

# Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

June 1 – 30, 2005

This is a summary of Mexican wolf reintroduction project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and New Mexico on the Gila National Forest (GNF). Additional information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329, or toll free at 1-888-459-WOLF, or by visiting the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service web site at <http://mexicanwolf.fws.gov>. Past updates may also be viewed on this web site or interested parties may sign up to receive the update electronically by visiting <http://azgfd.gov>. This update is public property and can be used for any purpose. The reintroduction project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services (USDA-WS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR), the San Carlos Apache Tribe (SCAT) on the San Carlos Apache Reservation (SCAR), and other supporting organizations, including the Turner Endangered Species Fund (TESF) and Defenders of Wildlife (DOW).

**Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to:** (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 1-888-459-WOLF (9653). To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the Arizona Game and Fish Department'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 sub-adults, younger than 18 months or pups. The capital letter "A" preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

**Definitions:** For the purpose of this update, a "wolf pack" is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory and are proven breeders. In the event that one of the two alpha wolves dies, the remaining wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack name. A "group" of wolves is defined as two or more wolves that travel together on a consistent basis, but are not proven breeders. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that uncollared wolves may form a group or a pack. If they are confirmed through trapping, sightings, or other field methods, they will be included in the appropriate category.

## CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of the end of June, the collared population consisted of 22 wolves in nine packs and five lone wolves. Estimates of uncollared wolves are best made from an accumulation of data gathered throughout the year. The annual estimate of uncollared wolves for 2005 will be provided in the January 2006 monthly update.

**In Arizona:** Bluestem Pack (AF521 and AM507), Hawks Nest Pack (AF486) (radio collar is not functioning), Rim Pack (AF858), San Mateo Pack (AF903, AM796, and uncollared pups 926, 927 and 928) and lone wolves f872, f873 and Cienega female (AF487), which is no longer identified as a pack because it is a single animal that has dispersed from its traditional home range. Hon-Dah Pack (AM578) and lone wolves F613 and M795 were located on the FAIR.

**In New Mexico:** Aspen Pack (AF667, AM512, m871, and uncollared pups 983, 974 and 975), Luna Pack (AF562 and AM583), Ring Pack (AF799), Saddle Pack (AF797 and collared pups f861, f862, m863 and m864).

*Observation reports of wolves from the public are important, and should be reported immediately as many of the wolves are currently dispersing. All wolf-sighting reports are recorded and evaluated. Please call the toll free number listed above to report a wolf sighting as soon as possible after the sighting. Thank you for your help.*

## NEW TRANSLOCATIONS

On June 13, project personnel captured San Mateo Pack AF903 and AM796, along with their three 10-week-old pups, at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility, and gave them medical examinations, vaccinations, and placed

new radio collars on the adults. Later the same day, personnel translocated the wolves into the ASNF in Arizona, placing them into an electrified, plastic mesh pen. All five wolves made their way out of the pen that same evening.

Also on June 13, project personnel captured Aspen Pack AF667 and AM512, along with yearling m871 and three pups of the year, at the Sevilleta Facility, and gave them medical examinations, vaccinations, and placed new radio collars on the adults. The following day, personnel packed the wolves into the Gila Wilderness on mules, placing them into an electrified, plastic mesh pen. By June 15, all six wolves had left the pen.

## **MONITORING**

Field efforts continue to focus on monitoring wolf activity, reproduction and recruitment, as well as on confirming other uncollared wolves in the wild.

**In Arizona:** The official necropsy report for Iris AM798, found dead May 9, 2005, along Highway 60 east of Vernon in Arizona, confirmed that the wolf died from gunshot. Please see "REWARDS OFFERED" below for more information.

On June 18, IFT personnel documented two uncollared wolves and at least two pups in the northeastern portion of the recovery area. IFT personnel will attempt to capture at least one pack member, and fit it with a radio collar for future monitoring.

On June 18, an off-duty AGFD research biologist reported seeing an adult wolf with three pups within the traditional home range of the Iris Pack.

On June 21, project personnel located Cienega F487 with the female's offspring from 2002, lone M795, on the FAIR.

On June 22, IFT personnel trapped lone F613 and an uncollared male in the same vicinity of each other on the FAIR; however, the uncollared male pulled out of the trap before being restrained and sedated. They released F613 on site on the assumption that the two wolves were traveling together. The IFT set the trap line to capture and place radio collars on any uncollared wolves with the Hon-Dah Pack on the FAIR. On June 24, IFT personnel did trap Hon-Dah AM587. They replaced the male's collar, and then released the wolf on site.

The newly released San Mateo Pack remained in the area of their release site in the ASNF.

Yearling f872 and f873 began to travel separately in mid-June, with f872 located in the north-central portion of the recovery area and f873 located in the west-central portion of the recovery area.

IFT personnel have not been able to locate Hawks Nest AF487 this past month, despite several telemetry flights and multiple search efforts on the ground. The battery on the radio collar of this wolf may have failed since the collar is older than the life expectancy of the battery. If the wolf is not located or trapped and fitted with a new collar within the next two months, the IFT will classify the female as "fate unknown."

IFT personnel located the Bluestem, Hon-Dah and Rim Packs, along with lone female 613 and lone male 795, in their traditional home ranges on either the ASNF or the FAIR.

