

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

November 1 – 30, 2006

The following is a summary of Mexican wolf reintroduction project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and in New Mexico on the Gila National Forest (GNF), collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Reintroduction Area (BRWRA). Additional information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 1-888-459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://mexicanwolf.fws.gov>. Past updates may also be viewed on either Web site, or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The reintroduction project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services (USDA WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR). Other entities cooperate through the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMOC) that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including private individuals, organizations and tribes.

To view the wolf distribution map, which contains the most recent three months of wolf aerial locations, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. Under “Mexican Wolf Conservation and Management,” scroll down to the links under “Distribution.”

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 1-888-459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD’s 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at 1-800-352-0700.

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks the history of all known Mexican wolves. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 18 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 18 months or pups. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

Definitions: For the purposes of the Monthly Update, a “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established home range. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars sometimes form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are reasonably resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of the end of November, the collared population consisted of 25 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among ten packs and one single wolf. This number is different from last month. Please see the San Mateo pack in Arizona, the Paradise pack on the FAIR, and M859 and F924 in New Mexico below for more detailed information of changes that occurred.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, M990, M991, m1041 and f1042)

On November 9, the IFT located AF521, f1042, M991 and two other unidentified wolves more than 20 miles northeast of their traditional home range in New Mexico in what is considered San Mateo pack territory. Male 990 continued to demonstrate dispersal behavior, and the IFT located it on the FAIR. On the November 13 and 20 telemetry flights, the IFT located m1041 north of its traditional home range in the north-central portion of the primary recovery area on the ASNF. On the November 20 telemetry flight, the IFT located AF521, m1041 and f1042 on the FAIR. On November 28, the IFT located M991, with F923 in close proximity, in the northwest corner of the GNF in New Mexico.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM619 and AF486 with a non-functional collar)

The IFT located AM619 in its traditional home range northeast of the Big Lake area on the ASNF.

Meridian Pack (collared AM806 and f1028)

On November 3, the IFT located AM806 in Luna, New Mexico. For the remainder of November, the IFT located AM806 with f1028 in Arizona in the vicinity of their release site near Middle Mountain. The IFT either located them together or within five miles of each other.

Rim Pack (collared AF858, AM992 and m1043)

Throughout most of November, the IFT located the alpha pair within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF. The IFT located m1043 with the alpha pair, and then separate from the pair on the November 6 and 20 telemetry flights. On the November 20 telemetry flight, the IFT located the alpha pair in the traditional Bluestem pack home range.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and M927, and AM796 with a non-functional collar)

During November, the San Mateo pack continued to use areas east of Escudilla Mountain in the Apache National Forest in New Mexico. On November 9, the IFT located five members of the Bluestem pack in the San Mateo pack area in New Mexico. The following day, the IFT discovered M927 dead in Arizona. Necropsy results are pending.

FAIR:**Paradise Pack (collared M1044)**

The IFT located M1044 on or near the FAIR boundary throughout November.

IN NEW MEXICO:**Aspen Pack (collared AF667, m1038, m1039, f1040 and uncollared AM512)**

Throughout November, the IFT located the Aspen pack in the eastern portion of the Gila Wilderness. On the November 13 telemetry flight, the IFT observed six pack members.

Luna Pack (collared AM583, M925 and uncollared AF562)

On the November 13 telemetry flight, the IFT located the Luna pack in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness, but they were located back in the central portion of the GNF before and after the November 13 telemetry flight.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AF861 and AM871)

Throughout November, the IFT located the alpha pair together in the central portion of the Gila Wilderness.

Saddle Pack (collared AF797, AM732 and M1007)

During November, the Saddle pack continued to use its traditional home range in the southern portion of the GNF. On the November 13 telemetry flight, the IFT located the pack just outside the BRWRA. On November 24, the IFT confirmed that the Saddle pack was involved in a second depredation incident in New Mexico (see "Incidents" below for more information).

