

WOLVERINE

Gulo gulo (Endangered Colorado)

THE LARGEST MEMBER OF the weasel or mustelid family, wolverines may grow to 44 inches in total length and weigh as much as 40 pounds. Wolverines are distinctive in color—a rich brown over most of their bodies, and they usually have cream or yellowish stripes along the sides joining over the tail.

Next to their close relative, the black-footed ferret, wolverines are some of the rarest mammals in North America. In their southern range, one male and four or five females may maintain a territory over more than 500 square miles. Wolverines live in the northern boreal forests and tundra across North America, Europe and Asia. Historically they occurred as far south as California and Colorado.

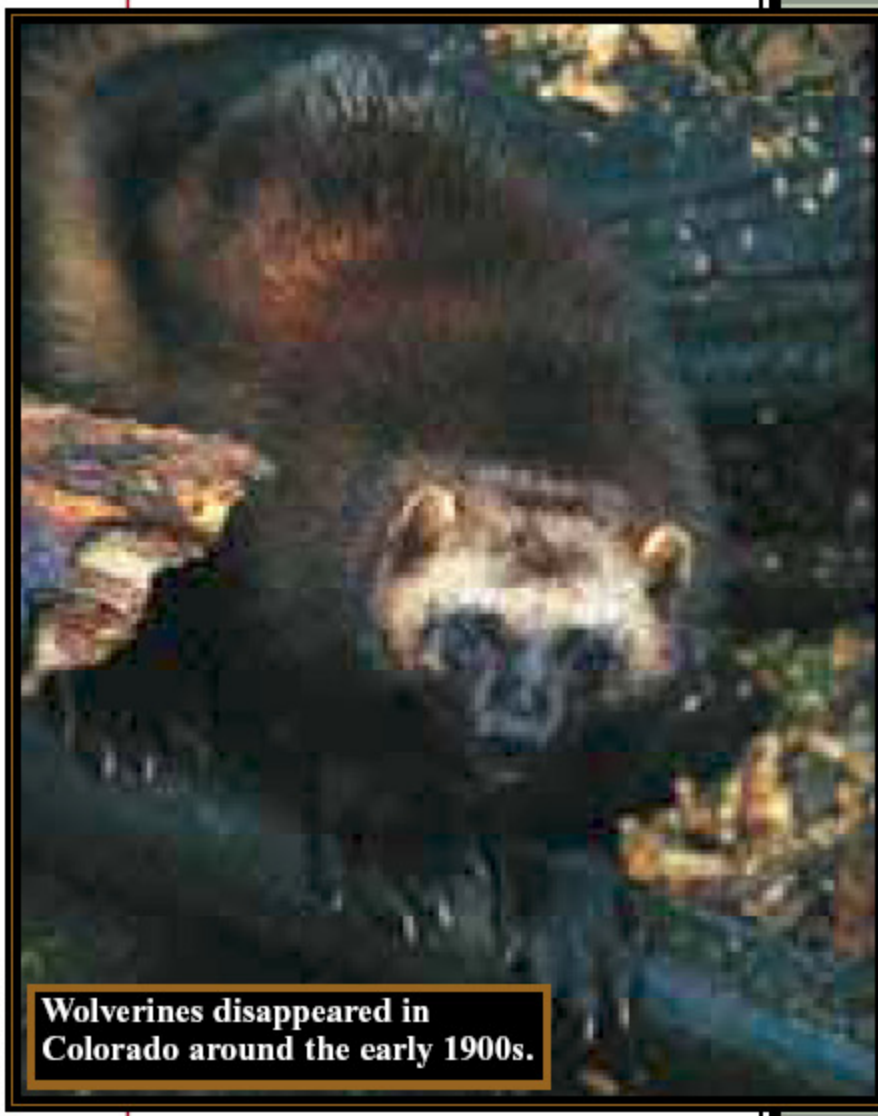
The wolverine's scientific name, *Gulo gulo*, can be translated as "the gluttonous glutton," an appropriate description of its eating habits. Wolverines will kill birds and mammals, but they are primarily scavengers and eat carrion and that may be partly responsible for their decline. Poison "bait stations," put out for predators, probably killed many wolverines in the past. Although the practice of poisoning on public lands is now seriously restricted by law, it is still occurring.

Although they can be formidable predators, much that has been written about their nasty disposition is overstated.

In 1994 and 1995, petitions were submitted to list the wolverine as a federally listed threatened or endangered

species in the lower 48 states but were determined to be "unwarranted" by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A new petition was filed in 2000 and the USFWS determined that it did not contain adequate information for further review.

While probably never common in this state, wolverines disappeared in Colorado around the early 1900s. The species was distributed in the higher elevation forests and tundra areas of Colorado. While all agree that the numbers have declined, there is evidence—though it's strictly circumstantial—that suggests wolverines could exist in Colorado. Habitat protection is the major effort made to maintain this species.



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