

- [Print This](#)
- [Email This](#)

Wolves reported near Kamiah bus stop

- **January 15th, 2010**
- (0) comments

By Eric Barker of the Tribune

Hunting outfitter says three animals appeared shortly after school bus stopped and picked up his children

A man who lives near Kamiah reported seeing three wolves near his children's bus stop recently.

Mike Popp, a hunting outfitter who lives on Glenwood Road east of Kamiah, said he is worried the wolves are becoming too habituated to people and running out of a natural prey base. Seeing a wolf is not unusual for him or his family. Popp guides hunters and frequently runs across the animals. He has also had them on or near his property on a regular basis and has long worried about the effects on elk and moose. But seeing them near the bus stop was different.

"We see wolves. Wolves kill our dogs, they chase our horses," Popp said. "It's just a given in the last five years but I think gosh darn it when they walk up to the bus stop like that ... the kids is what worries me."

Popp took his children to their bus stop Monday morning and sat in his jeep while his 6- and 8-year-olds had a snowball fight. The bus pulled up, stopped and flashed its lights. The kids got on and the bus driver pulled into a driveway to turn around. When the driver backed up, the bus emitted warning beeps. After it pulled away, three wolves came out of the woods and walked down the road toward Popp.

He started his jeep and drove toward the animals. They left the road and Popp followed their tracks to see where they had come from. He said it was clear they were sitting in the woods about 30 feet away from the road prior to the arrival of the bus.

"While we were there at the bus stop and those kids were snowball-fighting I know they could hear, and they just sat there," he said. "They are really becoming habituated to all the sights and sounds that are out there."

He said the sound of the kids yelling, the bus pulling up and backing up might be something they are keying on, and he fears their familiarity with people could lead to tragedy.

"That is what hit home," he said. "On Glenwood Road there are over 20 kids getting on the bus every morning."

He reported the incident to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and to local school officials.

Wolves were removed from federal protection this year and Idaho has an ongoing hunting season on them. But the Dworshak Wolf Hunting Zone where Popp lives closed after its quota of 18 wolves was met. Even so, Dave Cadwallader, director of the Clearwater Region of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game at Lewiston, said people can shoot wolves to defend the lives of people or their animals.

"I think it's no different than a mountain lion or a bear, if you feel threatened and in imminent danger then you are able to protect yourself," he said. "There just has to be some reasonable judgement and common

sense. I think that is how it has to be approached. You can't just see an animal and feel threatened. That animal has to be exhibiting some kind of overt behavior that is causing you alarm."

He said the wolves showing up in concert with the arrival of a school bus and the presence of children passes that test.

"If it develops into a timing issue, that the bus is showing up at a certain time and it has piqued their interest, it's probably time to seriously consider removing the wolves," Cadwallader said.

Popp thinks more has to be done to control wolves, not only to keep them from becoming habituated to people, but also to protect deer, elk and moose. He is in favor of adopting a zoned system such as the one Wyoming proposed but was rejected by the federal government. In Wyoming, officials wanted to protect wolves in national parks and designated wilderness areas but leave them open to hunting year-round in the rest of the state.