



Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

September 1-30, 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 September 2009, the collared population consisted of 29 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 10 packs and three single wolves. Some other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with radio-collared wolves, and others are separate from known packs.

Seasonal note: In September 2009, the IFT initiated fall trapping efforts to document pack status and pup recruitment in the BRWRA. We have trapped and collared four new wolf pups from the following established packs: male pup 1183 is associated with the Bluestem Pack; female pup 1184 is associated with the Hawks Nest Pack (unfortunately this pup shed its radio collar shortly after it was trapped, the IFT investigated the area and has no reason to believe this wolf pup is deceased); male pup 1185 is associated with the Middle Fork Pack; and female pup 1186 is associated with the Rim Pack. We also trapped AM806 and AF1042 of the Bluestem Pack and AF861 of the Middle Fork Pack and attached new radio collars to these wolves. The IFT will be initiating efforts to trap and collar other pups from the Hawks Nest, Rim, Bluestem, Paradise and Dark Canyon Packs, as weather conditions permit in October.

The IFT has also been attempting to trap and collar a reported uncollared wolf in the area west of Greer, Arizona. To date, this effort has not resulted in the capture or identification of an uncollared wolf in this portion of the BRWRA.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (AM806, AF1042 and mp1183)

Throughout September, the IFT located AM806 and AF1042 in their traditional territory in the central portion of the ASNF. The IFT observed at least four pups with this pack in September.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM1044, AF1110 and M1155)

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

Rim Pack (collared AF858, AM1107 and fp1186)

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

M619 (collared)

During September, the IFT located M619 in the central portion of the ASNF and the northwest portion of the GNF in New Mexico.

ON THE FAIR:

Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and AF1056)

During September, the IFT located the Paradise Pack within its traditional territory on the northern portion of the FAIR and the northwestern portion of the ASNF.

Bacho Pack (collared AM990)

Throughout September, the IFT located AM990 within its traditional territory on the FAIR and in nontraditional areas on the central portion of the ASNF in Arizona.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)

Throughout September, the IFT located the Dark Canyon Pack within its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF. The IFT documented at least two pups with this pack in September.

Luna Pack (collared M1156 and F1115)

Throughout September, the IFT located M1156 and F1115 in the traditional Luna Pack territory in the central portion of the GNF.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871, AF861 and mp1185)

Throughout September, the IFT located the Middle Fork Pack within its traditional territory in the central portion of the GNF. The IFT documented at least four pups with this pack in June and obtained visual observations of several pups in September.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)

Throughout September, the IFT located the San Mateo Pack within its traditional territory in the north-central portion of the GNF. At least one pup is known to be with this pack.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared AM1038, AF521, M1157, M1158 and M1161)

Throughout September, the IFT located the Fox Mountain Pack within its traditional territory in the northwestern portion of the GNF and the northeastern portion of the ASNF.

Laredo (collared F1028)

During September, the IFT documented F1028 in the west-central and central portions of the GNF.

F1106 (collared)

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

MORTALITIES

The IFT did not document any wolf mortalities during September.

INCIDENTS

In total, the IFT investigated six potential depredation incidents in September. The IFT confirmed four incidents as wolf depredations. Two were not confirmed as wolf-related depredations. Summaries of the investigations are as follows:

During September, the IFT assigned four depredation incidents to AF861 and AM871 of the Middle Fork Pack in New Mexico. All of the incidents occurred in the vicinity of Houghton Canyon. On September 5, the IFT confirmed two separate incidents involving a yearling heifer and a yearling of unknown sex. On September 24, the IFT investigated a dead yearling and confirmed it as wolf-related. Also on September 24, an injured yearling heifer was discovered and was later euthanized by the permittee due to its injuries. These four confirmed depredation incidents in September bring AF861 and AM871 to ten confirmed depredation incidents within a 365-day period. On August 28, FWS issued a management decision regarding these wolves that called for intensive hazing to be conducted on the Middle Fork Pack with the goal of deterring future livestock depredations and to potentially move the wolves out of the immediate vicinity. On September 4, FWS issued a second Directors Decision Memo to leave both AF861 and AM871 in the wild with their four pups, and to escalate the existing hazing efforts and take other actions to reduce the risk of further depredation. On September 10, FWS issued a Directors Decision Memo reaffirming the September 4 decision, stating that AF861 and AM871 will remain in the wild through the fall season until November 1, 2009, at a minimum without the necessity of further decisions. FWS developed these decisions with regard to overall low population numbers of Mexican wolves in the BRWRA, presence of pups with the adult wolves, and the genetic importance of the members of this pack.

On September 17, the IFT investigated a report of two dead calves near Rudd Knoll in Arizona. The carcasses were not located in close proximity to one another, and WS personnel only located one of the carcasses. The investigation determined that the calf died of causes not related to predation. The other reported carcass was not investigated.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The following information was inadvertently left out of the August 2009 monthly update:

On August 17, Project personnel captured mp1176 and mp1177 at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility for veterinary exams and final yearly vaccinations. The pups appeared to be in very good health.

No significant activity occurred in September.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

The IFT has been conducting hunter contacts in New Mexico and Arizona during the current archery elk hunt seasons.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

No significant activity occurred this month.

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.