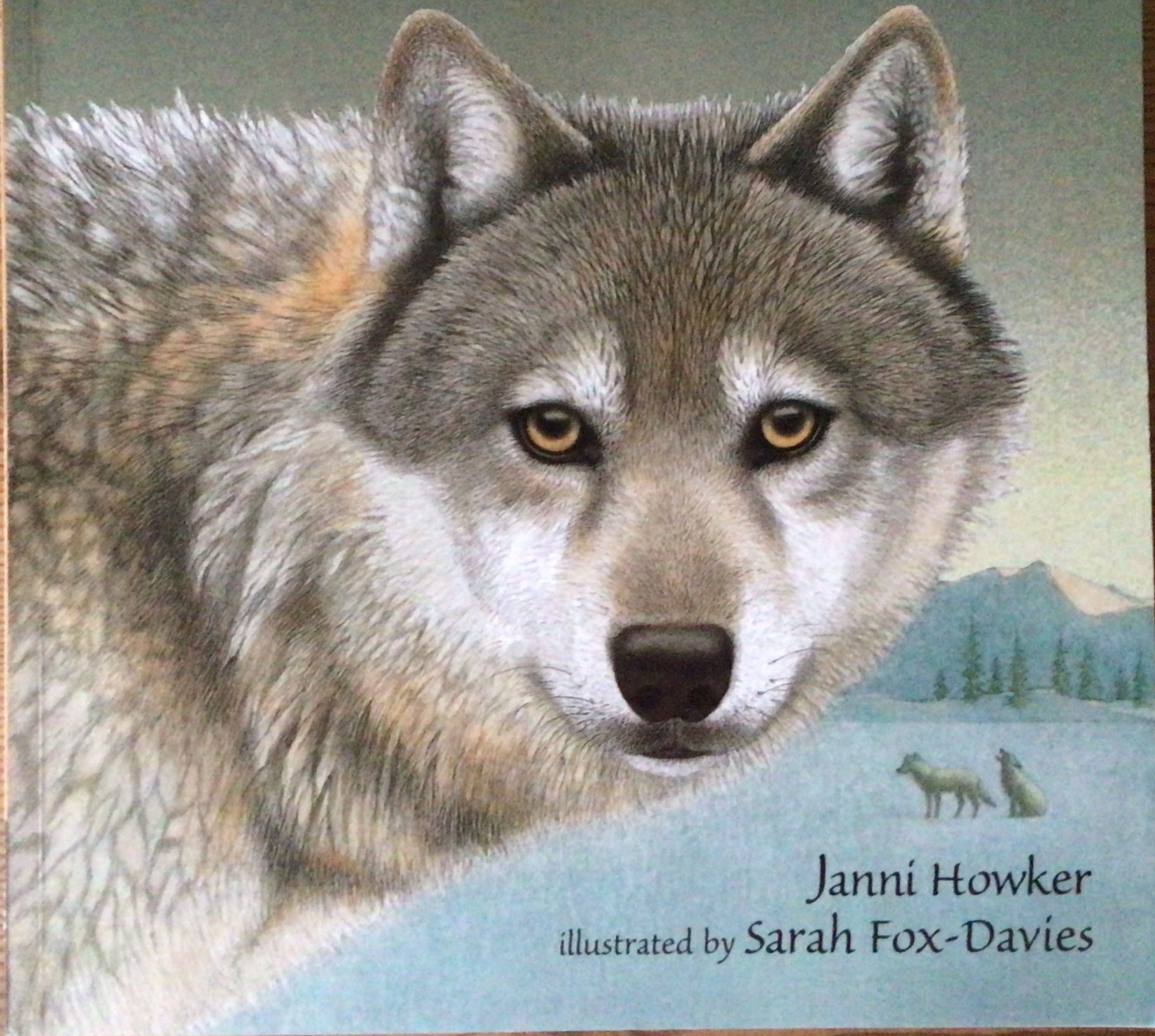




Walk with a WOLF



Janni Howker

illustrated by Sarah Fox-Davies

Once wolves roamed nearly all the lands of the northern hemisphere. But they have been hunted and killed by humans for centuries, and today they are extinct or very rare in places where lots of people live, including Europe and much of North America.

Most wolves now live in the far north of the world – in Alaska, Siberia, and parts of Canada such as the Yukon Territory, where this story is set.

Walk with a wolf in the cold air before sunrise.

She moves, quiet as mist,

between spruce trees and birches.

A silent grey shadow, she slides between boulders
and trots over blue pebbles to the edge of the lake.



She plunges through slush ice and laps the chill water,
snaps at a feather that drifts down from a goose wing,
then splashes to shore and
shakes herself like a dog.



*Wolves were probably the first large animals to live with people,
and all the kinds of dog we know today are descended from them.*



There's deep snow on the mountains.
Snow clouds bank in the east.
Winter is coming, and the geese fly south.

