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### **The Controversy of Wolf Reintroduction**

To many people, the wolf reintroduction controversy is unknown. For those who do know, it is a major issue. Barton Melissa is a journalist who wants to help inform people who do not know, or are misinformed, about wolves being reintroduced to Yellowstone. He wrote the article, "Restoration or Destruction: The Controversy Over Wolf Reintroduction," to help inform people. Wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park in 1995. This helped the ecosystem in Yellowstone National Park. The other side of the wolf controversy is often the view of the farmers and ranchers. If wolves are reintroduced to the wild, then farmers and ranchers risk the chance of their livestock (their income) being killed. It is against the law for them to protect their property because it is against the law to kill a wolf. The author of the article (Barton) is trying to inform those people who do not know about the controversy of wolves being reinstated to Yellowstone, which to some is a very emotional topic. The way he does this is by using three main ways of writing trying to convince people who read his article. Those ways are Logos, Pathos, and Ethos. Barton took a very scientific side on how it helped Yellowstone National Park and did not look at how it will affect ranchers and people who depend on livestock to live. He didn't take into account the fact that wolves can travel up to twenty miles a day during the summer. It wouldn't take long for wolves to venture outside of the 3,472 square miles of Yellowstone. Yes, when those wolves stay in Yellowstone National Park they are a great help to the ecosystem. It is when they get out of those boundaries that we need to worry.

This article, "Restoration or Destruction: The Controversy over Wolf Reintroduction," was published by the website Journal of Young Investigators. Like I said earlier, Barton is targeting those who don't know much about the topic or those who have been "misinformed." He says this in the end of his article. The reason he chose this audience is because he feels he was one of those "misinformed." He starts out by saying he has always thought of wolves as cruel and vicious predators, but after doing this research his views have changed. He now thinks of them as a "beautiful and majestic animal." The other people Barton targets are the farmers who haven't been hurt by wolves taking over their land. He uses numbers like 11,800 livestock were killed by coyotes in 2003. Coyotes are not endangered species, so if one or two, even a group of them were to be causing problems with your livestock, it wouldn't be a problem for you as the farmer or rancher to take care of that problem.

The first way of writing Barton uses is Logos. "Wolves do play a vital roles in the ecosystem in Yellowstone National Park," (Barton Para. 17). With wolves in Yellowstone, the other big game animals, such as elk, bison, and moose, won't graze like cattle. This helps the whole ecosystem to grow faster than it is destroyed. Before the wolves were reintroduced, big game animals were eating trees to the ground, and fragile stream areas were being destroyed. Big game animals were able to do this because there were not any predators for them to fear. This is in Yellowstone where elk or big game can't be hunted. In the article, it doesn't mention that outside the protected areas, elk and big game don't graze like domestic livestock. Wolves affect not only big game populations, but also ranchers and their livestock. Wolves killed 500 sheep in Montana in 2003. That number is only counting confirmed wolf kills. It does not count other wolf kills mangled beyond recognition. There were 2,700 confirmed wolf kills in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming during that year. Since wolves have been reinstated to Yellowstone, they have killed 3,000 elk every year. The wolves are preying on a higher rate of livestock and big game than the scientists predicted. Since wolves are protected, it prohibits ranchers from killing wolves feeding on their livestock. Ranchers wouldn't even be able to protect their children if wolves

were feeding on them. Only a US Wildlife official can kill a wolf if it has become a problem. The article also says that ranchers are not currently reimbursed for livestock or income lost to wolves. Defenders of Wildlife, a nonprofit wildlife organization, only provides compensation for confirmed wolf kills. It is not fair for wolves to be reintroduced into the wild and still have them be on the endangered species list. Now, on the other hand, I can see how they would be worried about taking wolves off of the endangered species list. If they did then you would have those ranchers and farmers who would go out looking for wolves and would kill them in big numbers. Ranchers and livestock owners don't need to go hunting for wolves, but they should have the right to get rid of any animal that is going to make an impact on their income, whether it is wolves, coyotes, or any predator. The author also states that documented losses of livestock to wolves are less than one percent, considerably less than losses to disease, weather, and other dangers. Disease, weather, and other dangers are uncontrollable factors. There is nothing that a rancher can do to stop them from happening. Ranchers can make sure they have a warm place for their livestock, but they can't stop the storms from coming or the temperatures from dropping. With wolves added to the other losses, it becomes very difficult for ranchers to survive. Small ranches can easily lose tens of thousands of dollars to wolves if located near a wolf den.

Barton uses Ethos to help explain that his opinion of wolves is the same as those who have grown up in urban areas, far from people whose lives and livelihoods are affected by wolves. He uses this to explain that he sees wolves as amazing animals, not cruel, vicious predators. He describes a situation that he was asked to sit in on. Two wolves from Mission Wolf, a Colorado nonprofit wolf rescue facility, were brought into the room on leashes. They walked around the circle of people sniffing audience members or licking someone's teeth. This is a standard wolf greeting. The author of the article has no idea how it affects ranchers. All he sees is a majestic animal and the scientific view that reinstating wolves is a good move. That isn't how he thought of wolves to begin with now is it? He is basing his thoughts on wolves over one visit with tamed wolves, which is no different than a very big

dog. An owner of Rayny Mesa Ranch described an attack in which wolves grabbed a cow and “proceeded to eat on her until she bled to death...”(Barton Para. 8). That sounds pretty cruel and vicious.

The author uses vivid descriptions of the animal and includes Pathos and Ethos in this part of the article. “I could not imagine how people could look at these amazing animals and see nothing but cruel, vicious predators” (Barton Para. 3). To show the people that wolves weren’t as vicious as they thought, they brought two wolves into the middle of a room. They jumped onto tables to show their agility, did a couple of tricks, and finally lay down. The wolves were clearly tamed and on leashes. These wolves were comfortable around humans. “They were already starting to lose interest in humans, and when fully grown, they will probably ignore us”(Barton Para. 1). Bears, which have become more comfortable around humans, often go into people’s campsites and eat their food. This is where the majority of bear attacks happen. Although there has not been a confirmed wolf attack on a person, if wolves get too comfortable around humans in Yellowstone, they will attack eventually. Wolf watching generates 35 million dollars a year in the three states surrounding Yellowstone National Park. How do we know bringing wolves to Yellowstone wasn’t just a marketing scheme backed by scientists?

Now Barton makes some very valid, logical points based on scientific studies in Yellowstone National Park. That seems to be all the study and the article is based upon. Melissa hasn’t looked at the big picture or the long term affects this will have on ranchers or the unprotected wild areas outside of the park. This is a highly emotional topic among people in the northwestern part of the United States. It is especially emotional for ranchers and livestock owners who are affected by the wolves and wolf or animal activists. Placing wolves in Yellowstone is great for the environment and ecosystem of Yellowstone. Outside of Yellowstone, ranchers should have the right to shoot or kill a wolf that is feeding on their livestock. There have now been sanctioned wolf hunts set up in Idaho, Wyoming and

parts of Montana. In northern Montana the wolves are still an endangered species. That is something that all states with wolves should do to keep the population normal. If the population was normal, it should be controlled, just like big game, small game, and waterfowl. Livestock owners should have permission to kill a wolf threatening their livestock. With those conditions, it would not be a problem to reinstate wolves into Yellowstone National Park. Until that is done and something is done about the wolves threatening ranchers and their families, I disagree with letting wolves back into Yellowstone.

Works Cited

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