



Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

May 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

At the end of May 2009, the collared population consisted of 27 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 10 packs and five single wolves. Some other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with radio-collared wolves, and others are separate from known packs.

Due to the recent deaths of M660 in captivity and six pups of the year from its mate F749, the IFT has suspended the planned initial release of this pack of wolves this upcoming July from the Engineer Springs release pen in Arizona. The IFT had planned to initially release a family group at Engineer Springs, including M660, F749, m1130 and m1133, as well as any pups produced this year. The IFT will monitor the wolf population in this portion of the BRWRA during 2009 and early 2010, with plans to release another wolf pack at this location during the summer of 2010.

Seasonal note: Wolf pups are generally born between mid-April and mid-May. During the upcoming months, the IFT will be actively monitoring wolf packs to determine if females are denning in order to document wild-born pups and estimate their survival. Based on location information from the past few weeks, the IFT has documented denning behavior for the Hawks Nest, Bluestem, Rim, Bacho, Paradise, Dark Canyon, Middle Fork and San Mateo Packs.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (AM806 and AF1042)

Throughout May, the IFT located AM806 and AF1042 in their traditional territory in the central portion of the ASNF.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM1044, AF1110 and mp1155)

During the month of May, the IFT located the Hawks Nest Pack in its traditional territory in the central portion of the ASNF.

Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM1107)

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

M619 (collared)

During May, the IFT located M619 in the north-central portion of the ASNF and northwestern portion of the GNF in New Mexico.

F521 (collared)

Throughout the month of May, the IFT located F521 on the northwestern portion of the GNF in

New Mexico and the eastern portion of the ASNF in Arizona.

ON THE FAIR:

Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and AF1056)

During May, the IFT located the Paradise Pack within its traditional territory on the northern portion of the FAIR.

Bacho Pack (collared AM990 and fp1154)

Throughout May, the IFT located AM990 within its traditional territory on the FAIR. During May, the IFT documented fp1154 to be traveling separate from the rest of the Bacho Pack. The IFT located this wolf on the SCAR during the month of May.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)

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

Luna Pack (collared M1156)

Throughout May, the IFT located M1156 in its traditional territory in the central portion of the GNF.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)

Throughout May, the IFT located the Middle Fork Pack within its traditional territory in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness and central portion of the GNF.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)

Throughout May, the IFT located the San Mateo Pack within its traditional territory in the north-central portion of the GNF.

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

Throughout May, the IFT located the Fox Mountain Pack within its traditional territory in the northwestern portion of the GNF.

Laredo (collared F1028)

During May, the IFT documented F1028 in the central portion of the GNF.

F1115 (collared)

Throughout May, the IFT documented F1115 in the north-central portion of the Gila Wilderness on the GNF.

F1106 (collared)

During May, the IFT located F1106 in the central and north-central portions of the GNF.

MORTALITIES

The IFT did not document any wolf mortalities during May.

INCIDENTS

In total, the IFT investigated five potential depredation incidents in May. Of the five, the IFT confirmed one as a wolf depredation and another as a probable wolf depredation. The remaining investigations did not implicate wolves. Summaries of the investigations are as follows:

On May 11, IFT personnel contacted a livestock owner regarding a dead calf they located near Coyote Peak in New Mexico. The owner declined to have the carcass investigated by WS personnel because it did not appear to be a wolf depredation.

On May 12, a livestock producer near Luna, New Mexico, reported an injured cow to WS personnel. During the subsequent investigation, the injured cow was not located; therefore, a follow-up investigation was not conducted.

On May 12, WS personnel investigated a dead cow near Sand Flat, New Mexico, and determined that it was killed by a wolf. The IFT assigned the incident to a single wolf, F1106. This is the first assigned depredation for this wolf since it was translocated into New Mexico near Ghost Lake in December 2008.

On May 19, WS personnel investigated a dead calf near the Mangas Mountains in New Mexico and determined that it was a probable wolf depredation. A depredation incident was not assigned to a wolf because the incident was not confirmed by WS personnel as a wolf depredation.

On May 19, a livestock producer notified IFT personnel of a dead yearling cow near Cooney Prairie in New Mexico. The livestock owner determined that the yearling died of natural causes and declined to have WS personnel conduct an investigation of the carcass.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On May 7, personnel at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility (Sevilleta) captured 14-week-old female pup 1167 of the Saddle Pack for a veterinary examination, as well as routine vaccinations. On the same day, M660 was captured at Sevilleta after previous observations showed a significant swelling on its face. Personnel determined that further examination was needed, and the animal was transferred to the Rio Grande Zoo for additional veterinary care. M660 died on May 14, due to complications of what was later identified as a tumor.

On May 19, IFT personnel assisted Sevilleta staff in capturing Saddle Pack M732, F797, M1049-1052 and fp1167. The pack was transported to the Wild Canid Survival and Research Center outside St. Louis, Missouri. M732 and F797 will be retired from the reintroduction program, while M1049-1052 remain eligible for translocation. fp1167 is eligible for initial release.

On May 23, M968 was transferred from the Wild Canid Survival and Research Center and placed in a pen by itself at Sevilleta as a plan to introduce M968 as a potential mate for F749 and

surrogate father to the litter of pups from M660.

On May 21, Sevilleta staff observed only five pups from F749's litter of six. They were unable to find the missing pup. While doing observations on May 25 and 26, Sevilleta staff observed unusual behavior from F749. They recovered two dead pups from the pen; the other three were not found and are presumed dead. A necropsy of one dead pup found is pending. F749 and two male yearlings from last year, m1130 and m1133, appear to be healthy. Plans to introduce M968 into this pack have been abandoned.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On May 8, Cathy Taylor presented a Project overview to 62 students and six adults at the San Lorenzo School in New Mexico.

On May 12, Cathy Taylor presented a Project overview to 20 USFS employees on the Black Mesa Ranger District in Overgaard, Arizona.

On May 15, Cathy Taylor gave a presentation to seven outfitter-guides in New Mexico at the Gila Hot Springs facility regarding Mexican wolf issues as they relate to their business operations on the GNF.

On May 18 and 19, Cathy Taylor and Chris Bagnoli gave presentations to 244 students and 12 educators at St. Johns Middle School in St. Johns, Arizona. The presentation included discussions regarding predator management and Mexican wolf recovery efforts in the BRWRA.

On May 24, Mike Godwin gave an impromptu presentation regarding Mexican wolf recovery work to 36 students and educators from Crowder College in Missouri, on a field trip near Greer, Arizona.

On May 26, Paula Capece and Cathy Taylor gave a presentation at the Employee Orientation of the Wilderness District on the GNF. They discussed the status of the Project, gave guidelines for avoiding wolf interactions in the forest, what to do if interactions do occur, and presented information on wolf identification to about 50 USFS permanent and seasonal employees.

On May 27, the IFT presented a Project overview to 12 members of the public at the AMWG meeting in Pinetop, Arizona. Other discussions included planned initial releases, annual population objectives and outreach effectiveness overall for the Project.

On May 30, Colby Gardner and Beth Orning-Tschampl gave a Project overview presentation to 39 adults and children at the Big Lake visitor center in Arizona.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Ben and Carrie Cook, project volunteers with the USFWS, left their positions with the Project this month. Thanks for all your hard work, Ben and Carrie!

Two new USFWS volunteers, Holly Lance and Rebecca Carter, joined the Project this month.

Welcome, Holly and Rebecca.

Rachel Williams joined the Project as a summer intern for the AGFD. Welcome to the Project, Rachel.

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.