**In New Mexico:** On June 18, IFT personnel captured an uncollared male wolf, possibly Francisco Pack AM904, in a leg-hold trap near the den of the Francisco AF511. AM904 had been fitted with a Global Positioning Satellite collar; a specially designed collar which can be programmed to drop off an animal at a future date, allowing biologists to retrieve valuable, specific location information. However, the GPS collar on AM904 prematurely dropped off of the wolf in December 2004. Results from blood samples sent to the USFWS laboratory for analysis confirmed that the wolf was AM904. The wolf sustained a compound fracture of the leg as a result of the trap set, and was taken to the project's veterinarian for treatment, where the USFWS elected to have the injured leg amputated. After recovery, project personnel transported the wolf to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility (Sevilleta).

On June 19, IFT personnel captured lone wolf M859 and transported the male to Sevilleta. They had placed traps in the area due to a confirmed depredation of a domestic calf the previous day in an area that was outside the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area boundary and on private land.

On June 23, IFT personnel captured AF511 of the Francisco in a leg-hold trap, as well as one of its pups. Personnel saw another pup at that time, but it eluded capture. The following day, personnel successfully captured the remaining three pups, and transported the five wolves to Sevilleta.

The newly translocated Aspen Pack remained in the area of their release site in the Gila Wilderness.

IFT personnel located the Luna, Ring and Saddle Packs in their traditional home ranges within the GNF.

## **INCIDENTS**

On June 2, IFT personnel confirmed that one or more wolves had killed two calves in Catron County, NM. Due to recent wolf location data, they determined that Ring Pack AM729 was responsible for the depredation of one calf, and that Francisco Pack AM904 was responsible for the depredation of the second calf.

On June 5, project personnel discovered remains of an old cow carcass in Apache County, AZ, where they had located yearling f872 and f873 the past week. IFT personnel investigated the carcass, but were unable to determine the cause of death due to the decomposed condition of the remains. Tracks and sign of numerous scavengers, including wolves, were present at the site. Since f872 and f873 had moved into the area on May 28, it is not likely the wolves were involved with the death of the cow, but they had definitely fed on the carcass.

On June 7, IFT personnel investigated an observation of a dead cow and calf they had made on the telemetry flight the previous day. The carcasses were located in the vicinity of the Hon-Dah Pack on the FAIR. Personnel determined that a wolf or wolves had killed the calf, but that the cow had died of a lightning strike. The IFT also located two additional dead adult cows in the area, but they determined that neither death was the result of wolf depredation. In order to better manage for possible future depredations, IFT personnel began trapping to place radio collars any uncollared wolves that may be associated with Hon-Dah AM587.

On the evening of June 7, project personnel observed Ring Pack AM729. The following morning, they located an injured calf with numerous bite wounds in the same vicinity of where they saw AM729. IFT personnel examined the injured calf, which later died as a result of its injuries, and determined that the male was responsible for the injuries.

On June 24, the USFWS ordered a lethal control action for Ring Pack AM729 because of its third and fourth confirmed depredations on calves that occurred on June 2 and June 7, respectively. With the aid of a helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft, IFT personnel attempted to shoot AM729 on June 24, but were unsuccessful. They made another effort on June 26, being successful this time in lethally removing AM729. Although Ring AF799 was involved in these depredations, the female was not targeted for lethal control, as these were AF799's first and second confirmed depredations. IFT personnel are now attempting to trap and remove AF799 and its pups because of their involvement in the two depredations.

## **CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

See "NEW TRANSLOCATIONS" above.

## **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

On June 3, Dan Groebner provided a field outreach program for 18 students and teachers from the Tempe Corona del Sol High School. During the program, two area ranchers stopped at the program site to provide their perspective on the project. Although this was an unplanned appearance by the ranchers, they added to the overall value of the program.

On June 9 and 10, members of the IFT attended an Immobilization Refresher Course in Alpine, AZ, presented by Dave Hunter of the Turner Endangered Species Fund.

On June 11, Dan Groebner provided an endangered species outreach program, using wolves as the primary subject, for 180 Cub Scouts and their families at their annual day camp in Linden, AZ.

On June 15, Shawna Nelson spoke to six employees of the USFS Wilderness Trail Maintenance Crew on wolf identification and sign, and provided an overview of the project.

On June 21, Shawna Nelson, addressed ten USFS biologists from throughout the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests about improving communication efforts and current wolf issues and concerns, and provided an update on current wolf packs.

On June 23, Shawna Nelson gave a presentation to 26 girls and counselors at a youth camp at Hannagan Meadow Lodge, located south of Alpine, AZ, and talked about fieldwork associated with the wolf project.

The Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) conducted eight public meetings in June, four in New Mexico and four in Arizona, which were attended by various stakeholders, including state, federal and tribal representatives. The three subjects covered in these meetings were the Five-Year-Review of the Blue Range Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project, five Standard Operating Procedures for the project, and a proposed one-year moratorium on new releases of captive Mexican wolves or wolves with a depredation in the past year. The comment period for these subjects will end July 31, 2005. The documents can be found at the following web sites: <http://mexicanwolf.fws.gov> or <http://azgfd.gov>.

#### **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

Nothing new to report.

#### **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 or individuals responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican gray wolves. An additional \$35,000 is being offered by a variety of public interest groups for a total 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, or Springerville, AZ at (928) 333-5245, or 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 hotline at 1-800-352-0700; or New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Operation Game Thief hotline at 1-800-432-4263.

***Killing a Mexican gray wolf is a violation of the federal Endangered Species Act, and can invoke criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and not more than one year in jail and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.***