

# Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

January 1 – 31, 2006

This 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). 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://azgfd.gov/wolf> or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service web site at <http://mexicanwolf.fws.gov>. Past updates may also be viewed on either web site or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://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). Other entities cooperate through the Adaptive Management Work Group that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including the San Carlos Apache Tribe (SCAT), the Turner Endangered Species Fund (TESF) and Defenders of Wildlife (DOW).

**Please note new information:** To better address the needs of cooperators and the public to be informed of areas that wolves recently occupied, the Interagency Field Team (IFT) has created a wolf location map. Updated monthly, this map will contain the most recent three months of wolf aerial locations and can be found at [http://www.azgfd.gov/w\\_c/es/images/WolfLocMapColor0206.gif](http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/es/images/WolfLocMapColor0206.gif).

**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 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 purposes of these Monthly Updates, a "wolf pack" is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established home range. In the event that one of the two alpha wolves dies, the remaining wolves, regardless of pack size, retain the pack name. The IFT recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars sometimes form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and reasonably resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

A "breeding pair" is defined as an adult male and an adult female wolf with at least two pups produced during the previous breeding season that survived until December 31 of the year of their birth.

## CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of the end of January, the collared population consisted of 22 wolves with functional collars dispersed among eight packs and including two lone wolves. The IFT estimates the 2005 end-of-year wolf population to be 35 to 49 animals, with five confirmed breeding pairs.

*Wolf observation reports from the public are important, and should be reported immediately. All wolf-sighting reports are recorded and evaluated. Please call 1-888-459-9653 to report a wolf observation as soon as possible after the sighting. Thank you for your help.*

## **IN ARIZONA:**

### **Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, AM507, M990 and m991)**

*This pack is considered a "breeding pair" per the definition above.*

The IFT located the alpha pair, AF521 and AM507, with their suspected offspring, sub-adult M990 and pup m991, throughout January within their traditional home range in the west-central portion of the ASNF. On one telemetry

flight, the IFT located m991 over 10 miles away from the rest of the pack, however, it had returned by the following week. The IFT estimates the year-end population of the Bluestem pack to be five to seven animals, based on recent snow-tracking evidence. Blood work to determine the genetic lineages of M990 and m991 is still pending.

**Cienega F487 (collared lone wolf)**

During the January 5 telemetry flight, IFT personnel found female 487 dead in New Mexico. It was the former alpha female of the Cienega Pack, but had been a lone wolf for the past year. Necropsy results determined that a vehicle hit the wolf, causing its death. F487 was among the most productive females in the project, and had pups that survived in 2000, 2002 and 2003.

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

On January 18, IFT personnel captured AF486. They replaced its non-functional telemetry collar with a Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) collar, and released it on site. This pack continued to use its traditional home range east of the Big Lake area on the ASNF.

**Hon-Dah Pack (collared AM578) located on the FAIR**

*This pack is considered a "breeding pair" per the definition above.*

*Wolf locations and pack information on tribal lands are not disclosed per an agreement with the WMAT.*

**Rim Pack (collared AF858 and M992)**

IFT personnel continued to locate these two wolves together throughout January within their traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF. Blood work to determine the genetic lineage of M992 is still pending.

**San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM796, with a non-functional collar, but believed to be with AF903)**

*This pack is considered a "breeding pair" per the definition above.*

During the second week of January, IFT personnel located this pack in New Mexico, but then it returned to its traditional home range in the northern portion of the ASNF in Arizona.

**IN NEW MEXICO:**

**Aspen Pack (collared AF667, AM512 and sub-adult M871)**

Throughout January, IFT personnel located the Aspen Pack in the eastern portion of the Gila Wilderness. Sub-adult M871 has been exhibiting dispersal behavior, but remained within in the Aspen pack alpha pair's core use area.

**Luna Pack (collared AF562, AM583 and m925)**

*This pack is considered a "breeding pair" per the definition above.*

The alpha pair, AF562 and AM583, as well as pup m925, remained together and within their traditional home range area in the central portion of the GNF. Project personnel observed two pups, collared m925 and an uncollared pup, in late November.

**Saddle Pack (collared AF797, uncollared AM732, collared sub-adults M863 and M864, and pup m1007)**

*This pack is considered a "breeding pair" per the definition above.*

Throughout January, IFT personnel located AF797 in the traditional Saddle Pack home range area in the southern portion of the GNF.

On the January 18 telemetry flight, IFT personnel observed M863 and M864 with two uncollared Saddle Pack pups. They captured one male pup, affixed a telemetry collar, assigned it studbook number 1007 and released it on site. The four wolves were 10 miles from the Saddle Pack at the time. Later in January, the IFT located M864 alone, 30 miles from the pack and just outside the recovery area. The IFT located M863 and m1007 together over 25 miles from the Saddle Pack alpha pair.

**Lone Wolves (sub-adult F861, formerly of the Saddle Pack, and M1008)**

Sub-adult F861 continued to exhibit dispersal behavior during January, with consistent locations 10 miles and greater from the Saddle Pack.

On January 18, IFT personnel captured an uncollared male wolf, affixed a telemetry collar and assigned it studbook number 1008. They observed an additional uncollared, unknown wolf with M1008 on January 20. See "Incidents"

below for more information. At the end of January, IFT personnel located M1008 five miles from where it was trapped.

### **MORATORIUM**

The IFT located five breeding pairs of wolves using land and air surveys conducted in December and January. Based on those numbers and discussions by the Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC), the proposed Moratorium on the release of new wolves will not be implemented. The IFT is formulating recommendations for new wolf releases in 2006; however, the AMOC has not approved any actions to date.

### **INCIDENTS**

On January 18, IFT personnel set traps in response to a confirmed depredation by an uncollared wolf or wolves in NM. They captured a 53-pound uncollared male that night. They assigned it studbook number 1008 and released it on site. The IFT monitored the situation to determine if additional wolves were traveling with M1008 and to see if any additional depredations occurred in the area. On January 20, IFT personnel observed M1008 with another uncollared wolf. They did not locate any other depredations.

### **CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

On January 10, project personnel transferred wolves f923, f924, F635, F638, M730 and M731 from the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility to the USFWS Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility. On January 31, M591 and F534 were transferred from the Sevilleta facility to the Ladder Ranch facility. These transfers are in preparation for the upcoming breeding season that typically occurs from early February through mid-March.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

On January 25, Shawna Nelson, IFT Outreach Coordinator, gave four presentations to 110 seventh grade students at Round Valley Middle School in Eagar, AZ.

All six components of the 5-Year Review, and its recommendations for modifying the project, are now available on the AGFD web site in downloadable PDF files at <http://azgfd.gov/wolf>.

The AMOC is in the early stages of planning a Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Workshop, tentatively scheduled for August 29-31, 2006, at the Hon-Dah Resort and Casino located near Pinetop, AZ. Most, if not all, of the workshop will be open to the public. Speakers will be by invitation only. No further information is available at this time, but interested parties may want to consider these dates when planning future activities.

### **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

On January 9, the NMDGF hired Saleen Richter as the New Mexico Field Team Leader. This new position is in addition to the existing NMDGF field biologist. Richter worked on the Mexican wolf project six years ago before moving to Maine to work as a lynx biologist, after which she obtained a Master's degree at Southern Illinois University.

On January 10, Mike Watrobka began work as a USFWS volunteer for the wolf project.

On January 17, Marc Criffield began work as a USFWS volunteer for the project.

On January 31, Veronica Yovovich began work as a USFWS volunteer for the project.

### **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 Springerville, AZ, at (928) 333-5245, 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 not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.