

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

March 1 – 31, 2008

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 Apache National Forest (AANF) and 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 March, the collared population consisted of 24 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 12 packs. Other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with wolves having radio collars, as well as being separate from known packs.

Seasonal note: Wolf pups are generally born between mid-April and mid-May. During the upcoming months, the IFT will be actively monitoring wolf packs to determine if females are denning in order to document wild-born pups and estimate their survival.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, AM806, F1042 and formerly F1113)

Throughout March, the IFT located the Bluestem pack in their traditional territory on the ASNF and the FAIR in Arizona and the ANF in New Mexico. The IFT continued to locate F1113 separately from the Bluestem pack and thus considers this individual as a single animal (see below).

Hawks Nest Pack (collared M1044, AF1110 and formerly AM619)

Throughout March, M1044 (originally from the Paradise pack) and AF1110 were located together in the traditional Hawks Nest territory. AM619 continued to be located apart from M1044 and AF1110 and has exhibited broader movements outside of the Hawks Nest pack territory, and is thus now considered a single animal (see below).

Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and formerly M1044)

The IFT located AM795 in and around the pack's traditional home range in proximity to Greens Peak throughout March. The IFT continued to locate M1044 with AF1110 of the Hawks Nest pack throughout March. The IFT now considers M1044 a member of the Hawks Nest pack.

Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM1107)

Throughout March, the IFT located AF858 and AM1107 within the pack's traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF, with occasional movements just inside the SCAR boundary.

M619 (formerly AM619 of the Hawks Nest pack)

The IFT continued to locate M619 apart from the Hawks Nest pack during March. M619 was primarily in and around the Hawks Nest territory early in the month, but was located outside the ASNF and 30 miles west of Springerville, AZ on the March 26 telemetry flight.

F1113 (formerly of the Bluestem pack)

The IFT continued to locate F1113 separately from the Bluestem pack throughout March. F1113 was generally located on the periphery and outside of the traditional Bluestem territory.

ON THE FAIR:

Bacho Pack (collared AM990)

Throughout March, the IFT located AM990 on the FAIR.

Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)

Throughout March, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)

Throughout March, the IFT located the Dark Canyon pack in their traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF.

Luna Pack (collared AM583 and uncollared AF562)

Throughout March, the IFT located Luna within their traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF with some use of the Gila Wilderness.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871, AF861 and F1115)

Throughout March, the IFT located the pack on and adjacent to the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness and central portion of the GNF.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)

Throughout March, the IFT located the pack in the central portion of the ANF.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared AM1038 and AF1111)

Throughout March, the IFT located the Fox Mountain pack in the northwestern portion of the ANF. AM1038 and AF1111 continue to be located apart during ground surveys and flights, yet they both have remained in the traditional Fox Mountain pack territory.

Elk Mountain Pack (collared AM1045 and AF1112)

Throughout March, the IFT located the pack in the central portion of the GNF.

F1040 (collared)

Throughout March, the IFT continued to search unsuccessfully for F1040. It remains “fate unknown.”

MORTALITIES

No known mortality of wolves occurred during March.

INCIDENTS

The IFT investigated five reports of dead livestock that were suspected to be wolf related, two of which were confirmed to have been depredated by wolves, one in Arizona and one in New Mexico.

On March 11, a suspected depredation incident involving a cow and calf on the SCAR was reported to the IFT. The IFT investigated the report on March 12 and determined that members of the Rim pack were responsible for the depredation incident based on evidence from the carcasses and wolf sign and radio telemetry at the depredation site.

On March 29, the IFT investigated a report of a suspected depredation incident made on the same day involving a single calf in Catron County, New Mexico. The IFT determined that

members of the San Mateo pack were responsible for the depredation based on evidence from the calf carcass and radio telemetry at the depredation site.

Three other IFT investigations that were reported to be wolf related included: March 19, NM cow determined to have died of natural causes; March 24, NM calf determined to have been killed by coyotes; and March 26, NM cow died of undetermined cause.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On March 28, the IFT transported M1039 from the Project veterinarian's temporary holding facility to the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility in New Mexico.

Genetic analyses were returned for F1113 and identified this wolf as the offspring of M507 and F521.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On March 7, Mike Godwin and Mike Sumner of AGFD attended a joint meeting held by the Greenlee County Cattle Growers and the Upper Eagle Creek and Blue River Watershed Associations. A general wolf project update was given and a request was made for assistance in contacting project personnel with timely reports on any sightings of uncollared wolves. Approximately 20 livestock operators and their families as well as agency personnel from the Arizona State Land Department, Bureau of Land Management, USDA APHIS WS, and USFS were in attendance.

On March 17 and 18, Ken Mills, Renae Held, and Luanne Tafoya of the NMDGF conducted a field tour in the GNF for 15 middle-school students who were winners of a wolf related art and essay competition hosted by The Southwest Environmental Center in Las Cruces, NM. The students were accompanied by 3 of their teachers and 3 Southwest Environmental Center staff members.

On March 19, John Oakleaf (USFWS) and Mike Sumner (AGFD) met with Rick DaValos (USFS) and a permittee regarding the proposed translocation of F1028 and M1008 (currently paired in captivity) to Home Creek in Arizona.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

On March 3, Kenneth Mills began his position as the Mexican Wolf Field Team Leader for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

James Waddell completed his term as a USFWS volunteer. Thanks for all the hard work, James!

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 \$33,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$45,000, 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, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700; or NMDGF 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.