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The demise of Scotland's wolves

Blink and you will miss it.

A carved stone by the side of the A9 near Brora claims to mark the site where the last wolf in Sutherland was killed by a man called Polson in 1700. The unremarkable grey marker reflects the sad demise of the wild animal in Scotland.

According to research done by Glasgow Zoo, now closed, the wolf was regarded as a common enemy.



Wolves were wiped out in the 18th century

Chieftains and royalty led hunts.

One attended by Queen Mary in 1563 employed 2,000 Highlanders and ended in the deaths of five wolves and 360 deer. Huge swathes of forest in Perthshire, Lochaber and Argyll were systematically destroyed to deprive wolves of their habitat.

Quoting from the Statistical Account of Glenorchy and Inishail, the zoo found that the predator was regarded as haunting Scotland's wilds and mountains. When "impelled by hunger, or inflamed with rage" it was claimed it would even attack people.

Killed children

The same account said that the last wolf in Britain was killed by Sir Ewen of Lochiel in 1680. However, many historians believe the very last one was dispatched near Findhorn, Moray, in 1743 amid an outcry that it had killed two children.

The Imperial College London's study has started a fresh debate on reintroducing the wild wolf to the Scottish Highlands. For the time being, however, the only howl in the Highlands is that of cars passing the Polson marker stone on the A9.