



Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

January 1 - 31, 2009

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Reintroduction 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 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). Other entities, including private individuals and nongovernmental organizations, cooperate through the Project's Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) that meets periodically in Arizona and New Mexico.

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

Project personnel completed the 2008 end-of-year population count this month. The IFT estimates the population at the end of December 2008 to be 52 wolves, with a total of two breeding pairs. A breeding pair consists of at least one adult male (including an alpha male), at least one adult female (including an alpha female), and at least two pups produced during the same year that survive until the end of December. Four other potential breeding pairs were lost this year due to the mortality of associated pack members. The specific population estimate for 2008, including the estimated number of uncollared wolves, will be released in February. As a result of capture and translocation efforts associated with the end-of-year population count, the collared population at the end of January 2009 consisted of 30 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 10 packs and six single wolves.

On January 17, project personnel darted and captured mp1161 from the Fox Mountain Pack in New Mexico. This pup-of-the-year weighed in at a robust 72 pounds during post-capture processing, and it was fitted with a new radio telemetry collar. The IFT also captured the Fox Mountain alpha male, AM1038, using a helicopter and replaced its old telemetry collar with a new unit. Both wolves were successfully reunited with the other pack members, and they are again roaming their territory in Arizona and New Mexico.

On January 18, project personnel captured M1039 near Lookout Mountain in New Mexico. On January 19, the IFT translocated M1039 near F1028 in the vicinity of Deep Creek in New Mexico to facilitate pair-bonding between the two animals. Subsequent telemetry monitoring indicated that the wolves did not interact significantly, and by the end of the month, the two wolves were traveling separately on the GNF.

On January 20, project personnel translocated F1054 into the Fox Mountain Pack territory in western New Mexico in an effort to provide a potential mate for AM1038. F1054 moved out of the recovery area and was subsequently recaptured on January 24 near St. Johns, Arizona. Project personnel translocated F1054 into New Mexico a second time on January 25. Toward the end of the month, F1054 was located outside of the BRWRA east of St. Johns. The IFT is developing a management action to address this situation.

On January 23, project personnel captured AM871 from the Middle Fork Pack in New Mexico during helicopter count activities. This wolf had suffered an apparent trap-related injury to its front left leg. Dr. Alcumbrac, project veterinarian, amputated the leg. The IFT will be translocating AM871 into the Middle Fork Pack territory as soon as the leg has healed.

On January 23, project personnel captured F1106 outside of the BRWRA on the west side of the Luera Mountains in New Mexico. The IFT subsequently translocated this wolf back into the

BRWRA near Gila Flats on the GNF in New Mexico on January 24.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, AM806 and F1042)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Bluestem Pack in its traditional territory on the ASNF and the FAIR.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared M1044, AF1110 and mp1155)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Hawks Nest Pack in its traditional territory on the ASNF.

Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and AF1056)

During the month of January, the IFT located the Paradise Pack primarily within the traditional territory of AF1056 on the north-central portion of the FAIR. The IFT will continue to monitor this pack's movements and may shift the Paradise Pack to the FAIR list of associated packs if it is determined that the wolves are primarily utilizing the FAIR for their territory.

Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM1107)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Rim Pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF.

Moonshine Pack

In late January, project personnel found F836 deceased on the FAIR. F836 had been traveling with M619 in Arizona in December, but in the early part of January, the two wolves were not traveling together. The other original member of the Moonshine Pack, M1039 is currently traveling in the central part of the GNF. As a result of the death of F836 and M1039's current movement patterns, the IFT now considers the Moonshine Pack to be defunct, and we have reclassified M1039 as a single animal.

M619 (collared)

In early January, M619 began traveling separately from F836 in Arizona. The IFT located this wolf off of the BRWRA during the early portion of January. As the month progressed, M619 moved back onto the BRWRA, and it was utilizing the northern portion of the ASNF

F1054 (collared)

On January 20, project personnel translocated F1054 into the Fox Mountain Pack territory in western New Mexico in an effort to provide a potential mate for AM1038. F1054 moved out of the recovery area and was subsequently recaptured on January 24 near St. Johns. Project personnel translocated F1054 into New Mexico a second time on January 25. Toward the end of January, F1054 was located outside of the BRWRA and east of St. Johns. The IFT is developing a management action to address this situation.

ON THE FAIR:

Bacho Pack (collared AM990 and fp1154)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Bacho Pack within its traditional territory on the FAIR.

Lofer Pack

AF1056, the former Lofer Pack alpha female, is currently considered the alpha female of the Paradise Pack. In July 2008, the IFT documented other wolves as being associated with AF1056 when it was considered a member of the Lofer Pack. Efforts to locate and capture these uncollared wolves will begin again as soon as weather conditions allow trapping activities to be conducted in a safe manner.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)

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

Luna Pack (collared F1118 and M1156)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Luna Pack in its traditional territory in the central portion of the GNF.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Middle Fork Pack in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness and central portion of the GNF.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)

Throughout January, the IFT located the San Mateo Pack in the north-central portion of the GNF.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared AM1038, mp1157, mp1158 and mp1161)

Throughout January, the IFT located the Fox Mountain Pack in on the western portion of the GNF.

Laredo (collared F1028)

In early January, the IFT documented F1028 west of the Gila Wilderness in the central portion of the GNF. In late January, F1028 was located northwest of the Gila Wilderness. Due to the IFT determination that F1028 is now traveling alone, it will be referenced a single wolf and will no longer be considered a "pack." The wolf will keep its original pack name for future reference.

F1115 (collared)

Throughout January, the IFT located F1115 in the central portion of the Gila Wilderness.

F1106 (collared)

On January 23, project personnel captured F1106 outside of the BRWRA on the west side of the Luera Mountains in New Mexico. This wolf was subsequently translocated back into the BRWRA near Gila Flats on the GNF on January 24. On January 26, the IFT located F1106

southwest of Gila Hot Springs.

M1039 (collared)

Throughout January, the IFT located M1039 in the central portion of the GNF. The IFT captured and translocated it into the vicinity of F1028 to facilitate pair-bonding between the two wolves. By the end of the month, the wolves were traveling separately on the GNF.

MORTALITIES

In mid-January, the IFT located F836 dead along State Highway 260 on the FAIR in Arizona. Law enforcement agents investigated the scene and collected the carcass for necropsy. The wolf's death is currently under investigation.

INCIDENTS

The IFT investigated two potential livestock depredation incidents during January. Neither of the incidents was confirmed as wolf depredations. The summaries are as follows:

On January 21, Wildlife Services (WS) personnel investigated a dead cow north of Luna, New Mexico, and determined that the cause of death was unknown.

On January 29, WS personnel investigated a dead calf near Johnson Basin, New Mexico. The cause of death was determined to be a coyote depredation.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

No significant captive management activities occurred in January.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

Chris Bagnoli and Paula Capece have been busy contacting numerous private landowners in Arizona and New Mexico regarding permission to conduct helicopter-based, wolf survey count and capture activities in January within and adjacent to the BRWRA. Approximately 19 landowners in New Mexico and 47 landowners in Arizona were contacted regarding this operation. Information regarding potential uncollared wolf sightings was solicited from these individuals during these calls as well.

John Oakleaf conducted a field tour of project activities with two biologists from the Les Loups du Gevaudan wolf recovery facility located in France.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

No significant personnel actions occurred during the month of January.

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 \$40,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$52,000, 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.