

# FIRST DRAFT

## Eradicating wolves in Colorado was difficult, gruesome endeavor

By the spring of 1923, W.J. Nearing of the U.S. Biological Survey had spent the better part of two years attempting to track and kill a lone female wolf known only as the Phantom in the Book Cliffs north of Fruita.

He'd shot her and thought he'd killed her the previous year, but when he reached the spot where her body should have been, he found only a few splotches of blood. She'd lived up to her nickname.

"Somewhere back there in the country where mirages shimmered, where wind elves had fashioned goblins out of rock ... the Phantom wolf was hidden in the enchanted land of the Big Salt Wash," wrote Arthur Carhart in his 1929 book, "The Last Stand of the Pack."

The book was reissued recently as "The Last Stand of the Pack: Critical Edition," edited by Andrew Gulliford of Fort Lewis College and Tom Wolf, an author and conservationist.

In addition to Carhart's original text, there is a thoughtful discussion at the end of the book by people like Gulliford and Wolf, who support reintroducing wolves into Colorado, and by cattle and sheep ranchers who oppose the idea.

Full disclosure, Gulliford is a friend who served as a historical adviser when I wrote "Troubled Trails," about the Ute Indians and the events of 1879.

Carhart may be familiar to many readers. He was the young White River National Forest recreation planner who in 1919 was assigned to platte homesites along the shores of Trappers Lake, 50 miles east of Meeker in what's now the Flat Tops Wilderness Area.

Instead, Carhart told his superiors that Trappers Lake should remain pristine. He worked to get the lake and its immediate environs protected from development, and he helped launch the wilderness movement nationwide.

He left Colorado not long after, but returned in 1923 to work as a landscape architect and begin a career as a writer.

Carhart wrote "The Last Stand of the Pack" with Stanley P. Young, a leader of the Bureau of Biological Survey in Colorado. That federal organization eventually became the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has done much in recent decades to protect endangered species, including wolves in northern states.

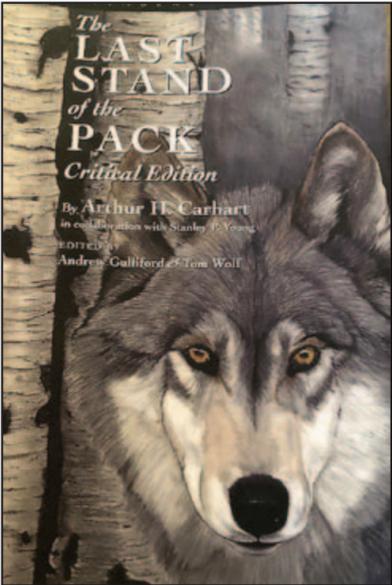
But when the Biological Survey was created in 1905 — and until well into the 1960s — its mission was to get rid of troublesome predator species such as coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, bears — and wolves.

"The Last Stand of the Pack" tells the stories of nine renegade wolves that were among the last of their species to survive in the wild in Colorado.



Courtesy of the Arthur Carhart Wilderness Training Center

Arthur Carhart as a young man, probably when he worked for the U.S. Forest Service at the Boundary Waters in northern Minnesota.



Their stories range from the Book Cliffs north of Fruita to southeastern Colorado. In addition to the Phantom, the book details efforts to eliminate wolves on the Uncompahgre Plateau, in Eagle County, Rio Blanco County and north of De Beque.

They weren't the absolute last of the pack, however. The last wild wolf killed in Colorado was believed to have been in 1945 in Conejos County.

Carhart treats the hunters and trappers of the Biological Survey as heroes, and in their day they certainly were

considered as such, especially among the cattlemen and sheep ranchers who sought help in ridding the range of the last lobos.

He is a good writer, painting evocative pictures of the landscape and the humans and animals that inhabit it.

Unfortunately, he also ascribes human traits to the wolves, such as vengeance and love. His descriptions of the techniques used to capture the wolves are often brutal, as were the methods. One doesn't need to be a supporter of wolf reintroduction to be disturbed by the account of Old

Lefty — so called because he had lost part of his left foot in a trap a decade earlier.

Lefty was finally caught in not one, but two leg-hold traps. Then he was wrestled to the ground and his jaws wired shut and his feet tied together, so he could be laid out on the ground to attract other members of his pack so they could also be killed.

Then there was the wolf pup, captured in its den, collared and staked to the ground just outside the den, with a minefield of steel traps hidden in an

arc around the yapping pup. The aim was to trap the mama wolf when she returned to see what was wrong.

