

Never Cry Wolf

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Hordes of bloodthirsty wolves are slaughtering the arctic caribou, and the government's Wildlife Service assigns naturalist Farley Mowat to investigate. Mowat is dropped alone onto the frozen tundra, where he begins his mission to live among the howling wolf packs and study their ways. Contact with his quarry comes quickly, and Mowat discovers not a den of marauding killers but a courageous family of skillful providers and devoted protectors of their young. As Mowat comes closer to the wolf world, he comes to fear with them on onslaught of bounty hunters and government exterminators out to erase the noble wolf community from the Arctic. *Never Cry Wolf* is one of the brilliant narratives on the myth and magical world of wild wolves and man's true place among the creatures of nature. "We have doomed the wolf not for what it is, but for what we deliberately and mistakenly perceive it to be -- the mythological epitome of a savage, ruthless killer -- which is, in reality, no more than the reflected image of ourself." -- from the new preface to *Never Cry Wolf*.

Farley Mowat was born in Belleville, Ontario, in 1921, and grew up in Belleville, Trenton, Windsor, Saskatoon, Toronto, and Richmond Hill. He served in World War II from 1940 until 1945, entering the army as a private and emerging with the rank of captain. He began writing for his living in 1949 after spending two years in the Arctic. Since 1949 he has lived in or visited almost every part of Canada and many other lands, including the distant regions of Siberia. He remains an inveterate traveller with a passion for remote places and peoples. He has twenty-five books to his name, which have been published in translations in over twenty languages in more than sixty countries. They include such internationally known works as *People of the Deer*, *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be*, *Never Cry Wolf*, *Westviking*, *The Boat That Wouldn't Float*, *Sibir*, *A Whale for the Killing*, *The Snow Walker*, *And No Birds Sang*, and *Virunga: The Passion of Dian Fossey*. His short stories and articles have appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Maclean's*, *Atlantic Monthly* and other magazines.

Chapter 1 The Lupine Project

It is a long way in time and space from the bathroom of my Grandmother Mowat's house in Oakville, Ontario, to the bottom of a wolf den in the Barren Lands of central Keewatin, and I have no intention of retracing the entire road which lies between. Nevertheless, there must be a beginning to any tale; and the story of my sojourn amongst the wolves begins properly in Granny's bathroom.

When I was five years old I had still not given any indication - as most gifted children do well before that age - of where my future lay. Perhaps because they were disappointed by my failure to declare myself, my parents took me to Oakville and abandoned me to the care of my grandparents while they went off on a holiday.

The Oakville house - "Greenhedges" it was called - was a singularly genteel establishment, and I did not feel at home there. My cousin, who was resident in Greenhedges and was some years older than myself, had already found his m² tier, which lay in the military field, and had amassed a formidable army of lead soldiers with which he was single-mindedly preparing himself to become a second Wellington. My loutish inability to play Napoleon exasperated him so much that he refused to have anything to do with me except under the most formal circumstances.

Grandmother, an aristocratic lady of Welsh descent who had never forgiven her husband for having been a retail hardware merchant, tolerated me but terrified me too. She terrified most people, including Grandfather, who had long since sought surcease in assumed deafness. He used to while away the days as calm and unruffled as Buddha, ensconced in a great leather chair and apparently oblivious to the storms which swirled through the corridors of Greenhedges. And yet I know for a fact that he could hear the word "whiskey" if it was whispered in a room three stories removed from where he sat.

Because there were no soulmates for me at Greenhedges, I took to roaming about by myself, resolutely eschewing the expenditure of energy on anything even remotely useful; and thereby, if anyone had had the sense to see it, giving a perfectly clear indication of the pattern of my future.

One hot summer day I was meandering aimlessly beside a little local creek when I came upon a stagnant pool. In the bottom, and only just covered with green scum, three catfish lay gasping out their lives. They interested me. I dragged them up on the bank with a stick and waited expectantly for them to die; but this they refused to do. Just when I was convinced that they were quite dead, they would open their broad ugly jaws and give another gasp. I was so impressed by their stubborn refusal to accept their fate that I found a tin can, put them in it along with some scum, and took them home.

I had begun to like them, in an abstract sort of way, and wished to know them better. But the problem of where to keep them while our acquaintanceship ripened was a major one. There were no washtubs in Greenhedges. There was a bathtub, but the stopper did not fit and consequently it would not hold water for more than a few minutes. By bedtime I had still not resolved the problem and, since I felt that even these doughty fish could hardly survive an entire night in the tin can, I was driven to the admittedly desperate expedient of finding temporary lodgings for them in the bowl of Granny's old-fashioned toilet.

