – a female will only respect a wolf with high stamina and the player will only be able to fend off other suitors if they have enough surplus stamina to survive a fight.  Simply having a large amount of surplus stamina will make the player's wolf look stronger and walk more confidently; often resulting in potential rivals being submissive rather than even start a fight.  A wolf with low stamina may simply back down when challenged by a player wolf with high stamina.

### Stamina Per Day
The player's wolf can only eat three full stamina tanks' worth of prey per day.  One tank is equal to the average amount of energy a wolf will need to stay alive and hunt for one day.

### Stamina Meter
The stamina meter shows how much stamina the wolf has in their current tank and how many tanks they have stored.  The meter also has a mark showing how much stamina the player should have amassed by the time they sleep in order to make sure they don't run out overnight.

### Weather
Weather can affect stamina.  Biting wind and cold, sweltering sun and heat, as well as driving rain and blizzards lower stamina faster than temperate weather.  The player will need to protect their wolf against such things by swimming, drinking water, resting in the shade when it is hot, burrowing under the snow when it is windy and cold, etc.  Digging a den expends stamina, but once dug, a den will protect the wolf from both heat and cold while asleep.  This is the sort of thing a stamina surplus is useful for.  Dens must be occupied regularly, otherwise the player risks finding that another animal has moved in.  If the animal is another predator, this can cause problems.

### Water
The player can get a small stamina boost from drinking water.  Not drinking water at all will trigger a warning that the wolf is thirsty and will result in faster stamina loss until the wolf drinks.  This must be done at least once per day.

### Low and Negative Stamina
If a wolf's stamina drops to zero, they will fail to capture struggling prey.  They will also lose any fight they may be in.  As the wolf continues to move and live, the stamina meter will drop below zero.  Their speed will slacken and their posture will droop.  If the stamina meter drops to one full tank below zero, the wolf will die.

### Stamina Tank Increases
The player starts out with only one tank of stamina that they can fill.  They can gain a maximum of 10 total tanks.  Each time they kill a new type of prey and eat it, their active stamina meter will increase in size.  Once it exceeds the maximum limit, they will gain a second tank, and so on.  This is used to represent hunting experience gained by a wolf over time.  Thus, an older wolf that has killed more types of prey will have a larger maximum stamina meter and will find it easier to kill larger prey and advance higher in pack rank.  The player can also increase their stamina meter by finding special rock promontories in territory that they have aquired and howling atop them at the full moon.

# HUNTING

*Wolves* will offer the player hundreds of different animal types to hunt.  Different animals will require different strategies to successfully hunt and kill, as well as varying rewards for doing so.

## TERRITORY
Hunting in one area for too long will exhaust the available prey and cause remaining prey to migrate elsewhere.  Thus, the player will have to change their hunting grounds regularly and challenge other wolf packs for the best locations.

# BESTIARY

When the player eats a new type of animal, that animal will be added to the bestiary. The bestiary menu will show further information on that animal including its name, feeding, living, and hibernation habits, where it can be found, etc. This will provide the player with important hunting information. For instance, if they catch a pika and read the bestiary entry, they will learn that it almost always makes its home in rockslides at the base of mountains or cliffs. Then, when the player sees such a formation while exploring, they will know to examine it more closely and look for a pika scent trail.

# ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

## Go Prone

When approaching prey, go prone to make yourself harder to see.

## Use Cover

Use cover, such as tall grass to hide yourself.

## Circle The Prey

Run quick circles around prey to cut off any escape routes and force them to stay still.

## Separate Prey From the Herd

Run through gaps in any herd formation to cause stragglers to run away from you and thus, away from their allies and protection.

## Stay Downwind

Scent is affected by wind. The movement of wind is clearly visible in scent view mode. Stay downwind of prey to avoid them smelling you.

## Mask Your Smell

The player can find dead animals or animal feces scattered around the world. Often, an animal's feeding grounds will contain the feces that particular type of animal close by. The wolf can roll in these items to mask their own smell. For example, if a wolf is tracking a herd of deer, they might pass some deer droppings on their way. They can roll in these and thus be undetectable by scent even if they are upwind of the herd.

# PREY TYPES



## Small Prey

(e.g. Mice, Voles, Squirrels, Rabbits, Lemmings) – These are the most plentiful type of prey. They can be easily found, but not too easily caught. They tend to be very fast and change direction randomly. They also have a strong chance of hiding in the nearest tree stump, burrow, or other likely hole. The player must sneak up on them slowly and carefully. If they miss the first lunge, they will have to expend a large amount of stamina chasing the prey down. The best reason to hunt these types of prey, however, is that they don't struggle. If a lunge connects, they die. Thus, even a wolf with low or negative stamina can kill this type of prey.

## Medium Prey

(e.g. Marmots, Groundhogs, Fawns) – These are slightly more rare than small prey. They fill up a wolf's basic stamina needs for one full day with a small surplus left over. The drawback with focusing on these animals is that they are harder to find, requiring more stamina to search for than small prey. They also put up a pretty good fight when attacked, running away at medium speed and struggling when caught. In addition, much larger parents protect some, like fawns. If the wolf has not built up enough stamina before attacking one of these, they risk losing the prey as it struggles.

