

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

July 1 – 31, 2007

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 888-459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may 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 Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA APHIS 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 (AMWG) that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including private individuals, organizations and tribes.

To view the weekly wolf telemetry flight location information or the 3-month wolf distribution map, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. On the home page, go to the “Wolf Location Information” heading on the right side of the page near the top and scroll to the specific location information you seek.

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

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 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 may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

At the end of July, the collared population consisted of 25 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 11 packs and five single wolves. This number is different from last month because the IFT lethally removed AF924 of the Durango pack per a USFWS Permanent

Removal Order. Other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with wolves having radio collars, as well as being separate from known packs.

At the end of 2006, there were 59 wolves throughout the BRWRA in New Mexico and Arizona. Of those, 46 were born in the wild.

SEASONAL NEWS

Mexican wolf pups are generally born mid-April to mid-May. The IFT will continue monitoring wolves to determine if females are denning in order to document wild-born pups. Based on location information and wolf observations, the IFT has documented denning behavior in seven packs and possibly in four others. See pack information below for more information.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF521 and f1042)

During July, the IFT located all pack members on the FAIR. Based on location information, the IFT has documented denning behavior in this pack.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM619 and uncollared AF486)

Throughout July, the IFT located AM619 in its traditional home range in the north and central portion of the ASNF. Based on location information, the IFT has documented possible denning behavior in this pack.

Paradise Pack (collared M1044, M1045 and M795)

Throughout July, the IFT located the pack in the northwest portion of the BRWRA on the ASNF. On July 7, 16 and 20, the IFT confirmed that, based on all available evidence, an uncollared member of the pack was involved in domestic sheep depredations (see "Incidents" below for more information). On July 19, as a result of these depredation incidents, the USFWS issued a Permanent Removal Order for any two adults or yearlings captured. The IFT continued to obtain three ground locations of the pack per week; maintained the turbo fladry fencing (a visual and physical deterrent to canids) around the perimeter of a sheep pasture; enacted a dog leash law with the cooperation of the USFS which will remain in effect until August 15; and is providing updates to the permittee. Supplemental feeding stations have been initiated in an effort to draw the wolves away from existing sheep grazing areas, which will be continued until the sheep are removed from the area in mid-August. Based on location information, the IFT has documented denning behavior in this pack.

Rim Pack (collared AF858 and f1048)

Throughout the majority of July, the IFT located the pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF. On the July 30 aerial telemetry flight, the IFT located AF858 on the SCAR. The following day, the IFT located AF858 back on the ASNF. Based on location information, the IFT has documented denning behavior in this pack.

ON THE FAIR:

Bacho Pack (collared M990)

Throughout July, the IFT located M990 on the FAIR. Based on location information, the IFT has documented possible denning behavior in this pack.

Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)

Throughout July, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR. Based on wolf observations, the IFT has documented denning behavior in this pack.

IN NEW MEXICO:**Aspen Pack (collared AF667, M863 and f1046)**

Throughout July, the IFT located the Aspen pack north of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. Based on location information, the IFT has documented denning behavior in this pack.

Durango Pack (collared AM973 and AF924)

Throughout July, the IFT located AM973 in the northeastern portion of the GNF. On July 5, the IFT lethally removed AF924 per the USFWS Permanent Removal Order for three depredation incidents within a 365-day period. The IFT established a supplemental food cache near the den site to assist AM973 in feeding the pups and to help prevent subsequent depredation incidents. On July 9, during the aerial telemetry flight, the IFT observed AM973 walking. Based on location information, the IFT has documented denning behavior in this pack.

Luna Pack (collared AM583, f1047 and uncollared AF562)

During July, the IFT located the Luna pack in the central portion of the GNF, with f1047 located separate from AM583. On July 27, the IFT observed AM583 with two uncollared wolves on a deer kill. Based on location information, the IFT has documented possible denning behavior in this pack.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)

Throughout July, the IFT located the pair in the northeastern portion of the Gila Wilderness. Based on location information, the IFT has documented denning behavior in this pack.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903)

On the July 9 aerial telemetry flight, the IFT located AF903 in Arizona. For the remainder of the month, the IFT located AF903 on the Apache National Forest (ANF) in New Mexico. Based on location information, the IFT has documented possible denning behavior in this pack.

M992 (collared)

On July 2, the IFT located M992 with F923 in the central portion of the GNF. For the remainder of the month, the IFT located M992 within 10 miles of single F923 in the central portion of the GNF and in the vicinity of the Luna pack.

m1038 (collared)

During July, the IFT located m1038 in the northwestern portion of the ANF north of the San Mateo pack.

m1039 and f1040 (both collared)

Throughout July, the IFT located m1039 and f1040 south of the traditional Aspen pack home range, in the eastern portion of the Gila Wilderness.