I was too young at the time to appreciate the special problems which old age brings in its train. It was one of these problems which was directly responsible for the dramatic and unexpected encounter which took place between my grandmother and the catfish during the small hours of the ensuing night.

It was a traumatic experience for Granny, and for me, and probably for the catfish too. Throughout the rest of her life Granny refused to eat fish of any kind, and always carried a high-powered flashlight with her during her nocturnal peregrinations. I cannot be as certain about the effect on the catfish, for my unfeeling cousin - once the hooveraw had died down a little - callously flushed the toilet. As for myself, the effect was to engender in me a lasting affinity for the lesser beasts of the animal kingdom. In a word, the affair of the catfish marked the beginning of my career, first as a naturalist, and later as a biologist. I had started on my way to the wolf den.

My infatuation with the study of animate nature grew rapidly into a full-fledged love affair. I found that even the human beings with whom the study brought me into contact could be

fascinating too. My first mentor was a middle-aged Scotsman who gained his livelihood delivering ice, but who was in fact an ardent amateur mammalogist. At a tender age he had developed mange, or leprosy, or some other such infantile disease, and had lost all his hair, never to recover it - a tragedy which may have had a bearing on the fact that, when I knew him, he had already devoted fifteen years of his life to a study of the relationship between summer molt and incipient narcissism in pocket gophers. This man had become so intimate with gophers that he could charm them with sibilant whistles until they would emerge from their underground retreats and passively allow him to examine the hair on their backs.

Nor were the professional biologists with whom I later came into contact one whit less interesting. When I was eighteen I spent a summer doing field work in the company of another mammalogist, seventy years of age, who was replete with degrees and whose towering stature in the world of science had been earned largely by an exhaustive study of uterine scars in shrews. This man, a revered professor at a large American university, knew more about the uteri of shrews than any other man has ever known. Furthermore he could talk about his subject with real enthusiasm. Death will find me long before I tire of contemplating an evening spent in his company during which he enthralled a mixed audience consisting of a fur trader, a Cree Indian matron, and an Anglican missionary, with an hour-long monologue on sexual aberrations in female pygmy shrews. (The trader misconstrued the tenor of the discourse; but the missionary, inured by years of humorless dissertations, soon put him right.)

My early years as a naturalist were free and fascinating, but as I entered manhood and found that my avocation must now become my vocation, the walls began to close in. The happy days of the universal scholar who was able to take a keen interest in all phases of natural history were at an end, and I was forced to recognize the unpalatable necessity of specializing, if I was to succeed as a professional biologist. Nevertheless, as I began my academic training at the university, I found it difficult to choose the narrow path.

For a time I debated whether or not to follow the lead of a friend of mine who was specializing in scatology - the study of the excretory droppings of animals - and who later became a high-ranking scatologist with the United States Biological Survey. But although I found the subject mildly interesting, it failed to rouse my enthusiasm to the pitch where I could wish to make it my lifework. Besides, the field was overcrowded.

My personal predilections lay towards studies of living animals in their own habitat. Being a literal fellow, I took the word biology - which means the study of life - at its face value. I was sorely puzzled by the paradox that many of my contemporaries tended to shy as far away from living things as they could get, and chose to restrict themselves instead to the aseptic atmosphere of laboratories where they used dead - often very dead - animal material as their subject matter. In fact, during my time at the university it was becoming unfashionable to have anything to do with animals, even dead ones. The new biologists were concentrating on statistical and analytical research, whereby the raw material of life became no more than fodder for the nourishment of calculating machines.

My inability to adjust to the new trends had an adverse effect upon my professional expectations. While my fellow students were already establishing themselves in various

esoteric specialties, most of which they invented for themselves on the theory that if you are the only specialist in a given field you need fear no competition. I was still unable to deflect my interests from the general to the particular. As graduation approached I found that the majority of my contemporaries were assured of excellent research jobs while I seemed to have nothing particular to offer in the biological marketplace. It was, therefore, inevitable that I should end up working for the Government.

The die was cast one winter's day when I received a summons from the Dominion Wildlife Service informing me that I had been hired at the munificent salary of one hundred and twenty dollars a month, and that I "would" report to Ottawa at once.

I obeyed this peremptory order with hardly more than a twitch of subdued rebelliousness, for if I had learned anything during my years at the university it was that the scientific hierarchy requires a high standard of obedience, if not subservience, from its acolytes.

Two days later I arrived in the windswept, gray-souled capital of Canada and found my way into the dingy labyrinth which housed the Wildlife Service. Here I presented myself to the Chief Mammalogist, whom I had known as a school chum in more carefree days. But alas, he had now metamorphosed into a full-blown scientist, and was so shrouded in professional dignity that it was all I could do to refrain from making him a profound obeisance.

