

Notes for Ben Gadd's presentation on session "Writing for Different Media" at the 1999 Waterton - Glacier International Writer's Workshop

Suppose that you're writing about wolverines. Here are openings you might produce for stories in different publications:

1. Natural-history guide

Wolverine, *Gulo gulo* (weasel family)

Seen year-round in the Canadian Rockies, occasional at subalpine and alpine elevations in nearly any habitat. Length 100 cm (tail 23 cm), weight 15 kg. Females about 10 percent smaller.

2. Children's story

Wendy the Wolverine lived with her mother Wanda and her brother Willy under a big, cozy boulder beside the Wapta Icefield.

One day, Wendy woke up feeling very hungry.

"Mommy," she said, "I'm really, really hungry!"

Willy said, "Me, too! Me, too!"

So Wanda said, "Okay, kids. Let's go kill something!"

3. Nature film

Narrator: "It is spring in wolverine country." (Shot: Water dripping from melting snowbank. Close in to shot of wolverine crawling out from under a rock.)

"In the glacial moraines surrounding the Wapta Icefield, high in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, a wolverine leaves its den." (Wolverine blinks in the sun and sniffs the air.) "Soon it will satiate its hunger."

4. Hollywood film

Handheld camera, position low to the ground, moves forward through the woods. Sound of heavy breathing, grunting, gnashing of teeth. Camera moves faster, brushing past branches. Tighten shot and close in on what lies ahead: a campsite and tent. BOB and MARY look toward the camera as it approaches.

BOB: "What's that!? Oh, my God ..."

MARY: places hand over mouth and screams.

Cut to black.

5. National Geographic

Grinning from ear to ear, wildlife biologist Janice Hayden-Jones watches an adult female wolverine waddle away across a mountain meadow. She has just released the animal.

"Well," she says, looking wistful, "that's the last one. Every wolverine in British Columbia has been tagged and radio-collared."¹

¹Research supported by your Society.

6. True Hunting Action magazine

I held steady on the wolverine as it broke cover and stepped warily into the clearing. This was the moment of a lifetime.

It turned its head toward me and sniffed. I realized that it had caught my scent. Time for the shot.

I got the round off just in time, a frontal penetration slightly left of the breastbone. Perfect. The wolverine dropped painlessly. My 180-grain handload had paid off again.

7. News item

A family of four were killed by wolverines on September 19th. The attack occurred at Big Bay Campground in Fish Lake Provincial Park, near Kamloops.

Dead are Bob and Mary Pleebie, of East Deerdropping, Saskatchewan, and their children Duane, 4, and Darlene, 5.

Park superintendent Lester Griswold stated that such an attack was quite unusual.

“We deeply regret this incident,” he said. “However, we are happy to report that all the animals involved had been radio-collared a few days previously.”

Park rangers are now tracking the wolverines to their lair.

8. Interpretive sign

Design concept: large, colorful image of wolverine, head turned and eyes looking at the viewer.

Text in both official languages: “Wolverines are mammals. They eat a variety of foods. They are seldom seen.”
