

Alert, Nunavut Personal letter from Lewis Cocks

Greetings Lois,



I worked for the Canadian Wildlife Service for a number of years...next door to Dr Ian Stirling, Polar Bear biologist extraordinaire. Without taking anything away from Ian or PBs, the arctic wolves and just to a slightly lesser extent the arctic hares and foxes and lemmings that subsist at Alert are even more incredible as models of energy conversion and efficiency and for sheer persistence. Notwithstanding the paucity of food,

natural or handed out, these animals survive ...feeding is forbidden and respected. The pers are reminded that artificially sustaining these creatures does more harm in the long term than subsistence living...so they subsist, albeit in much lower numbers than when food scraps were moderately abundant from "caring" staff. This is the fourth time over 15 years that I have witnessed the wolves. As you well know, they are such graceful gliders with long legs and they don't appear to fear humans or to have a menacing bone in their bodies. I would not want to stumble in their presence but I would not characterize them as cunning or aggressive either in spite of living in their chosen austere environment.

When a Herc crashed in Nov in the early 1990's about 20 km from Alert, it was reported that inquisitive wolves showed up at the crash site within days....they must have followed their noses over the bleak landscape from Alert. As I recall, there was a population of about 5 adults and fewer sub adults and they could have more easily stayed put in proximity of the Alert station...but they did not.



I left Alert on Oct 6 and the sun disappeared below the horizon for four months several days later. I only saw one wolf this trip, I understand that the population is stable at about 3 in the vicinity of Alert.

Cheers,

Lewis Cocks