Run with a wolf as she bounds up the steep slope.
She sniffs at a skull that stares at the lake.
Moss grows on the antlers.
The bone has turned grey,
there's no meat on it now –
and she's hungry.

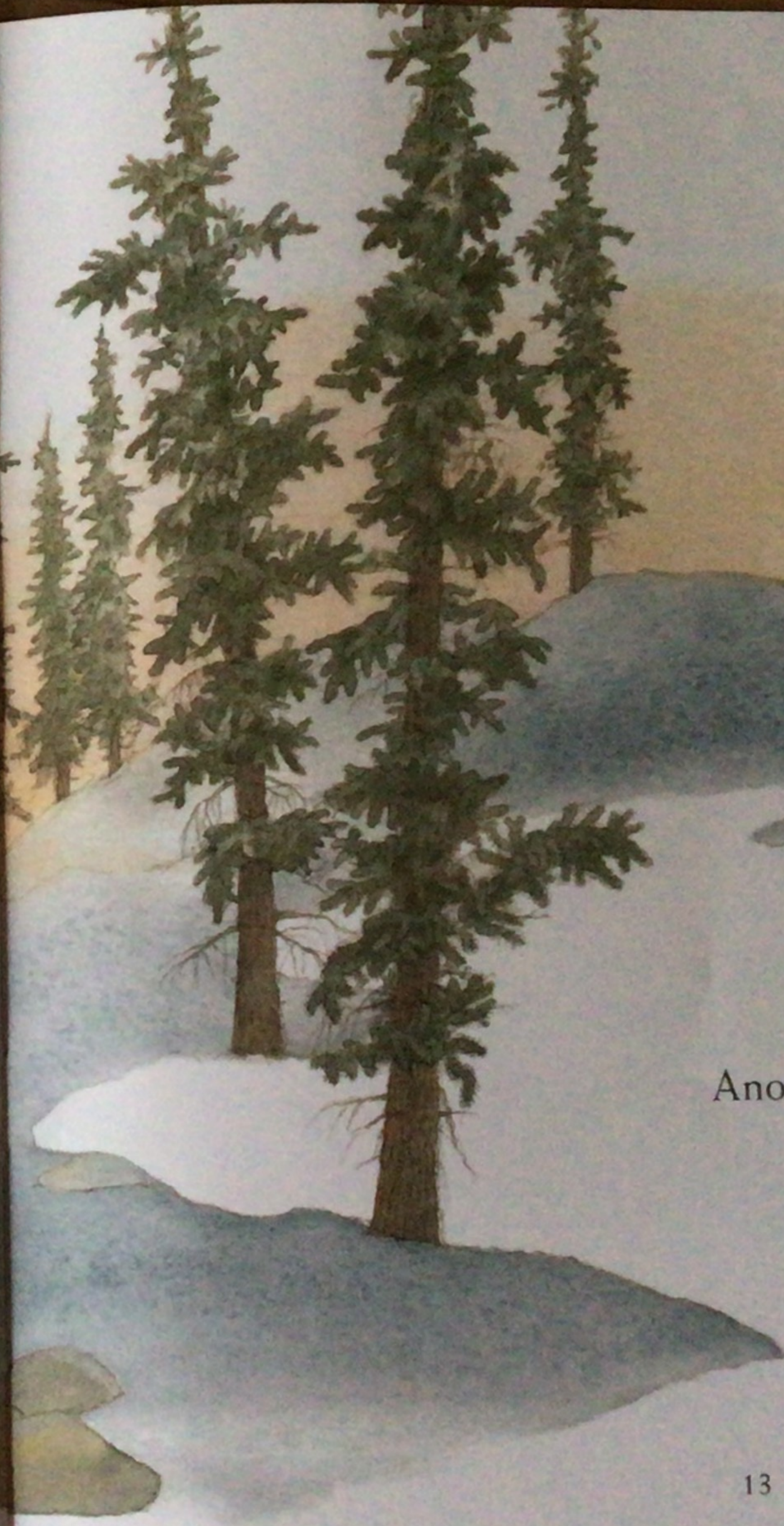
*During the summer months, a wolf may hunt alone
and catch fish, hare, squirrels and other small animals,
But these creatures go into hiding in winter,
to escape from the freezing cold weather.*



Howl with a wolf in the dawn, thin and icy.
Deep from her chest the eerie sound comes.

Long, low music.

The song of the Arctic.



