

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

December 1 – 31, 2006

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 1-888-459-9653, 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 also 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-APHIS Wildlife Services (USDA 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 (AMOC) that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including private individuals, organizations and tribes.

To view the wolf distribution map, which contains the most recent three months of wolf aerial locations, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. Under "Mexican Wolf Conservation and Management," scroll down to the links under "Distribution."

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 1-888-459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD'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 their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 18 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 sometimes form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are reasonably resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of the end of December, the collared population consisted of 26 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among ten packs and two single wolves. This number is different from last month due to the addition of translocated M863 into Arizona. Please see below for more detailed information.

NEW TRANSLOCATION

On December 15, the IFT captured 2.5-year-old M863 at the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility, fitted it with a radio collar and translocated it to the ASNF, south of Big Lake in Arizona. The purpose of the translocation was to increase the possibility of developing an alpha pair bond with the Bluestem pack female. The IFT removed M863 in March 2006 from private land in New Mexico as a result of a depredation incident. The wolf had also been associated with a depredation incident in August 2005 as part of the Saddle pack in New Mexico.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, M990, M991, m1041 and f1042)

On December 16, the IFT located Meridian pack AM806 with AF521. The two remained together for the remainder of the month. Other members of the Bluestem pack made wide-ranging movements, and the IFT located them separate from each other. Most of the pack members remained on the ASNF, with the exception of M990. The IFT

located M990 both on the FAIR and SCAR. On the December 27 telemetry flight, the IFT located M991 with Rim pack AF858.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM619 and AF486 with a non-functional collar)

The IFT located AM619 in its traditional home range northeast of the Big Lake area on the ASNF. On December 1, the IFT located two sets of tracks in the Hawks Nest pack's traditional home range, indicating that AF486 may still be traveling with AM619.

Meridian Pack (collared AM806 and f1028)

On December 2, the IFT located AM806 in the east-central portion of the BRWRA in Arizona. On December 16, the IFT located Meridian pack AM806 with AF521. The two remained together for the remainder of the month. The IFT located f1028 separate from AM806. It traveled east, moving into New Mexico before returning to the area near its release site.

Rim Pack (collared AF858, AM992 and m1043)

Throughout most of December, the IFT located the pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF, with m1043 separate from the alpha pair. On the December 11 telemetry flight, the IFT located m1043 on the FAIR. On the December 24 telemetry flight, the IFT located m1043 in the southern portion of its traditional home range, but they located it back on the FAIR on the December 27 telemetry flight. Also on the December 27 telemetry flight, the IFT located M992 on the SCAR and located AF858 with Bluestem pack M991.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM796 with a non-functional collar)

During December, the San Mateo pack continued to use areas east of Escudilla Mountain in the Apache National Forest in New Mexico.

M863 (collared)

The IFT translocated M863 on December 15 to the ASNF south of Big Lake in Arizona. M863 remained at that vicinity for two days, and then moved over 50 miles to the northwest portion of the GNF in New Mexico.

FAIR:

Paradise Pack (collared M1044)

On the December 4 and 24 telemetry flights, the IFT located M1044 in the northwest corner of the BRWRA. The IFT obtained a visual observation of M1044 and two other pack members.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Aspen Pack (collared AF667, m1038, m1039, f1040 and uncollared AM512)

Throughout December, the Aspen pack continued to use areas to the northeast and southeast of the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument.

Luna Pack (collared AM583, M925 and uncollared AF562)

During December, the Luna pack traveled north of the Gila Wilderness, and then moved south near the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument in the Gila Wilderness.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AF861 and AM871)

Throughout December, the IFT located the alpha pair together in the central and northern portion of the Gila Wilderness. On the December 11 telemetry flight, the IFT located the Saddle pack in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness, less than five miles from the Middle Fork pack.

Saddle Pack (collared AF797, AM732 and M1007)

On the December 11 telemetry flight, the IFT located the Middle Fork pack in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness, less than five miles from the Saddle pack.

F923 (collared)

During December, the IFT located F923 in Arizona, in the central portion of the BRWRA, approximately five miles from members of the Bluestem and Meridian packs.

INCIDENTS

On December 12, the IFT investigated a calf carcass in Catron County. The IFT confirmed the presence of M925 via radio telemetry signals and a second wolf based on track observations in the vicinity. Although wolves had visited the carcass, they were not the cause of death. It appeared to investigators that the calf died from a car collision or a fall from a cliff.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On December 13, captive management personnel transferred F866 from the Wild Canid Survival and Research Center to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility to be paired with M1019 for companionship.

On December 15, the IFT captured 2.5-year-old M863 at the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility, fitted it with a radio collar and translocated it to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, south of Big Lake in Arizona. On the same day, captive management personnel transferred M1008 from the Ladder Ranch to the Sevilleta facility.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On December 7, members of the six cooperating agencies in the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project attended the Mexican Wolf Directors' Summit held in Phoenix, Arizona. Participants included directors or their surrogates from the AGFD, NMDGF, Arizona and New Mexico Wildlife Services, and Regional Offices of the USDA-USFS, USFWS and USDA-WS. The purpose of the Summit was to provide an opportunity for invited state, federal and tribal leaders to meet with the members of the IFT and government members of AMOC and AMWG to exchange views and discuss issues pertaining to Mexican wolf reintroduction in Arizona and New Mexico, including working relationships, communication, decision-making and responsibilities relative to the reintroduction effort in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area and the relationship this effort has to overall wolf recovery.

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(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican gray wolves. A variety of public interest groups are offering 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.