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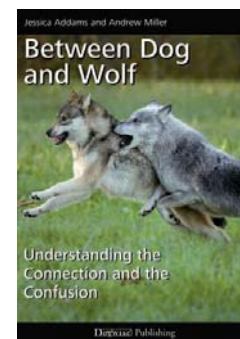
## ***Between Dog and Wolf – Understanding the Connection and the Confusion***

Chapter 1—Modern Wolf Mythology

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Everyone knows what a dog is.

Dogs are featured in our favorite television shows and movies. Our neighbors have dogs. Our friends have dogs. Our families have dogs. Dogs appear on postcards, in glossy magazines, and in books. They walk down the street each day, accompanied by their adoring owners. Our police and armed forces use dogs. Rescue workers and therapists of all kinds use dogs. A whole industry has grown up around our love of dogs, providing “designer” pet food, supplies, toys, and even clothing. There are dog walkers, dog day cares, dog spas, and professional groomers. Dogs occupy every corner of our lives. Everyone has seen one. Everyone knows what a dog is like.

Everyone knows what a wolf is. . .or do we?

Most of us think we have a pretty good idea of what a wolf is. We have seen wolves, usually in bit parts, in the movies. We have seen cartoons, photographs, and documentaries. We read about them in books and sometimes we see them in zoos.

Before we, the authors, began working with wolves, we thought we knew what wolves were, what they looked like, and basically how they lived. We have college degrees, after all, were generally interested in animals and watched documentaries on television. We had seen wolves, briefly, in zoos. Wolves looked like big dogs. They were gray, or “agouti.” The ones that lived in “the Arctic” (wherever that was) were pure white. They all had yellow eyes. It was very simple.

### **The wolf through a kaleidoscope**

Pick any street in your town. Take a walk down it and randomly knock on twenty doors as you go by. Ask each individual what they think about wolves or wolf hybrids. You will likely hear twenty completely different answers.

Everyone brings their own opinions to the table, based on their own unique experiences, when thinking or speaking about wolves. In your hypothetical walk down the street you may meet people who will tell you:

- Wolves make great guard dogs.
- Wolves kill hundreds of sheep in a night.
- Wolves love children.

- Wolves eat children.
- Wolves weigh five hundred pounds.
- Wolves make great pets.
- Wolves are unpredictable and may kill you.

You may meet people who had wolves as pets while they were children and loved the animals dearly. You may meet people who were attacked by someone’s pet wolf when they were children and now fear them. You may meet people whose neighbors had a wolf who ate neighborhood cats and chickens and had to be shot. You may meet people whose neighbors had a wolf who rescued a child. You may meet people who currently own wolves and use them as educational “ambassador” animals, taking them out to meet people to make them less fearful of wolves. And, unfortunately, you may meet people who own wolves and keep them on chains in the backyard as ferocious guard animals, defending their territory from passers by.

Likely all these different and contradictory anecdotes have some truth to them. Attacks by wolves on children have been documented just as thoroughly as the wild wolf’s natural tendency to avoid people entirely when given the chance. Wolves have been seen to hunt and kill domestic stock, but an analysis of stomach contents indicate that livestock is not their primary food source (Petersen and Ciucci, 2003). As we will see in future chapters, wolves exhibit enough variation in behavior that it’s likely that every anecdote can find some supporting evidence somewhere. The thing to remember is that while a person may accurately describe something that actually happened once, there is a good chance that what they are describing is not necessarily the normal state of things. Just because there is one person, somewhere, who had X happen to them, there is a good chance that someone else will instead have Y (or Z or Q) happen to them in the same situation.

**Jessica Addams and Andrew Miller** have nearly twenty years of collective work at Wolf Park, a non-profit education and research facility in Battle Ground, Indiana. Both started as visitors, moved up to long-term internships, and eventually became full-time staff. Besides working with wolves, they have always been involved with animals and the study of animal behavior. Their degrees are in biology and wildlife science. Jessica and Andrew own and train their own dogs and other pets, and read voraciously.