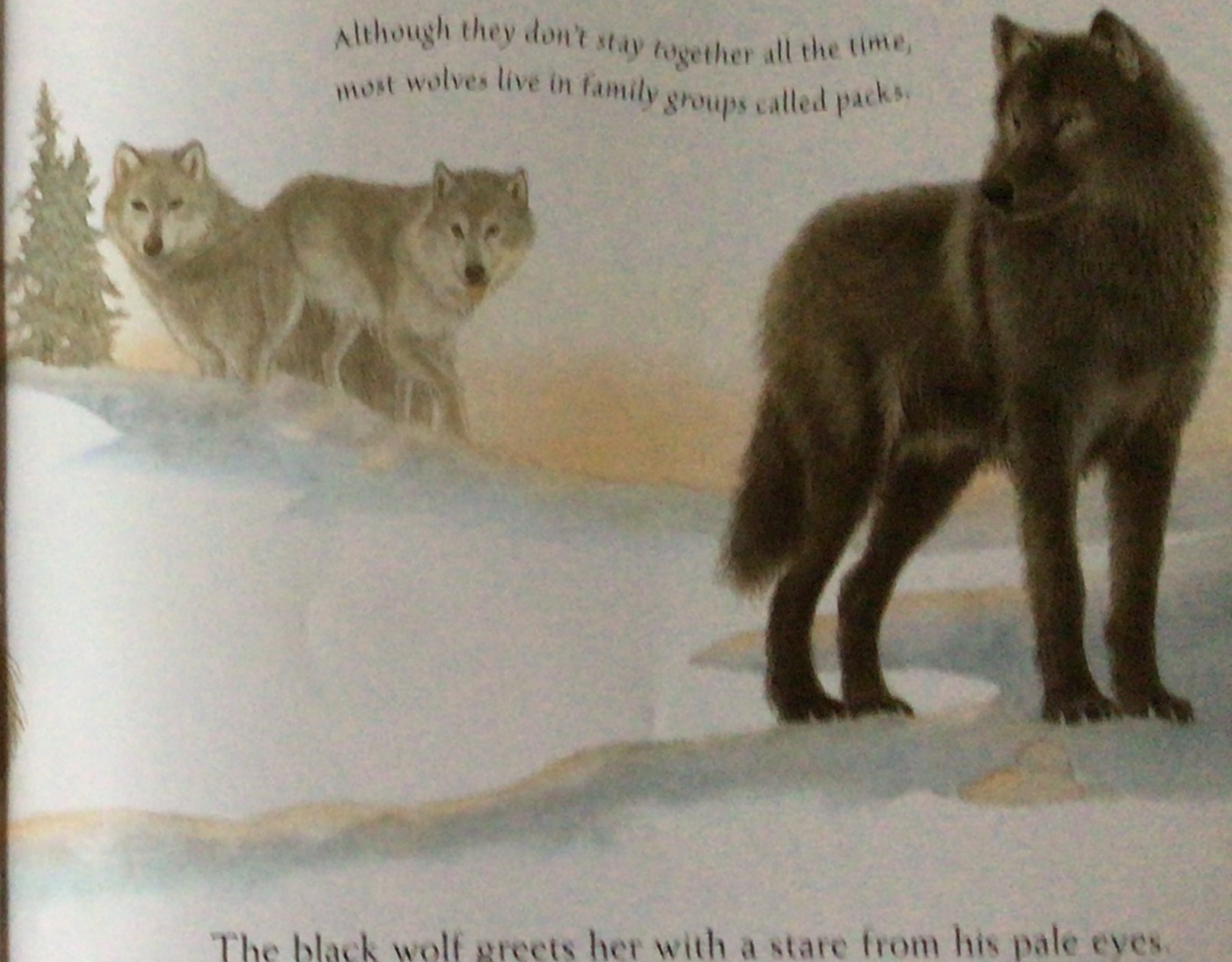
Another howl answers.

With a wag of her tail, the wolf runs to the pack.
Three sons and a daughter, cubs from the spring,
squirm on their bellies and lick at her neck.



*Mother wolves give birth in springtime.
They can have anything from one to eleven cubs each year.*

*Although they don't stay together all the time,
most wolves live in family groups called packs.*



The black wolf greets her with a stare from his pale eyes.
He's her mate, the pack's strongest hunter —
and he's hungry, too.

The wolf pack is ready.

They set off together, like eight ghost dogs,
silent and stealthy as the coming of frost.

Three ravens are flying high overhead.



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Most packs have up to eight wolves in them,
although packs of as many as fifty have sometimes been seen.

Hunt with a wolf on the trail of a bull moose,
following its tracks and
its scent on the ground.

*Wolves have to hunt as a pack
if they are to kill large animals,
such as moose and deer.*



There's a crash in the bushes – the moose is close.
The wolves crouch on their bellies,
their hearts beating fast.
There's danger in hunting –
a kick from a moose can break a wolf's ribs.

Charge with a wolf!

The pack breaks through the bushes,
swift as grey lightning with one bolt of black.





The moose turns and sees them.
But he's old and he's limping.
There are scars on his legs.

