

## Highlights of 2006 Wolf Workshops

January 28, 2006 was an unusually warm Saturday at Sandhill Skills Center near Babcock, Wisconsin. We had a light rain and our bus ride to Wolf Country was not filled with excitement. We weren't sure we wanted to get wet and muddy if there was so little chance of finding good wolf sign. Everyone was pleasantly surprised shortly after departing the bus when we found beautiful big wolf tracks in the mud. The curious had split into two groups, the larger of the two was listening to our expert presenter, Dick Thiel, as we took sticks and picked through the wolf scat that was scattered near the tracks we had found. Excited voices were overheard from the other group so we made our way over to them thinking they had found more amazing wolf sign. What we found instead was a spotted blue salamander snaking through the grasses. Unbelievable! It was January in Wisconsin and this colorful little fellow was sunbathing as though he lived in the banana belt.

Continuing on, we found several raised leg urinations (RLU) in the little snow that remained and numerous other tracks and scat. It was awesome and so much better than we had hoped for in these unusual weather conditions.

Workshop number 2 was a beautiful snowy weekend at Treehaven Field Station near Tomahawk, Wisconsin. With fresh snow cover we only found a few wolf tracks but we were still able to have a good field experience. This particular workshop was attended by several experienced trackers which made the classroom discussions enriching as well as all the conversations over meals and in front of the huge stone fireplace each evening. The light snow continued most of the weekend. It was a picturesque and entertaining weekend.

In February, at Beaver Creek Reserve near Fall Creek, Wisconsin, we had snow a few days before the workshop. We found lots of wolf tracks along a narrow road and followed them into the field. Near the road there had been some blood spots near the tracks so we were trying to figure out the cause of the blood sign. We also saw deer tracks and snowshoe hare tracks. Temperatures were pretty good so we were able to stay in the field for an extended period of time. We never did determine where the blood had come from.

Back at Sandhill the middle of February we had a large snowfall a few days before and tracking was awesome. On snowshoes we followed the tracks of approximately 3 to 5 wolves for about a half mile. We broke into groups to follow the different paths of tracks. We found many RLU's and even managed to cross a waterway so we could see a massive urination marking. This wolf was definitely warning others to "Keep Out". It was the coldest weekend of the winter but it didn't feel that bad in the warm sun of the afternoon. We returned to the field that night for howling but it was a bust. No self respecting wolf would have gotten up from a warm family huddle to howl for a bunch of humans that night.

The last workshop of the season returned to Treehaven. We had much better wolf sign than the February workshop. The return trip to the field after dinner was planned for

howling. We drove down a road that we had not been on in the afternoon and found a deer carcass in the road that wolves and ravens had been scavenging on. There were lots of wolf tracks and raven wing markings in the snow. Everyone was very excited to find such a sighting.