

'First wolf in a century' shot dead in German region

April 23 2012



Picture taken on April 21 and handed out by the police, shows the dead animal laying on the forest floor near Gensingen, western Germany. As the environment ministry of Rhineland-Palatinate announced, a genetic testing should clear if the shot animal is a wolf that has been spotted recently and that was the first wolf since 123 years that settled in the Westerwald region.

German hunters offered a reward Monday to find the killer of what was believed to be the first wolf spotted in a southwestern region in more than a century.

The hunters' association of Rhineland-Palatinate state said it would hand over 1,000 euros (\$1,300) for information leading to the person who shot dead the animal which was found at the weekend in the Westerwald low mountain range.

Amid widespread outrage in the region over the shooting, [DNA testing](#) is to determine whether the remains are in fact those of a wolf and not a [wild dog](#), [local authorities](#) said.

If so, it is believed to be the first of the species seen in Westerwald in 123 years.

"If it proves to be the case that the animal that was shot to death is the wolf often spotted in Westerwald, it would be sad news for our region and a setback for [species conservation](#)," state environment minister Ulrike Hoefken said in a statement.

Hoefken said wolves could "live in peaceful co-existence with people" in her state and that there was no justification for shooting the animal.

The hunters' association said it was "shocked" by the killing.

"The wolf shooting must be cleared up and the person who is responsible must be brought to justice," said its president, Kurt Alexander Michael, calling it a "serious violation of nature conservation laws".

Germany's wolf population was wiped out by over-hunting in the 19th century and destruction of its natural habitat.

But it has gradually made a comeback in recent years due to migration from the east since the end of the Cold War, when border obstructions began to be removed.

Wolves have been a protected species since 1990, the year of national reunification.

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