The wolves leap at him, biting.
Hear the moose bellow.
Hear the wolves panting as they drag him down.
Drops of his blood fall like berries to the ground.





Rest with a wolf, no longer hungry,
she watches the cubs come to join in the feast.



If there is plenty of food around, pack members will all feed at once.
But if meat is scarce, the strongest wolves will eat first,
and the youngest, the cubs, last.

Sleep with a wolf while a blizzard is blowing.
The sky is full of a million grey ice moths,
as the wind drives the flakes down.



Backs to the gale, the wolves curl among boulders,
heads tucked between hind legs,
and noses covered by the fur of their tails.

Dream with a wolf as the Pole Star is shining.
There's thick snow on the ground and a shivering wind.
But the wolf dreams she is walking
with new cubs in warm sunlight,
as the wild geese return with the spring to the lake.



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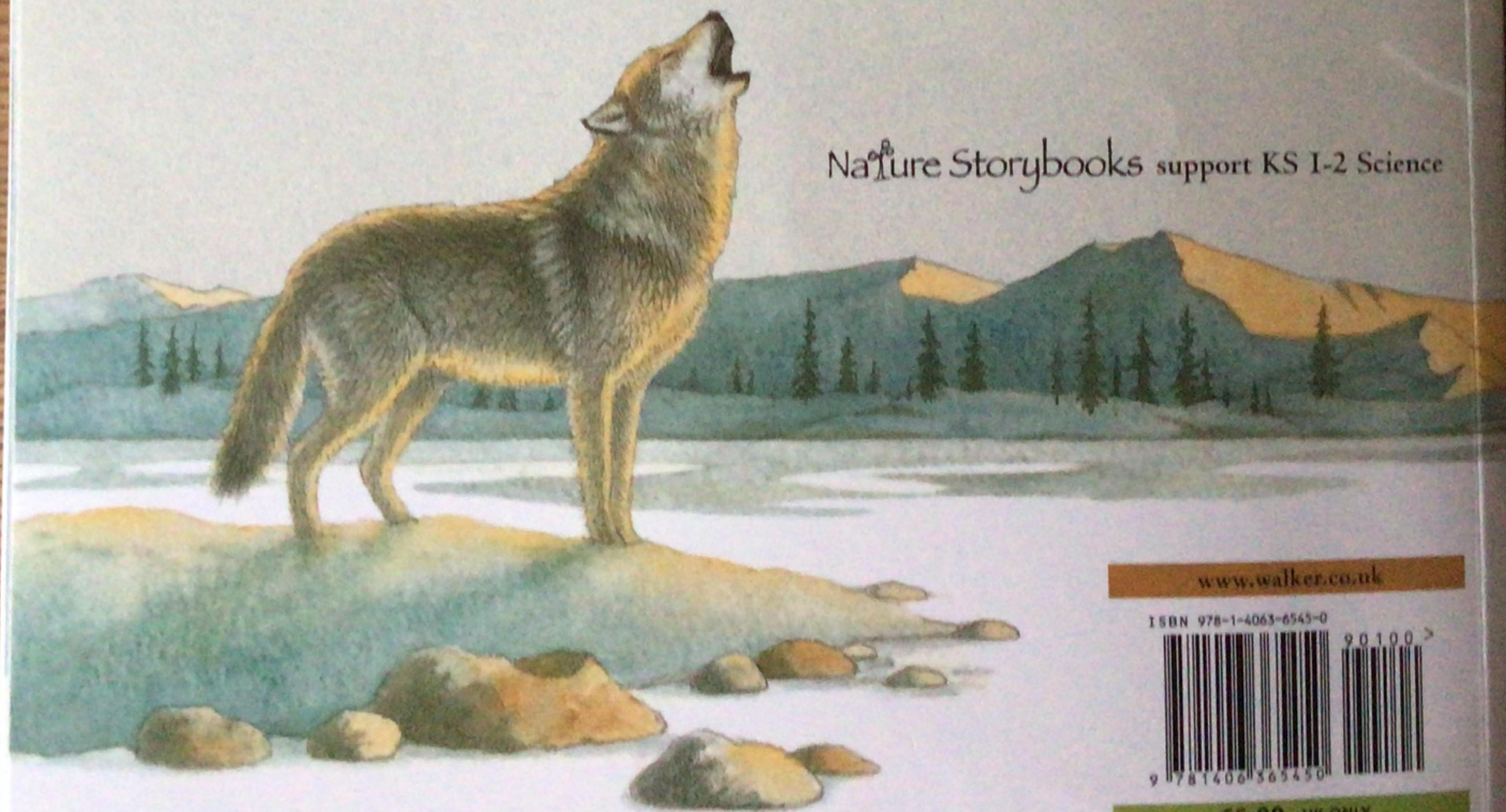
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