



Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

January 1-31, 2010

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR) and in New Mexico on the Apache National Forest (ANF) and Gila National Forest (GNF). Non-tribal lands involved in this Project are collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). Additional Project 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). Other entities, including private individuals and nongovernmental organizations, cooperate through the Project's Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) that meets periodically in Arizona and New Mexico.

To view 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 24 months or pups. The capital letter "A" preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

Definitions: A "wolf pack" is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory. In the event that one of the two alpha (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining alpha

wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain at least one wolf with a radio telemetry collar attached to it. 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

Project personnel completed the 2009 end-of-year population count this month. The survey was completed on January 31. The specific population estimate for 2009, including the estimated number of uncollared wolves and breeding pairs, will be released in February. A breeding pair consists of at least one adult male (including an alpha male), at least one adult female (including an alpha female), and at least two pups produced during the same year that survive until the end of December. As a result of count and capture efforts associated with the end-of-year population count, as well as a translocation that occurred earlier in the month, the collared population at the end of January 2010 consisted of 28 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among nine packs and three single wolves.

On January 10, the IFT released f1154 from captivity into New Mexico at the Gila Flat release site on the Gila National Forest. The IFT removed this wolf from the San Carlos Apache Reservation (SCAR) in June 2009 for being outside of the BRWRA boundary. This wolf was a wild-born offspring of the Bacho Pack from the FAIR in 2008.

On January 25, Project personnel darted and captured m1189 outside of the BRWRA, north of Antelope Peak on Arizona State Trust lands. The wolf was traveling with m1155 of the Hawks Nest Pack at the time, and the IFT considers this wolf to be part of that pack. The IFT determined the wolf to most likely be a yearling. The IFT released it on the ASNF near Carnero Lake, and it has since traveled back into the Hawks Nest Pack territory near Sipe Wildlife Area.

On January 30, Project personnel darted and captured AF903 of the San Mateo Pack in the vicinity of Sand Canyon, southeast of Apache Creek on the GNF. This wolf was recaptured due to the anticipated failure of its radio-telemetry collar. The IFT replaced the collar released the wolf near the original capture site.

During the helicopter capture effort, Project personnel noted four instances where wolves were located on elk carcasses. Efforts by IFT personnel to document these kill sites were hampered by deep snow; however, it appears these same conditions have assisted wolves in the BRWRA to find suitable native prey during the winter months.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF1042 and mp1183)

Throughout January, the IFT located AM806, AF1042 and mp1183 in their traditional territory in the central portion of the ASNF and on the FAIR.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM1044, AF1110, m1155, m1189 and fp1188)

During January, the IFT located the Hawks Nest Pack in its traditional winter territory in the north-central portion of the ASNF.

Rim Pack (collared AF858, AM1107 and fp1187)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Rim Pack within its traditional winter range in the west-central portion of the ASNF.

M619 (collared)

In January, the IFT located M619 in the central and north central portion of the ASNF.

ON THE FAIR:

Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and AF1056)

During January, the IFT located the Paradise Pack within its traditional winter territory on the northwestern portion of the ASNF.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Dark Canyon Pack within its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF.

Luna Pack (collared M1156 and F1115)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Luna Pack within its traditional territory in the central portion of the GNF.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871, AF861 and mp1185)

In January, the IFT located the Middle Fork Pack within its traditional territory in the central portion of the GNF.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)

The IFT located the San Mateo Pack within its traditional territory in the north-central portion of the GNF during January.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared AF521, m1157, and m1158)

In January, the IFT located three of the Fox Mountain Pack members outside of their traditional territory in the northwestern portion of the GNF. The IFT has not located AM1038 and m1161 since mid-December 2009. The other members of this pack AF521, m1157 and m1158, were located in the north and north-central portion of the GNF in January.

F1106 (collared)

During January, the IFT located F1106 in the northeast portion of the GNF. This is a single wolf, and its movements have varied widely throughout the month.

F1154 (collared)

During January, the IFT located this wolf in the Aldo Leopold Wilderness on the GNF.

MORTALITIES

No known wolf mortalities were documented in January.

INCIDENTS

The IFT initiated three investigations of potential livestock depredation incidents in January. All of the incidents were first located from the helicopter during population count and capture efforts.

On January 27, Project personnel observed the Rim Pack next to a cow carcass on the SCAR near the border with the ASNF. On January 29, Wildlife Services (WS) personnel attempted to snowmobile to the site, but were unable to traverse the extremely muddy roads. The carcass was not investigated due to the impassable roads into the area.

On January 30, Project personnel observed two members of the Fox Mountain Pack, AF521 and m1157, next to two calf carcasses north of Aragon in the Tularosa Mountains on the GNF in New Mexico. On January 31, WS personnel attempted to travel to the area on ATVs, but they were unable to reach the carcasses, and the carcasses could not be investigated.

On January 31, Project personnel observed members of the Paradise Pack, AM795 and AF1056, next to at least two dead cows and one dead calf north of Greens Peak on the ASNF in Arizona. They also observed three live cows in the area. WS personnel investigated the site on February 1 and determined that six cattle, including four cows, one yearling and one calf, had died in the area. The four cows and one yearling were determined to have died of complications associated with deep snow and cold temperatures. WS personnel determined the calf had died as a result of a wolf depredation. The three remaining cattle, two yearling heifers and one calf, were successfully removed from the area. The cattle were trapped in a small area and were unable to move to lower elevations due to deep snow and fences. The calf killed by the wolves was determined to be unlawfully present on the ASNF. As a result, the depredation incident will not be assigned to AM795 and AF1056.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On January 10, 2010, Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility personnel captured and prepared f1154 for translocation back into the BRWRA at Gila Flats on the GNF in New Mexico.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

Chris Bagnoli and Paula Capece contacted numerous private landowners in Arizona and New Mexico regarding permission to conduct helicopter-based, wolf count and capture activities in January within and adjacent to the BRWRA.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Paula Capece, the Interagency Field Team leader for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, left the Project in mid-January. Paula spent 15 months with the Project, and worked very hard to provide leadership on the IFT, as well as the NMDGF's wolf work. Her efforts to move the Project forward and develop partnerships with ranchers in New Mexico will be greatly missed. Thank you, Paula, for all of your hard work!

Carissa Michaud, a volunteer with the FWS, also left the Project in January. Thank you, Carissa, for your efforts on the Project!

REWARDS OFFERED

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000, the AGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000, and the NMDGF 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 and private individuals have pledged an additional \$40,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$52,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Mesa, Arizona, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, Arizona, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (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.