## Fish

What's an adventure game without a fishing minigame? Stand in a river and patiently wait for your chance to catch a fish. Small fish like sunnies will be easy to catch but provide little stamina. Salmon will provide a great deal of stamina but will struggle so much that only a strong wolf can catch them.

## Large Prey

(e.g. Deer, Boars, Mountain Goats) – These are pretty much impossible for a lone wolf to take down unless already wounded or sick. Many are protected in herds, and a wolf risks death when trying for a head-on confrontation. The only safe way to take one of these down is to approach very carefully with allies, using advanced hunting techniques. A huge amount of stamina is needed to track, attack, and take down large prey, but the reward is well worth it. One of these animals will feed 3-5 wolves comfortably with enough left over that a day or two of food can be buried afterwards. This food can be dug up the next day, meaning that the wolf will not have to hunt at all on that second day.

### Extra-Large Prey
(e.g. Elk, Moose, Bison) – A pack of at least 6 wolves is required to take down one of these.  The same rules as those for large prey apply, but the resulting kill can feed more wolves for more days.



### Small Predators
(e.g. Weasels, Badgers, Raccoons) – These are similar to medium prey, but they tend to fight back more and, thus, require larger stamina expenditure.

### Large Predators
(e.g. Mountain Lions, Grizzly Bears) – Even wolves need to protect themselves.  Wolf pups, and even lone adult wolves, are in danger from these sorts of animals.  They can only be taken down by very large packs (about 12 wolves) and require Herculean amounts of stamina to kill.  It's best to run away when you see these, or try to chase them off with howls and posturing.  A direct attack should only be undertaken by the very skilled, confident, and strong.

# PACK DEVELOPMENT

If you ever want to take down a deer, you need to join or form a pack.  When packs become too large for the available prey in a given area, the youngest or lowest ranking members tend to break off and form their own packs.  By seeking out these juveniles, the player can form their own pack.  They can also choose to join an existing pack if the pack has few members.  Either way, in order to advance to alpha status, the player will have to gain stamina.  If they have high enough stamina, wolves with lower stamina will simply submit to them on sight.  If they have equal stamina to a wolf they meet, they will have the option of challenging that wolf or submitting.  A fight following the challenge determines the winner.

Alphas are the only wolves allowed to mate and the ones who decide when, what, and where to hunt.  If the player is lower ranking in the pack, they will still gain the benefit of taking down and eating larger prey, but they will not be able to lead the hunt.

# MATING

In order to have pups, you must find a suitable mate.  Mates will be in demand by other wolves, so not only must you have enough stamina to impress your potential mate, you must also be able to fend off her other suitors.



Once a mate has accepted you, you can have pups.  This is a good way to increase the size of your pack and, let's face it, pups are cute.  The mother will need a den to have her pups in.  You will have to dig this in a safe place near good hunting grounds.

# TERRITORY

Your pack isn't the only one around.  Different territory is owned by different wolf packs.  When the prey has been exhausted in one area or when your pack is large enough that you need to hunt bigger game, it's time to challenge another pack.  Don't forget to mark your territory so other packs know to stay away.

# HOWLING

The player can howl to rally their pack around them, to challenge other packs, to look for other wolves in their territory, or to scare prey.

In addition, once the player has expanded their territory, they can search the new territory for special rock promontories. If they howl atop these at the full moon, they will get a substantial stamina meter increase.

# VIEW MODES

As a wolf, not only does the player have access to incredible strength and speed but also the wolf's senses of smell and hearing. Each of these senses is represented by a view mode that the player can engage, much like thermal vision or night vision in a game like *Splinter Cell.*

### SCENT VIEW

In this mode, different scents are represented by different colors and shapes. Prey and predators of varying levels of strength and size are represented by the yellow-to-red color range. Water is represented by blue. Friendly wolves by green. Unknown wolves by purple. The width of a scent trail also gives the player a clue as to the size of the prey; larger width equals larger prey. The player can also see how scent is being affected by wind in this mode. The scent trails are spread widely by a strong wind or less so by a weak wind. This is important for the player to know when approaching prey that may catch their scent and flee. While using scent view mode, the player can choose to see all scent types at once or they can cycle through them one at a time. Strong scents will be visible from far away, while weak scents, like a pika hiding under a rockslide, won't be visible until the player gets close.

### HEARING VIEW

The player will be able to zero in on the location of sounds both large and small using this view mode. A loud sound like a wolf's howl will be visible as a large, blue, dopplering circular effect in the distance, coming from the direction from which it originated. A mouse tunnelling under the snow will produce a much smaller circular effect that can only be seen when close.

