

GRAY WOLF

Wolves were on the brink of extinction in the contiguous United States in the 1960s, exterminated from the whole country except a small portion of Minnesota and Isle Royale National Park in Michigan. Since then, wolves have made an impressive comeback. Populations, as of 2014, are estimated at over 5000 individuals, occurring throughout the Great Lakes region, Rockies, and into the Cascades. A small population of Mexican gray wolves is also found in the Southwest.

In 2013, wolves were deemed recovered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the eastern part of Oregon and Washington, the Rocky Mountain region, and the Great Lakes region, and were removed from the federal endangered species list in those areas. However, protection in Oregon continued under the state endangered species act until November 2015, when wolves were removed from the Oregon endangered species list as well. In this controversial decision, Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife determined that wolves had reached the target population of 4 breeding pairs for 3 consecutive years, and could be considered recovered in the state.

Breeding pairs are still only found in Oregon in the eastern part of the state and in the Rogue River area, where OR-7 settled down after his monumental journey to California in 2011. In the rest of the state, there have been only scattered sightings of lone individuals. In the Mt Hood National Forest, a radio-collared wolf traveled through on his way further south in the summer of 2015, and many more unconfirmed sightings have been reported throughout the years.

Wolves are a keystone species. Their return has caused cascading changes throughout the ecosystem, affecting things from the behavior of the elk to the stream-side vegetation. ODF&W says their management of wolves will not change with the delisting, and wolves in Oregon will still be afforded the protections granted in the wolf plan. It is important that they be held to this, so that wolves can continue to be a part of our landscape and eventually return to Mt Hood.

IDENTIFYING WOLF TRACKS

Tracks:

Feet are large! There are very few breeds of dog with feet as big.

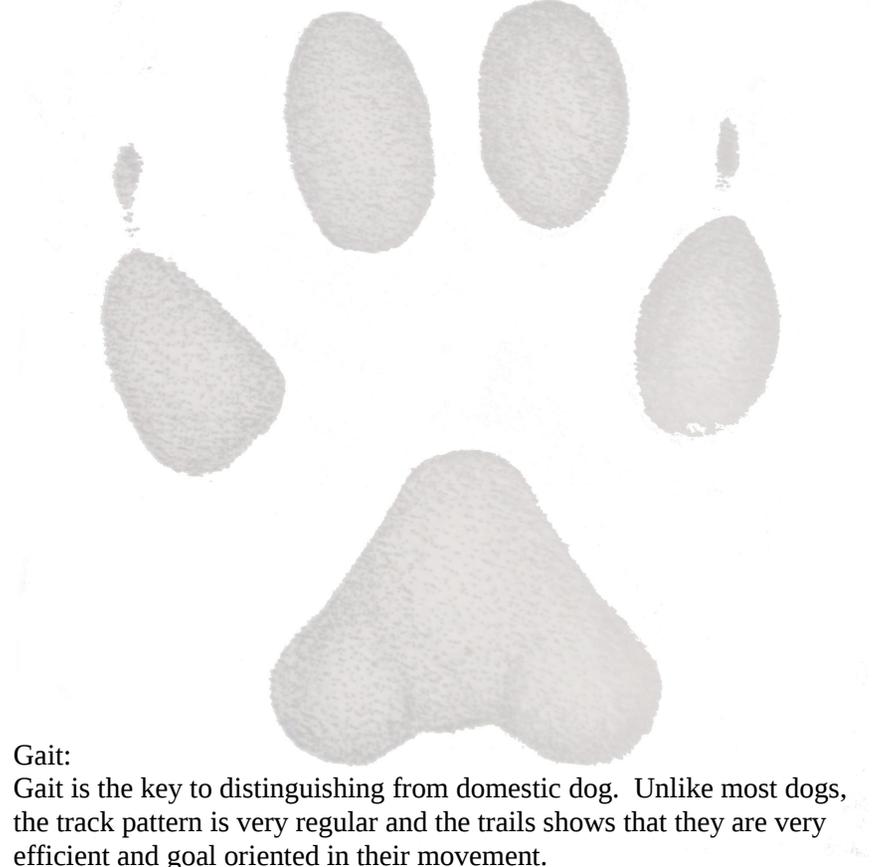
Front: $3\frac{1}{2}$ – $5\frac{1}{4}$ " long x $2\frac{7}{8}$ – $4\frac{7}{8}$ " wide

Rear: $3\frac{1}{8}$ – $4\frac{3}{4}$ " long x $2\frac{5}{8}$ – 4" wide

Drawing is a life size front foot (from Moskowitz 2010).

Differ from coyote in that:

- Front feet often appear more splayed
- Track is often proportionally wider, and negative space more H-shaped than X-shaped (negative space wider than long). Domestic dogs also have these traits.



Gait:

Gait is the key to distinguishing from domestic dog. Unlike most dogs, the track pattern is very regular and the trails shows that they are very efficient and goal oriented in their movement.

Use similar gaits to coyotes. Trot is the most common gait.

Walk: 30-48" Direct register trot: 44-70" Side trot: 46-84" (full stride)