

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

February 1 – 28, 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 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 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 wolf distribution map, which contains the previous 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.” To be consistent in disseminating Mexican wolf location information, the weekly telemetry flight locations are now available on the same link and under “Distribution,” as per Standard Operating Procedure 26.0, *Location Dissemination Guidelines*.

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 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 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 sometimes 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 February, the collared population consisted of 31 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among nine packs and six single wolves. This number is different from last month because the IFT lethally removed San Mateo pack AM796, and M992 is no longer associated with the Rim pack and is considered a single wolf.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF521, m1041 and f1042)

Throughout February, the IFT located this pack within the central portion of their traditional home range on the ASNF. On the February 5 telemetry flight, the IFT located f1028 with the pack. On the February 20 telemetry flight, the IFT observed seven wolves, but f1028 was not among them.

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

The IFT located AM619 in its traditional home range north and northeast of the Big Lake area on the ASNF.

Rim Pack (collared AM991, AF858 and m1043)

Throughout February, the IFT located the pack within their traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF. The IFT located pup m1043 on the FAIR, separate from the alpha pair. M992 is no longer associated with the Rim pack, and is now considered a single wolf listed under “New Mexico.”

M990 (collared)

During February, the IFT located M990 on the FAIR.

f1028 (collared)

Throughout February, the IFT located f1028 in the central portion of the ASNF. On the February 5 telemetry flight, the IFT located f1028 with members of the Bluestem pack.

FAIR:

Paradise Pack (collared M1044, M1045 and M795)

Throughout February, the IFT located the pack in the northwest corner of the BRWRA.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Aspen Pack (collared AF667, m1038, m1039, f1040, f1046 and uncollared AM512)

Throughout February, the Aspen pack continued to use areas to the northeast and southeast of the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. On the February 14 telemetry flight, the IFT located M863 with the Aspen pack, excluding f1040, north of the traditional Aspen pack territory. On the February 21 telemetry flight, the IFT located m1039 approximately five miles south of the pack. During the same telemetry flight, the IFT located f1040 over 20 miles south-southwest of the pack. They again located M863 with AF667 and m1038 on this flight and on the February 26 telemetry flight.

Luna Pack (collared AM583, f1047 and uncollared AF562)

During February, the Luna pack remained north of the Gila Wilderness. On the February 5 telemetry flight, the IFT located f1047 approximately 15 miles south of the pack.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)

Throughout February, the IFT located the pair together in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness.

Saddle Pack (collared AM732, AF797, M1007 and f1016)

The pack remained in the GNF and in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness. On the February 14 telemetry flight, the IFT observed four wolves. On February 13, a permittee discovered a calf in this area that the IFT later confirmed had been injured by a wolf. The calf died on February 22 from its injuries. This resulted in a third depredation incident for M1007. On February 24, the USFWS issued a permanent removal order for M1007 for the three confirmed depredation incidents involving three cows in New Mexico.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903)

During February, the pack continued to use areas east of Escudilla Mountain in the Apache National Forest in New Mexico. On February 5, the USFWS issued a permanent removal order for AM796 for involvement in three depredation incidents. The removal order applied only to AM796, not the other members of the pack, as detailed examinations of canine bite measurements in two confirmed cattle depredation incidents and in one injury to a horse were consistent with AM796. In the third cattle depredation, the IFT was not able to obtain measurements due to the deterioration of the carcass. On February 20, the IFT lethally removed AM796 in an area east of Escudilla Mountain in New Mexico’s GNF.

M863 (collared)

In February, the IFT located M863 in the northeast portion of the GNF. On the February 14, 21 and 26 telemetry flights, the IFT located M863 with the Aspen pack.

F923 (collared)

During February, F923 made wide-ranging movements. The IFT located F923 along the New Mexico/Arizona border and in the west-central portion of the GNF.

M925 (collared) – Formerly of the Luna pack

The IFT located M925 separate from the Luna pack in the northern portion of the BRWRA.

M992 (collared) – Formerly of the Rim pack

The IFT located M992 in New Mexico in the vicinity of single F923.

INCIDENTS

On February 2, the IFT investigated a calf carcass in Catron County, New Mexico. They confirmed that it was a wolf depredation committed by an unknown, uncollared wolf in the area.

On February 6, a permittee in Apache Country, Arizona, contacted the IFT to report a missing 350-pound calf after the permittee received telemetry information of a wolf location nearby. The IFT and permittee searched the relatively small, fenced pasture, but were unable to locate the calf or a carcass. Five days later, the permittee found a different calf dead and observed a cow fighting off three canids. An IFT investigation determined that coyotes were responsible for the calf depredation and found no sign of wolves in the area.

On February 12, the IFT received a call concerning an injured calf in Catron County. The IFT confirmed that wolves caused the injury the previous evening. Despite administration of antibiotics, the calf died on February 22, making it a third depredation incident for Saddle pack M1007. On February 24, the USFWS issued a permanent removal order for M1007 for the three confirmed incidents involving three cows in New Mexico.

On February 24, the IFT investigated the remains of a calf in Catron County. They confirmed that it was a wolf depredation committed by an unknown, uncollared wolf, as they didn't pick up any wolf telemetry signals in the area. Following this investigation, the IFT examined the remains of a cow on the same allotment, shown to them by the permittee, that had died three weeks prior. Due to insufficient remains and some wolf scat in the vicinity, they deemed it a possible depredation.

On February 26, the IFT received a report of a wolf interacting with two dogs in Apache County. One of the dogs sustained a minor puncture wound. The IFT didn't locate any wolves with radio collars in the vicinity, and they monitored the area to prevent any further interaction.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Nothing new to report.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On February 14, Shawna Nelson gave a presentation to 150 Arizona Sonora Desert Museum docents as part of their advanced docent training at Lowes Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson, Arizona.

On February 15 and 16, Shawna Nelson provided three presentations to 76 fourth-grade students at Keeling Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona.

On February 15-19, the IFT assisted a British Broadcasting Corporation videographer with obtaining on-site footage of free-ranging wolves in Arizona. The BBC was following up on a previous filming assignment covering the transfer of the Meridian pack into its release acclimation pen last summer.

The 19th Annual North American Wolf Conference will be held April 24-26 at the Little American Hotel in Flagstaff, Arizona. The conference serves as a bridge to bring together leading wolf biologists, conservationists, livestock owners, depredation specialists, educators, and state, tribal and federal wolf managers to share information ranging from ecological and genetic research, non-lethal techniques to reduce livestock conflicts, and economic and environmental impacts of wolf restoration. Please visit <http://www.defenders.org/wolf/conference/> for more details.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

AGFD completed interviews for the Field Team Leader position and is now going through the selection/approval process.

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 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.