# GAMEPLAY EXAMPLES

### SUBSISTENCE

The narrator speaks, as the wolf wakes up and digs out of a snowbank. *"It is bitterly cold. Wind whips through the branches overhead. Dusk falls and the wolf wakes from its sleep."* Safe from the freezing wind in a burrow the player dug in the snow before sleeping, its stamina has been mostly protected overnight. The narrator continues, *"It scuffles out from under the snow and shakes the caked flakes from its fur. Yawning, and with a nearly empty belly, the wolf begins to search for food."*

The player turns on scent-view. They maneuver the wolf through the forest, looking for the colored scent trails that indicate various types of prey and food. They find a thin yellow one next to a thick blue one. It trails off towards a frozen stream where it disappears into a small burrow in the bank. The player gives up on this prey and walks down to the river, following the blue trail. If it wasn't winter, or if the wolf wasn't so hungry, perhaps they might consider digging into the bank and trying to catch the rabbit in its warren. As it is, that would waste too much strength. They need an easier target. In the meantime, the player stops at a hole broken in the ice where water rushes by, emitting the blue trail. The wolf drinks noisily from the stream.

The player picks up another yellow trail, this one even thinner. It continues for several hundred feet, and then disappears into a small hole in the deep snow. The player switches to hearing mode. They see a slight blue glow under the snow. The player makes the wolf lunge towards the blue glow. The glow evades the first lunge. The wolf jumps again and digs deep into the snow. It emerges triumphant, crunching something small and furry briefly in

its jaws, and then swallowing.  The wolf's stamina meter fills partway.  Good.  The player can now focus on tracking something larger without worrying that the wolf's stamina will get too low to chase it.  A message pops up, notifying the player that they have caught a pika.  Its entry has been added to their bestiary along with information about the pika's burrowing habits, how much stamina it is worth, and where they might find more in the future. The narrator tells us a bit about the pika as the player switches back to scent mode and trots off after a thicker, orange scent trail, perhaps a marmot or a raccoon.  *"The pika is native to cold climates, mostly in Asia, North America and parts of eastern Europe. Diurnal in its habits, it appears in early morning and disappears into its grass-lined nest, hidden in rock crevices, shortly after sunset.  It is most commonly found in slag heaps formed by rockslides at the bases of cliffs and mountains."*

## LARGE PREY

The wolf slinks cautiously through the woods.  Behind it are two other wolves, following closely.  The player can see the wolf's own scent trail, a dark green hue, billowing off of it.  The player has been careful to approach the herd of white-tailed deer up ahead from downwind.  The wolf goes prone.  It slinks through the tall grass, carefully avoiding being seen.  Because the wolf has gone prone within sight of the herd and with the herd in its field of view, the narrator's voice comes in, narrating the hunting habits of the wolf and giving clues as to the best way to attack by doing so, *"The wolf has spotted a herd of deer.  It must keep downwind of the herd to avoid them catching its scent.  It slinks through the tall grass, getting closer.  Once it lunges, the herd will take flight.  Before the herd gets too far away, the pack will need to break one of the stragglers off from the main group and cut off its escape by circling it."* Closer the wolves crawl, until suddenly, they leap out and rush the herd.

The deer take off immediately, running away from the wolves.  One is slower than the rest and it flags slightly.  The player takes their chance and runs in front of the deer, between it and the herd.  The deer rears back and turns behind it, but another wolf is there.  The player begins running in a circle around the deer.  The other wolves follow suit.  The narrator comes in again, *"With the deer cut off from the herd, the wolves must judge the right time to jump and take down their prey.  The alpha will go for the neck, while the others attack the legs."* The circle tightens around the rearing deer until, suddenly, the player jumps.  The wolf grabs the deer by its neck.  The other two wolves go for the legs.  The deer struggles, but it eventually goes down.  The wolves release their grips and start tearing into their hard-earned feast.

Once again, the narrator speaks as they eat, *"The wolves have expended a great deal of stamina killing the deer, but it has been worth it.  This deer will fill them with enough stamina today that they can consider fighting rival wolf packs for territory that has better game.  Better game, like bison, will require a larger pack to kill, and a larger pack will require bison to feed it.  But if they can reach that stage, they will be well on their way to defeating the grizzly."*

Having eaten their fill, the wolves leave the carcass.  The player grabs one of the legs and carries it away, burying it beneath a distinctive fur tree.  They will retrieve it tomorrow if game is scarce.  The player howls to rally their pack and sets off to confront the pack that owns the territory to the north.

## PACK ADVANCEMENT



The narrator cuts in, "The wolf sees another young wolf walking cautiously through the forest.  It doesn't seem to have any pack members in sight.  This is good, as the wolf knows that they cannot challenge an already established pack alone, but this juvenile might be possible to dominate."  The wolf catches sight of the player and advances slowly, ears to the side, teeth bared.  The player does likewise.  The two wolves circle each other warily, waiting for a chance to pounce.  The player decides to make the first move.  The wolf jumps on its foe and knocks it on its side.  The wolf tries to get up, but the player stands over it and growls menacingly.  The wolf acquiesces and licks the player-wolf's muzzle.  The player lets it up and continues on through the forest, with its new ally following.  Once again, the narrator speaks, "By dominating the juvenile, the wolf has created the first member of its own pack.  Perhaps the wolf will eventually find a mate or challenge the aging or wounded leader of another pack.  One way or another it will gain allies and become stronger."