



Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

December 1-31, 2011

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project (Project) activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR) and in New Mexico on the Apache National Forest (ANF) and Gila National Forest (GNF). Non-tribal lands involved in this Project are collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). Additional Project 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 website at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may be viewed on either website, 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), 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).

To view 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 24 months or pups. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

Definitions: A “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory. In the event that one of the two alpha (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining alpha wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain at least one wolf with a radio telemetry collar attached to it. 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 December 2011, the collared population consisted of 33 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among eleven packs and four single wolves. The IFT documented one wolf mortality in December. Another collared wolf was lethally removed from the BRWRA during the month due to nuisance-related incidents. Some other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with radio-collared wolves, and others are separate from known packs.

Seasonal note: In December, the IFT continued with more focused efforts to document uncollared wolves within the BRWRA, including snow track surveys, trail cameras and coordinated follow up regarding reported wolf sightings. These activities are scheduled to continue over the next several months.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF1042, and mp1240)

Throughout December, the IFT located these wolves in their traditional territory in the central portion of the ASNF. The radio telemetry collar for AM806 worked intermittently during December.

In November, the IFT determined that mp1242 had sustained an injury to its rear leg. IFT personnel implemented capture operations, and were able to dart and capture this wolf from the ground on December 3. The wolf was in very poor body condition, and died while in transport to a Project veterinarian. The animal had a severe gunshot wound to a rear leg, which ultimately caused its death.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared f1208, mp1244 and fp1247)

In December, these wolves continued to use their traditional territory in the north-central portion of the ASNF. Toward the end of the October, m1248 began to disperse from other pack members. Throughout November and December, the IFT located this wolf alone outside of the traditional Hawks Nest Pack territory in the northern portion of the ASNF and on the FAIR. The IFT now considers m1248 to be a single wolf. M1038 was not located during December via radio telemetry collar signal.

Rim Pack (collared AM1107 and AF858)

Throughout December, the IFT located the Rim Pack utilizing its winter range in the south-central portion of the ASNF.

Paradise Pack (collared AM795, AF1056, mp1243 and mp1245)

In December, these wolves continued to utilize the traditional range of their territory in the northern portion of the ASNF and the FAIR.

m1248 (collared)

Throughout December, the IFT located this wolf traveling widely through the BRWRA in Arizona and on the FAIR.

ON THE FAIR:

M1183 (collared)

During December, the IFT located this wolf on the FAIR.

M1253 (collared)

During December, the IFT located this wolf on the FAIR.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992, AF923, fp1250 and fp1251)

Throughout December, the IFT located the Dark Canyon Pack within its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared M1158 and F1188)

Throughout December, the IFT documented these wolves together in the northwest portion of the GNF.

Luna Pack (collared AF1115, F1246 and mp1241)

In December, the IFT located the Luna Pack within its traditional territory in the north-central portion of the GNF.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)

In December, the IFT located AM871 and AF861 within their traditional territory in the central portion of the GNF.

Morgart's Pack (collared M1155)

Throughout December, the IFT documented this wolf traveling in the north-central portion of the GNF, largely within the Luna Pack territory.

San Mateo Pack (collared AM1157, AF903, f1212 and mp1249)

During December, the IFT located these wolves in the traditional San Mateo Pack territory in the north-central portion of the GNF. The IFT continued to document f1212 traveling away from the pack on the edges of their territory. The IFT also continued to document m1252 traveling widely through the BRWRA in New Mexico. The IFT now considers m1252 to be a single wolf.

Willow Springs Pack (collared M1185)

Throughout December, the IFT located this wolf in the north-central portion of the GNF.

m1252 (collared)

Throughout December, this wolf was located traveling widely through the BRWRA in New Mexico, as well as in areas outside of the BRWRA.

MORTALITIES

The IFT documented one dead wolf in December. IFT personnel captured Bluestem Pack mp1242 in Arizona on December 3 after it was discovered injured in late November. The wolf died shortly after capture due to injuries sustained from a gunshot wound. The shooting incident is under investigation.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

In December, the IFT received several reports of F1105 interacting with domestic dogs and private residences within the BRWRA in the central portion of the GNF. Due to these continued nuisance issues, the FWS issued a lethal removal order for F1105, which was carried out by WS personnel on December 14.

INCIDENTS

During December, IFT personnel investigated one livestock depredation incident in the BRWRA. On December 30, WS personnel investigated a dead cow and newborn calf north of Springerville, Arizona, on Arizona State Trust lands. They determined the cause of death to be complications associated with the birth of the calf.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On December 7, Project personnel captured F1031, F1032, F1033 and F1034 for a veterinary examination, as well as routine vaccinations at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility.

On December 19, Project personnel captured M1019 and F886 at Sevilleta. The pair was transported to the Endangered Wolf Center in Missouri via the Light Hawk transportation program where they will be retired from the reintroduction project.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

During December, Project personnel contacted numerous private landowners in Arizona and New Mexico regarding upcoming helicopter Mexican wolf count and capture operations. IFT personnel also solicited sighting information regarding potential uncollared wolves in the BRWRA during these contacts. Information obtained will be followed up by IFT personnel.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Janess Vartanian joined the Project as a FWS biologist on a term appointment. Janess has worked on the Project previously as a wildlife technician and wildlife specialist for the AGFD. Welcome back, Janess!

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 \$46,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$58,000, 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, Arizona, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, Arizona, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (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.