But the mama wolf in this instance was the Phantom, and Nearing's best-laid plans (and traps) didn't work on her. She navigated her way through the traps, and then killed her own offspring, which had had contact with humans.

It wasn't until Dec. 12, 1923, that Nearing finally caught the Phantom in a trap in an arroyo leading west from Big Salt Wash, about 20 miles north of Fruita. He found her snarling, with one leg caught in the trap, then shot and killed her.

Despite his admiration for the hunters and trappers of the Biological Survey who sought to wipe out the wolves, Carhart also demonstrated an affinity for the animals themselves.

When he described the death of the Greenhorn Wolf in Huerfano County, the last of the nine wolves to die, Carhart wrote:

"The cruel, wilderness soul of the wolf left the stiffening body and galloped away into that farther land where there are no traps, no guns, no poison, no enemies."

Gulliford said he decided to reissue the Carhart book, along with the discussion about possible wolf reintroduction in Colorado because, "As a historian, I know the damage wolves caused, but I'm also fascinated by the contribution that wolves made to the landscape."

For instance, when wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park, they not only trimmed back overpopulated elk herds, but allowed other species to flourish, from beaver to small rodents to songbirds. The cutback in elk numbers allowed damaged riparian areas to recover, and thus offered more room for other native species, Gulliford said.

"As a hunter, I want all of the ecological parts," he added. Furthermore, Gulliford said, "The whole idea of being outside and hearing wolves" is attractive to many people. Some towns in Montana are already experiencing an uptick in wolf tourism.

But Gulliford has also spent a great deal of time with cattlemen and sheepmen.

"I am very sympathetic to their concerns," he said. "My goal with the book is to have a dialogue about the future of wolves."

In 1929, Carhart saw no future for wolves in this state.

"Man has won. The wilderness killers have lost," he wrote. Because civilization had come to the West, "there was no place left for the gray killers, the renegades of the range lands."

"The Last Stand of the Pack: Critical Edition" is available through Grand Valley Books and Out West Books on Main Street in Grand Junction, and Barnes & Noble Booksellers on Patterson Road.

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BOB SILBERNAGEL

## Utah's data on homeless riddled with problems

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALT LAKE CITY — The state auditor says data about the homeless population is riddled with inconsistencies and doesn't help evaluate the effectiveness of different programs because of a lack of clear, measurable goals.

The audit released last week

was designed to help state lawmakers decide which programs deserve funding, but it instead concluded better planning and goal setting are needed before any assessments can be made.

The report also found that a 2015 declaration by state officials that it had reduced the chronic homeless population by 91 percent was erroneous and

based on bad data.

During a hearing, Republican Senate President Wayne Niederhauser suggested funding could be cut or reduced.

The director of the Housing and Community Development Division at the Department of Workforce Services, said his agency is committed to improving. Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox

said he's not surprised by the results, saying he had prior concerns.

"We're really excited about this audit and what came back because it allows us to now go in and make the changes that need to be made and fix it so we can monitor this going forward," Cox said. "We have to have good data."

## BLOTTER

COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

Keenan Mease, 20, was arrested on an outstanding warrant in the area of D½ Road and Rob Ren Drive on Satur-

day.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

Matthew Simon, 31, received a sum-

mons for allegedly driving with a suspended license Thursday.

Tracy Wright, 31, received a summons for alleged theft after being contacted at 275 Mountain View St. on Friday.

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**ATTENTION ADVERTISERS**

The Daily Sentinel's advertising deadlines will be moving up to accommodate the **Christmas & New Year's holidays!**

This early deadline schedule is designed to help you plan your advertising around the holidays.

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Publication Date	Deadline
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12/26, Wednesday .....	12/20, Thursday 5pm
12/26, <i>Sentinel Weekly</i> .....	12/18, Tuesday 5pm
12/27, Thursday .....	12/21, Friday 2pm
12/28, <i>Out &amp; About</i> .....	12/21, Friday, 2pm
12/31, Monday (E-Edition only) .....	12/26, Wednesday 2pm
1/1, Tuesday (E-Edition only) .....	12/27, Thursday 2pm
1/2, Wednesday .....	12/27, Thursday 2pm
1/3, Thursday .....	12/28, Friday 2pm
1/4, <i>Out &amp; About</i> .....	12/28 Friday 2pm

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12/24, Monday (E-Edition only) .....	12/21, Friday 2pm
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1/2 Wednesday .....	12/24, Monday 4pm

**The Daily Sentinel offices will close at 3:00 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 24 and Dec. 31.**

**The Daily Sentinel offices will be CLOSED on Tuesday, Dec. 25 and Tuesday, Jan. 1.**

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