



## The Ninemile Wolves

By Rick Bass

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One of Rick Bass's most widely respected works of natural history, *The Ninemile Wolves* follows the fate of a modern wolf pack, the first known group of wolves to attempt to settle in Montana outside protected national park territory. The wolf inspires hatred, affection, myth, fear, and pity; its return polarizes the whole of the West -- igniting the passions of cattle ranchers and environmentalists, wildlife biologists and hunters. One man's vigorous, emotional inquiry into the proper relationship between man and nature, *The Ninemile Wolves* eloquently advocates wolf reintroduction in the West. In a new preface, Bass discusses the enduring lessons of the Ninemile story.

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## The Ninemile Wolves By Rick Bass Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

In 1989, two wolves appeared in a valley in northwestern Montana--the first known pair to den outside Glacier National Park in 60 years. The rancher let them stay long enough for the pups to mature; a month later, after attacks on dogs and calves (probably by coyotes), the wolves were removed, kept in captivity for several weeks and released. One pup escaped, then was captured; the other two died of starvation. The following year, another pair came to Ninemile and produced six pups. Bass ( *Winter: Notes from Montana* ), a champion of reintroduction, follows the fortunes and misfortunes of the young wolves caught in a bureaucratic and political crossfire. He has interviewed ranchers, farmers and wildlife biologists, and accompanied federal agents as they tracked the wolves. For Bass, wolf recovery has become a moral as well as an environmental issue. Here he makes a persuasive case for wolves.

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#### From Library Journal

This essay by popular writer Bass ( *Winter: Notes from Montana* , LJ 2/15/91) examines the attempt to reintroduce an orphaned wolfpack to the Ninemile valley of northwest Montana. Conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the project was continually opposed by state authorities and special interest groups. Bass shows open contempt for the state's interference and stresses the importance of restoring balance to Western ecosystems. He also describes the history of wolf eradication programs in the United States and attempts to debunk many myths associated with the much-maligned creature. A good companion to Barry Lopez's *Of Wolves and Men* ( LJ 10/15/78), this is recommended for natural history and environmental collections.

- Tim Markus, Evergreen State Coll. Lib., Olympia, Wash.

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#### From Kirkus Reviews

Bass continues his essays about Montana (Winter, 1991, etc.) with this masterful life history of a contemporary wolf pack. In the 19th-century West, Bass notes, wolves were relentlessly trapped, poisoned, and shot; between 1870 and 1877 alone, 700,000 wolves were killed just in Montana. When, in 1989 and for the first time in 60 years, a wolf pack (soon dubbed the "Ninemile" pack) appeared in Montana, outside of Glacier National Park, locals divided into two groups: those "for" wolves, and those "against"--the latter motivated purely by money, Bass says. The fledgling pack consisted of a male, a female, and cubs. When a farmer's calf was attacked, the female was anonymously shot, despite evidence that the calf had been attacked by coyotes. Several months later, the male--who had been bringing his youngsters food--was fatally struck by a motor vehicle, and the US Fishery and Wildlife Service had to step in to feed the cubs. At this point in the narrative, Bass's observation that wolves' lives are inseparable from human politics becomes depressingly apparent. The Montana Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Preservation asked the USFWS to remove the pups because they might affect Montana's biggest cash crop: deer hunters. The USFWS declined, and soon the orphan pack had taught itself to hunt. But freedom was short-lived. When two heifers were found killed, the USFWS tranquilizer-darted the pack and relocated the wolves. At their new home, two were shot by ranchers (despite a \$100,000/one-year penalty if caught), and the last female was placed in permanent captivity. Throughout this sad, short history, Bass vividly renders the viewpoint of these green-eyed, magnificent predators, able to bound 16 feet when pursuing moose or deer. "Wolves are the most social mammal...except (maybe) for humans," Bass says. An essay as rare and beautiful as a wolf-sighting in the Montana woods. (Photographs and drawings--some seen.) -- Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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