

## **Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update**

August 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 August, the collared population consisted of 25 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 11 packs and five single wolves. The IFT permanently removed uncollared m1043, a former member of the Rim pack, in the Paradise pack territory 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. Based on location information and wolf observations, the IFT has documented pups in five packs. See pack information below for more information.

### **IN ARIZONA:**

#### **Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF521 and f1042)**

During the majority of August, the IFT located the pack on the FAIR. On the August 27 telemetry flight, the IFT located the pack on the ASNF. During August, the IFT observed two pups with this pack.

#### **Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM619 and uncollared AF486)**

Throughout August, the IFT located AM619 in its traditional home range in the north and central portion of the ASNF. On August 12, the IFT observed AM619 and two uncollared wolves, one believed to be F486. Based on this information and the length of time of the observation of these three wolves, the IFT no longer believes this pack had pups this year.

#### **Paradise Pack (collared M1044, M1045 and M795)**

Throughout August, the IFT located the pack in the northwest portion of the BRWRA on the ASNF and on the FAIR. On August 3, the IFT observed an uncollared wolf in the Paradise territory. The following day, they observed five wolves chasing elk on the FAIR near where the Paradise pack had recently killed an elk. On August 4, the IFT confirmed that, based on all available evidence, an uncollared wolf in the Paradise pack territory was involved in a domestic sheep depredation (see "Incidents" below for more information). On August 14, the IFT observed two pups and five adults. On August 15, the USFS lifted the dog leash order that was enacted with the cooperation of the IFT. On August 17, the IFT captured and permanently removed an uncollared wolf in the Paradise pack territory to the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility as a result of the July 19 USFWS Permanent Removal Order. The IFT later confirmed the wolf to be m1043, a former member of the Rim pack.

The IFT continued to obtain three ground locations for the pack per week; moved the turbo fladry fencing (a visual and physical deterrent to canids) from around the perimeter of a sheep pasture to the sheep shearing area to provide a secure site for the herders to bed the sheep down while they are in the shearing area; placed a Radio-Activated Guard (RAG) box in the area as an auditory deterrent for wolves; and is providing wolf location updates to the permittee. Supplemental feeding stations have been continued in an effort to draw the wolves away from existing sheep grazing areas.

**Rim Pack (collared AF858 and f1048)**

Throughout August, the IFT located the pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF. On August 28, the IFT observed and heard f1048 howling. Based on location information, the IFT had documented denning behavior in this pack and is attempting to obtain visual confirmation of the pups.

**ON THE FAIR:****Bacho Pack (collared AM990)**

Throughout August, the IFT located M990 on the FAIR. Based on location information, the IFT had documented possible denning behavior in this pack and is attempting to obtain visual confirmation of the pups.

**Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)**

Throughout August, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR. In August, the IFT documented pups with this pack.

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

Throughout August, the IFT located the pack north of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. During the first part of August, a ranch hand in the area observed four pups with the Aspen pack.

**Durango Pack (collared AM973)**

Throughout August, the IFT located AM973 in the northeastern portion of the GNF. On August 5, the IFT observed two pups, approximately 13-weeks old, with AM973. The IFT continued a supplemental food cache near the den site to assist AM973 in feeding the pups and to help prevent subsequent depredation incidents. Later in August, a trail camera captured an image of one pup and AM973.

**Luna Pack (collared AM583, f1047 and uncollared AF562)**

Throughout August, the IFT located the Luna pack in the central portion of the GNF, with f1047 located separate from AM583. On August 11, the IFT observed two uncollared wolves and possible pup tracks in the Luna Pack territory. On August 17, the IFT observed AM583 and three uncollared, adult-sized wolves. On the August 27 aerial telemetry flight, the IFT located f1047 in the Middle Fork pack territory.

**Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)**

Throughout August, the IFT located the pack in the northeastern portion of the Gila Wilderness. Based on location information, the IFT had documented denning behavior in this pack and is attempting to obtain visual confirmation of the pups.