F923 (collared)

On July 2, the IFT located F923 in the vicinity of M992 in the central portion of the GNF. For the remainder of the month, the IFT located F923 within 10 miles of M992 in the central portion of the GNF and in the general area the Luna pack.

INCIDENTS

On July 7, the IFT received a report of two dead sheep that had died on July 5 and 6 in Apache County, Arizona. The IFT investigation confirmed wolf involvement and revealed that both depredations occurred within the same 24-hour period, thus resulting in the second depredation incident for a member of the Paradise pack within a 365-day period. The shepherd observed an uncollared wolf in the area, and the IFT assigned the depredation to an uncollared member of the Paradise pack based on all available evidence. The IFT continues to monitor and employ non-lethal techniques.

On July 11, the IFT investigated a report of a dead steer with a wolf near the carcass in Apache County. The IFT investigated the same day and determined the steer to have been killed by a coyote based on bite marks and coyote scat in the area.

On July 13, the IFT received a report from a landowner stating that a ranch hand discovered two dead yearling cows in Apache County. The IFT investigated that day. One of the two cows had been previously investigated on July and was determined to be a coyote kill. The IFT confirmed the second cow had been killed by a lightning strike.

On July 16, the IFT investigated a report of three dead sheep that had died in Apache County, one each on July 12, 13 and 14. The IFT investigation confirmed wolf involvement and revealed that two of the three depredations occurred within the same 24-hour period, thus resulting in the third and fourth depredation incidents, based on all available evidence, for an uncollared member of the Paradise pack within a 365-day period. As a result of these depredation incidents, the USFWS issued a Permanent Removal Order on July 19 for the first two adults or yearlings captured in an effort to stop the pack from preying on the sheep. The Paradise pack is comprised of six adult and yearling wolves and an unknown number of 2-month old pups.

On July 17, the IFT received a report of one injured and one dead sheep in Apache County. The IFT investigation determined the death and the injury to be caused by a black bear.

On July 19, the IFT received a report of a dead cow on the FAIR in Arizona. The IFT investigation determined that the cause of death was due to a lightning strike.

On July 20, the IFT investigated a report of a dead sheep in Apache County. The IFT investigation determined it to be a confirmed wolf depredation resulting in the fifth depredation incident for a member of the Paradise pack, based on all available evidence, within a 365-day

period.

On July 23, the IFT received a report from a landowner in Apache County that he observed two wolves at his residence on July 20 and that the wolves had killed four chickens. The IFT investigated that same day, but were unable to find sign due to heavy rains.

On July 25, WMAT Forestry personnel discovered a dead calf on the FAIR. The IFT investigation determined that the calf died of unknown causes.

On July 27, the IFT received another report from the landowner who had reported an incident on July 23 in Apache County. The report was of a wolf with a chicken in its mouth at his residence. The IFT investigated the following day and discovered only coyote tracks in the area.

On July 29, the IFT investigated a report of a dead sheep in Apache County. The IFT investigation was unable to determine the cause of death, but determined that it was not wolf-related.

On July 29, the IFT investigated a report of a dead cow in Catron County, New Mexico. The IFT investigation was unable to determine the cause of death, but determined that it was not wolf-related.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On July 30, the IFT transported f1028 from the Project veterinarian office in Arizona to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility in New Mexico and placed f1028 in captivity with M1008.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On July 4, Dan Groebner provided a wolf reintroduction project presentation to 48 guests of the Hidden Meadow Ranch near Greer, AZ.

On July 25, Shawna Nelson, John Oakleaf and employees of NMDGF and USFWS law enforcement met with five permittees from the Glenwood Ranger District in NM to listen to their concerns about the Project in an effort to increase communication efforts with impacted ranchers.

On July 26, Shawna Nelson provided a wolf project update and a presentation and addressed issues and concerns with employees of the National Park Service at the Gila Cliff Dwellings, NM.

On July 28, Shawna Nelson worked an information booth and provided a wolf reintroduction project presentation to 148 members of the public at the Torreon subdivision in Show Low, AZ.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

On July 2, Janine Carlin and Lauren Ross began their temporary positions as USFWS volunteers for the project.

On July 21, Santiago Gonzales left his position as the USFWS Assistant Recovery Coordinator for the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program to take a position as the coordinator of the USFWS Coordination Act. Thank you for all of your hard work, Santiago!

On July 31, Dan Stark, biologist for the USFWS, left his position to lead the state wolf recovery project in Minnesota. Thank you, Dan, for all of your hard work over the last eight years!

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 wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations have pledged 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.