M859 (collared)

On the November 6 telemetry flight, the IFT located M859 just outside the BRWRA in the northern portion of the GNF and separate from F924 by approximately 10 miles. On November 13, the IFT located M859 and F924 on a cow carcass, resulting in a third confirmed depredation incident for M859. On November 14, the USFWS issued a permanent removal order for M859, and the IFT lethally removed it on November 22 (see "Incidents" below).

F923 (collared)

Throughout most of November, the IFT located F923 in the west-central portion of the GNF. On November 28, the IFT located F923, with M991 in close proximity, in the northwest corner of the GNF in New Mexico.

F924 (collared)

On the November 6 telemetry flight, the IFT located F924 in the northern portion of the GNF, separate from M859 and just outside the BRWRA. On November 13, the IFT located F924 and M859 on a cow carcass, resulting in a second confirmed depredation incident for F924. On November 17, the IFT captured F924 and transferred it to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility in New Mexico (see "Incidents" below).

INCIDENTS

On November 10, the IFT received two reports of a wolf attacking dogs in the Gila Wilderness. The first interaction occurred on October 7 when a wolf pinned a hound out hunting bears by the throat. The owner threw rocks, but the wolf did not let go until the owner approached them. The dog was not seriously injured. The second incident occurred on October 9 at a residence where an individual was gathering horses and was being followed by a hound. The wolf pinned the dog by the neck. The owner yelled and threw rocks, but the wolf did not let go until the owner approached the animals. The dog required veterinary care, and its prognosis is not known at this time. This incident occurred in the Aspen pack territory, and the wolf likely involved is AM512 of the Aspen pack.

On November 13, the IFT investigated a cow carcass in Catron County, New Mexico. The IFT investigation confirmed a third depredation incident for M859 and a second depredation incident for F924. As a result, on November 14, the USFWS issued a permanent removal order for M859. On November 17, the IFT captured F924 and transferred it to the Seville Wolf Management Facility in New Mexico. On November 22, the IFT lethally removed M859.

On November 17, the IFT investigated a cow carcass in Catron County. The carcass was old and decomposed, and the IFT considered it a possible wolf depredation.

On November 24, the IFT investigated a calf carcass in Saddle pack territory in Catron County. The IFT determined the kill to be a confirmed wolf depredation, and they observed four wolves in the area of the calf, resulting in the second depredation incident for AM732, AM797 and M1007, and the first depredation incident for the Saddle pack pups born this spring.

On November 28, an Apache County elk hunter encountered two wolf pups traveling down a trail toward her. The pups fled when the hunter loaded her gun.

On November 29, the IFT investigated an injured sheep in Catron County. The IFT was not able to determine the cause of its injury, but track evidence in the area indicated the presence of dogs and coyotes.

On November 30, the IFT received a report that a wolf observed in the area the day before may have carried off a hunter's elk antlers that were stored next to his vehicle at camp. The hunter did not see a radio collar on the wolf. The following day, the IFT located AM806 of the Meridian pack in the area and searched for the antlers, but could not locate them.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Nothing new to report.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On November 5, Shawn Farry provided a presentation to 15 students of the Grand Circle Field School near the Grand Canyon, Arizona.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Shawn Farry, Mexican Wolf Field Team Leader for the Arizona Game and Fish Department, resigned effective November 17. Dan Groebner, Region I Nongame Specialist, is temporarily assuming responsibilities for this position until it is filled.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department is currently recruiting applicants for the Mexican Wolf Field Team Leader position. The application period closes January 5, 2007. Please visit www.azstatejobs.gov for more information.

Veronica Yovovich left the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project on November 15.

REWARDS OFFERED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 and the Arizona Game and Fish Department Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican gray wolves. A variety of public interest groups are offering an additional \$35,000, for a total reward amount of up to \$46,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agents in Mesa, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the White Mountain Apache Tribe at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; Arizona Game and Fish Department Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700; or New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Operation Game Thief at 1-800-432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act, and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.