**San Mateo Pack (collared AF903)**

On the August 6 aerial telemetry flight, the IFT located AF903 in the eastern portion of the ASNF. By the following aerial telemetry flight on August 13, the IFT located AF903 in the northeastern portion of the Apache National Forest (ANF) in New Mexico. On August 20, the

IFT located it northeast of the town of Luna. Due to the movements and observations of AF903 alone, the IFT no longer suspects this pack to have pups.

#### **M992 (collared)**

Throughout August, the IFT located M992 with F923 in the central portion of the GNF. On August 15, the IFT observed M992 with F923.

#### **m1038 (collared)**

During August, the IFT located m1038 in the northwestern portion of the ANF and in the northeastern portion of the ASNF in Arizona in the San Mateo pack territory.

#### **m1039 and f1040 (both collared)**

During August, the IFT located m1039 separate from f1040 making wide-ranging dispersal movements. The IFT located m1039 first in the vicinity of the Luna pack, then in the northern portion of the GNF on August 6, and finally, in the northwestern portion of the ANF in the San Mateo pack territory on August 27. Throughout August, the IFT located f1040 west and southwest of the traditional Aspen pack home range, in the eastern portion of the Gila Wilderness.

#### **F923 (collared)**

Throughout August, the IFT located F923 with M992 in the central portion of the GNF. On August 15, the IFT observed F923 with M992.

### **INCIDENTS**

On August 4, the IFT investigated a dead sheep and confirmed it to be a wolf depredation. This marks the sixth depredation incident for a member of the Paradise pack, based on all available evidence, within a 365-day period in Apache County, Arizona. The IFT assigned the depredation to an uncollared member of the Paradise pack. The IFT continues to monitor the pack and employ non-lethal techniques. This incident, and all others assigned to the Paradise pack since May, was assigned to m1043.

On August 17, an AGFD Wildlife Manager discovered a dead cow in Apache County. The IFT investigation revealed that the cow had died as a result of a lightning strike.

On August 29, a permittee reported that while checking her cattle on horseback earlier that same day near Beaverhead, Arizona, one of her dogs wandered off. When it returned a short time later, there was a wolf following it. She fired a pistol into the air and the wolf left, but apparently circled around in front of her where she encountered it a second time. She fired her pistol again, and the wolf left the area. She indicated that the wolf's attention appeared to be focused on the dog.

On August 30, the IFT received a report of a dead calf on the FAIR in Arizona. The IFT investigation was unable to determine a cause of death due to severe decomposition.

### **CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

On August 15, the IFT and employees of the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility captured the seven Saddle pack pups for their second round of vaccinations. All seven pups were in good health.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

On August 6, Shawna Nelson provided a wolf project update and addressed issues and concerns with 16 employees of the Glenwood Ranger District in New Mexico.

On August 7, Shawna Nelson provided a wolf project update and addressed issues and concerns with 20 employees of the Clifton Ranger District in Arizona.

On August 10, Shawna Nelson and John Oakleaf provided a wolf project presentation to approximately 40 participants and addressed issues and concerns at the summer meeting of the Society for Range Management near Alpine, Arizona.

On August 17, Shawna Nelson provided a wolf project update and addressed issues and concerns with 15 members of the Upper Eagle Creek Watershed Association in Clifton, Arizona.

On August 18, Shawna Nelson addressed issues and concerns with 50 members of the Greenlee County Cattle Growers Association at Eagle Creek, Arizona.

On August 29, the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) held its quarterly meeting in Alpine, Arizona. Approximately 70 members of the public attended. Information on the AMWG meetings is disseminated electronically through a self-subscription newsletter titled Endangered Species Updates. You may sign up to receive the newsletter by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>.

### **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

On August 13, Kyle McCarty, a biologist with the AGFD Bald Eagle Management Program, began a temporary duty assignment to assist the wolf project with field monitoring.

On August 22, Janess Vartanian, biologist for the AGFD, left her position to begin a Master's degree program at the University of Wyoming. Thank you, Janess, for all of your hard work!

### **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.