Through the next several days I was subjected to something called "orientation" - a process which, so far as I could see, was designed to reduce me to a malleable state of hopeless depression. At any rate, the legions of Dantesque bureaucrats whom I visited in their gloomy, Formalin-smelling dens, where they spent interminable hours compiling dreary data or originating meaningless memos, did nothing to rouse in me much devotion to my new employment. The only thing I actually learned during this period was that, by comparison with the bureaucratic hierarchy in Ottawa, the scientific hierarchy was a brotherhood of anarchy.

This was driven home one memorable day when, having at last been certified as fit for inspection, I was paraded into the office of the Deputy Minister, where I so far forgot myself as to address him as "Mister." My escort of the moment, all white-faced and trembling, immediately rushed me out of the Presence and took me by devious ways to the men's washroom. Having first knelt down and peered under the doors of all the cubicles to make absolutely certain we were alone and could not be overheard, he explained in an agonized whisper that I must never, on pain of banishment, address the Deputy as anything but "Chief," or, barring that, by his Boer War title of "Colonel."

Military titles were de rigeur. All memos were signed Captain-this or Lieutenant-that if they originated from the lower echelons; or Colonel-this and Brigadier-that if they came down from on high. Those members of the staff who had not had the opportunity to acquire even quasi-military status were reduced to the expedient of inventing suitable ranks - field ranks if they were senior men, and subaltern ranks for the juniors. Not everyone took this matter with due solemnity, and I met one new employee in the fishery section who

distinguished himself briefly by sending a memo up to the Chief signed "J. Smith, Acting Lance-Corporal." A week later this foolhardy youth was on his way to the northernmost tip of Ellesmere Island, there to spend his exile living in an igloo while studying the life history of the nine-spined stickleback.

Levity was not looked upon with favor anywhere in those austere offices, as I discovered for myself while attending a conference concerning my first assignment.

A tentative list of the material requirements for this assignment lay on the conference table, surrounded by many grave countenances. It was a formidable document, made out in quintuplicate - as was the official rule - and imposingly headed:

DESIDERATA FOR THE LUPINE PROJECT

Having already been unnerved by the gravity of the gathering, I lost my head completely when the assembly began to consider the twelfth item listed in this horrendous document:

Paper, toilet, Government standard: 12 rolls.

An austere suggestion by the representative of the Finance Department that, in the interest of economy, the quantity of this item might be reduced, providing the field party (which was me) exercised all due restraint, sent me into an hysterical spasm of giggling. I mastered myself almost instantly, but it was too late. The two most senior men, both "majors," rose to their feet, bowed coldly, and left the room without a word.

The Ottawa ordeal drew toward its end; but the climax was still to come. One early spring morning I was called to the office of the senior officer who was my direct chief, for a final interview before departing "into the field."

My chief sat behind a massive desk whose dusty surface was littered with yellowing groundhog skulls (he had been studying rates of tooth decay in groundhogs ever since he joined the Department in 1897). At his back hung the frowning, bearded portrait of an extinct mammalogist who glared balefully down upon me. The smell of Formalin swirled about like the fetid breath of an undertaker's back parlor.

After a long silence, during which he toyed portentously with some of his skulls, my chief began his briefing. There was a solemnity about the occasion which would have done justice to the briefing of a special agent about to be entrusted with the assassination of a Head of State.

"As you are aware, Lieutenant Mowat," my chief began, "the *Canis lupus* problem has become one of national importance. Within this past year alone this Department has received no less than thirty-seven memoranda from Members of the House of Commons, all expressing the deep concern of their constituents that we ought to do something about the wolf. Most of the complaints have come from such civic-minded and disinterested groups as various Fish and Game clubs, while members of the business community - in particular the manufacturers of some well-known brands of ammunition - have lent their weight to the support of these legitimate grievances of the voting public of this Great

Dominion, because their grievance is the complaint that the wolves are killing all the deer, and more and more of our fellow citizens are coming back from more and more hunts with less and less deer.

"As you may possibly have heard, my predecessor supplied the Minister with an explanation of this situation in which it was his contention that there were fewer deer because the hunters had increased to the point where they outnumbered the deer about five to one. The Minister, in all good faith, read this fallacious statement in the House of Commons, and he was promptly shouted down by Members howling "Liar!" and "Wolf-lover!"

"Three days later my predecessor retired to civilian life, and the Minister issued a press statement: "The Department of Mines and Resources is determined to do everything in its power to curb the carnage being wreaked upon the deer population by hordes of wolves. A full-scale investigation of this vital problem, employing the full resources of the Department, is to be launched at once. The people of this country can rest assured that the Government of which I have the honor to be a member will leave no stone unturned to put an end to this intolerable situation."

At this ju...

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