

gray wolf *Canis lupus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Canidae

ILLINOIS STATUS endangered, native

FEATURES

The gray wolf has a head-body length of 43-48 inches. The tail is 12-19 inches long. An adult weighs 70-120 pounds. The tail is bushy, and the legs are thin. The muzzle is long, and the ears stand up straight. There are four toes on the hind feet. The front feet have five toes, one of which does not touch the ground. The claws on the feet do not retract. This animal walks and runs on its toes. The wolf has good senses of sight, smell and hearing. The fur is usually gray.

BEHAVIORS

There are populations of gray wolves in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and occasionally an individual from those states will travel into Illinois. This species was once common in Illinois, but with the arrival of settlers of European descent, it was extirpated in the 1800s. The gray wolf is also known as the timber wolf. It carries its tail high or even with its back when running. This species is usually active at night. It hunts in packs in the nonbreeding season. Both parents feed the pups. Gray wolves eat a variety of prey species including birds and mammals. This species is listed as endangered in Illinois because of its previous federally endangered status in the upper Midwest. Illinois was a part of that range for the federal endangered species listing of the gray wolf, so the status in Illinois must include the federal designation. The gray wolf was delisted from the federal endangered species list in 2020. Illinois updates its endangered and threatened species list every five years. The 2020 Illinois endangered/threatened species list was finalized before the delisting of the gray wolf occurred by the federal government. So the gray wolf will remain on the Illinois endangered species list until at least 2025, when its status in the state will be evaluated again.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forest; upland deciduous forest

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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