



*In the book 'Wolf Brother' by Michelle Paver, the young boy Torak befriends a most unusual companion, a wolf cub. The passage below gives information about wolves.*

The wolf (Latin name *Canis Lupus*) is a large, powerful carnivorous mammal.

Grey wolves live in small packs consisting of a senior adult pair and their offspring, though sometimes the pair will 'adopt' other immature wolves. Each pack establishes a clear territory in which the pack members hunt for prey, constantly travelling but remaining within their chosen area. They avoid crossing out of their territory as they would be attacked by the wolf packs that occupy the neighbouring areas.

Wolves communicate with each other by howling. It is thought that they may howl for several purposes: to call the members of the pack together; to sound an alarm to other members of the pack if there is danger near their den; or to find each other.

Wolves feed mainly on large animals such as deer, moose, caribou, elk, wild boar and mountain sheep but they will also eat smaller animals and birds. As an extra component of their diet they may eat berries and fruit when these are in season.

On rare occasions wolves will attack people, though they are very cautious of humans and will avoid them whenever possible. Fear of wolves by humans has given rise to folk tales such as Little Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Pigs.

At one time wolves were common in some parts of Europe, Asia, Africa and North America but now there are much smaller numbers of wolves in these areas. Two hundred years ago wolves were widespread across mainland Europe but they were hunted by humans and exterminated from most countries. Small numbers of wolves still live in Spain, Italy and Finland but there are larger numbers in eastern Europe in countries such as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania. Wolves have not lived in the wild in this country since around the year 1500.

It seems incredible that the grey wolf is the main ancestor of the domestic dog. Even tiny dogs such as Yorkshire Terriers and Dachshunds are descended from the wild wolves that roamed the forests and moors thousands of years ago.