

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

April 1 – 30, 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 April, the collared population consisted of 21 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 11 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 and F1042)

Throughout April, the IFT located the Bluestem pack in their traditional territory on the ASNF and the FAIR.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared M1044 and AF1110)

Throughout April, the IFT located the Hawks Nest pack in their traditional territory on the ASNF.

Paradise Pack (collared AM795)

The IFT located AM795 in and around the pack's traditional home range in proximity to Greens Peak throughout April.

Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM1107)

Throughout April, the IFT located the Rim pack within their traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF, with occasional movements just inside the SCAR boundary.

M619 (collared)

The IFT continued to locate M619 apart from the Hawks Nest pack during April. M619's movements have become more varied and were primarily in the northern portion of the ASNF and ANF in Arizona and New Mexico.

F1113 (collared)

The IFT continued to locate F1113 separately from the Bluestem pack throughout April. A mortality signal from F1113's collar was received on the April 30 telemetry flight and the carcass was collected later that day. A cause of death determination is pending.

ON THE FAIR:

Bacho Pack (collared AM990)

Throughout April, the IFT located AM990 on the FAIR.

Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)

Throughout April, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)

Throughout April, 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 April, the IFT located Luna within their traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF with some use of the Gila Wilderness. Locations were not obtained on the April 7 and April 14 telemetry flight, and it is suspected that M583 was farther in the Gila Wilderness than usual.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871, AF861 and F1115)

The IFT located the pack on and adjacent to the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness and central portion of the GNF throughout April.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)

Throughout April, the IFT located the pack in the east-central portion of the ANF.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared AM1038 and AF1111)

Throughout April, the IFT located the Fox Mountain pack in the northwestern portion of the ANF. AM1038 and AF1111 were located apart during the telemetry flight on April 1, but have been located together on all subsequent telemetry flights on April 7, 14, and 22.

Elk Mountain Pack (collared AM1045 and AF1112)

AM1045 was last located on March 27. A weak signal from its collar on that date suggested the battery may have been failing. The IFT searched unsuccessfully throughout April for AM1045. A mortality signal from AF1112's radio collar was discovered on April 21 in the vicinity of Collins Park. The carcass was collected, but the cause of death has not yet been determined. By the end of April, there still remains no radio contact with AM1045, the remaining member of the Elk Mountain pack. It is considered "fate unknown," but is presumed to be alive.

F1040 (collared)

Throughout April, the IFT continued to search unsuccessfully for F1040. It remains "fate unknown" and will not be reported in monthly updates unless it is subsequently located.

MORTALITIES

On April 21 a mortality signal was received by members of the IFT from AF1112 of the Elk Mountain Pack. Members of the IFT and law enforcement agents investigated the scene and collected the carcass for necropsy.

On April 30, a mortality signal was received from single F1113. Members of the IFT and law enforcement agents investigated the scene and collected the carcass for necropsy.

INCIDENTS

In total, members of the IFT investigated nine potential depredations on livestock in April. Of these investigations, five were confirmed as wolf depredations, two were confirmed as coyote depredations, cause of death was unknown for one, and a calf that was reported as missing potentially due to wolf depredation was not located, and no collared wolves or wolf sign was

located.

On April 3, the IFT investigated a report of a missing calf in Catron County within the San Mateo pack territory. No evidence of wolves was found in the area based on telemetry or field sign nor was there any sign of the calf. The IFT had been intensively tracking the San Mateo pack, the only collared wolves in the area, following the March 29 depredation and was able to verify that the wolves were not in the area on previous or subsequent days.

On April 7, the IFT investigated a reported calf depredation in Catron County. The IFT determined that the depredation was a confirmed wolf kill. Based on telemetry evidence at the site, the depredation incident was assigned to members of the Middle Fork pack (AM871, AF861, and F1115).

On April 14, an IFT member discovered a dead adult cow while tracking members of the Elk Mountain pack. The IFT investigated the scene on April 15. A cause of death could not be determined because the cow had been dead for approximately two weeks, but there was no evidence of wolf predation.

On April 22, the IFT received a report of a suspected wolf depredation discovered on April 21 which involved a single adult cow on private land in the Gila National Forest in Catron County. The IFT investigator confirmed the depredation as a confirmed wolf kill, based on evidence on the carcass and at the scene. The depredation incident was assigned to a single uncollared wolf, based on sightings by the landowner at the scene and in the general area over the previous few weeks.

On April 27, the IFT received a report of a suspected wolf depredation of a calf in Catron County that occurred the evening of April 26. The IFT investigated the suspected depredation site on April 27 and confirmed it as a coyote depredation.

On April 29, a possible wolf depredation of a yearling cow on the FAIR was reported to the IFT. Members of the IFT investigated the depredation site and confirmed that the kill was made by wolves. The depredation incident was assigned to uncollared wolf/wolves. Trapping efforts around the depredation site are currently ongoing.

On April 30, members of the IFT located three additional yearling cow carcasses on the FAIR in the same general area as the confirmed wolf depredation on April 29. One of the cows was a fresh kill and was confirmed as a coyote depredation. The two additional depredations were estimated to be at least two weeks post mortem. After additional investigation, both were confirmed as wolf depredations and were assigned as a single depredation incident to the same uncollared wolf/wolves as the April 29 depredation incident. Management actions are underway to trap and collar these wolves.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On April 4, the IFT reunited a captive pair at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility that had been separated during the breeding season to prevent unwanted reproduction. The IFT also

captured F1028 to perform pregnancy tests, which determined that M1008 and F1028 had not successfully bred. M1008 and F1028 were originally scheduled for translocation in Arizona in April, pending confirmed pregnancy. This translocation was subsequently delayed and alternative options are being considered.

On April 25, the IFT captured F1028 at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility in order to perform veterinary care at the site of an old injury to its rear foot. F1028 was transferred to a veterinary facility for treatment and will be returned to Sevilleta with M1008 upon completion of recovery.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On April 22, the Adaptive Management Working Group (AMWG) held a quarterly meeting in Safford, AZ, which included presentation of an elk population model developed by staff with the Wildlife Management Division of the NMDGF; IFT updates on activities (staffing, outreach, end-of-year count, work plans, and annual report); an update of the NEPA scoping process; clarification memos for SOPs 5.0 (Initial Releases) and 6.0 (Wolf Translocations); new SOPs 25.0 (Media Access to the Field Project) and 27.0 (Population Monitoring of Mexican Wolves); clarification memos for SOPs 11.0 (Depredation Incident Investigation) and 13.0 (Control of Mexican Wolves); and dates and locations of upcoming 2008 and 2009 AMWG meetings.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Beth Wojcik accepted a volunteer position for the USFWS and began her term on April 2.

AGFD technician Cecilia Schmidt was placed on a temporary duty assignment with the Program until June 30, 2008.

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.