

Arctic Wolves-Ellesmere Island Personal letter from Lewis Cocks

The wolf is one of about 10 wild animals presently residing in the vicinity of Alert on the northeastern tip of Ellesmere Island (82 29"58 N 062 19"47 W. We observed 6 Arctic Hare, 1 Arctic Fox and I understand there are up to 4 although I did not see any other wolves. The animal population fluctuates however we feel the current pop is subsisting off the land vice being artificially supported by the resident human pop at Alert.



Food wastes are now strictly controlled and the food services personnel are oft reminded not to feed the animals. Food wastes are compacted and incinerated. In previous trips there were many more foxes and wolves due to the availability of food wastes; this is no longer the case.

This particular animal sauntered up to the main housing complex just minutes before our departure on 6 October. Like other Arctic wolves, this pop has little or no learned fear for humans. They appear passive although in this incredibly austere biologically impoverished area I would not want to stumble in their presence.



Alert is too far north for polar bears. Single animals rarely move through. I have observed a seal in open water once. Open water is rare and the leads can close rather quickly. The arctic poppies flower in just a few days and there are very few lemmings. Muskoxen have been seen within miles of the station. As well, I have seen Perry Caribou moving up, turning around and then heading back south.

Alert is now in darkness till March. The sun was barely above the horizon while I was there 30 Sept to 6 Oct. The temp was mostly -14 C; snowfall amounts are modest up there, what does fall, shifts around a lot. There are only about 17 frost free days a year, in mid August.

Regards,

Lewis Cocks