GRAY WOLF (CANIS LUPUS) PREDATION AND SCAVENGING OF REINTRODUCED AMERICAN BISON (BISON BISON) IN SOUTHWESTERN YUKON

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With some particularly large bulls weighing ≥1000 kg, American Bison (Bison bison, hereafter Bison) are the largest land mammal in North America. Given the potential quantity of biomass a Bison represents, preying or scavenging on Bison is seemingly profitable. Their physical size, social organization, and temperament, however, make Bison formidable prey (Fuller 1953; Smith and others 2000). Gray Wolves (Canis lupus; hereafter Wolves) and Grizzly Bears (Ursus arctos; hereafter Bears) are the only known predators of Bison, and they most often focus on calves and other young animals (Carbyn and Trottier 1988; Larter and others 1994; Smith and others 2000, 2001; MacNulty and others 2001; Varley and Gunther 2002; Wyman 2002).

In some areas, local Wolf packs are relatively adept at killing Bison (Carbyn and Trottier 1987; 1988; Larter and others 1994). This may be related, in part, to the length of time that Bison and Wolves have been sympatric, with Wolves longer accustomed to Bison on the landscape more readily viewing them as potential prey, and having sufficient time to learn how to hunt Bison through trial and error. In Europe, for instance, Wolves are known to prey and scavenge on European Bison (Bison bonasus) in the Białowieża Forest, Poland, where both species have co-existed since the 1920s (Jedrze-