

## **Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update**

October 1 – 31, 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 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 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 18 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 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 October, the collared population consisted of 25 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 11 packs and five single wolves. This number is different from last month because the IFT captured an uncollared female pup of the Rim pack, assigning it studbook

number f1104, and also discovered the remains of F1048 of the Rim pack in Arizona. Other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with wolves having radio collars, as well as being separate from known packs.

At the end of 2006, there were an estimated 59 wolves throughout the BRWRA in New Mexico and Arizona. Of those, 46 were born in the wild.

#### **IN ARIZONA:**

##### **Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF521 and F1042)**

During the first part of October, the IFT located the pack on the FAIR. On the October 15, 23 and 29 telemetry flights, the IFT located the pack on the ASNF.

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

Throughout October, the IFT located AM619 in its traditional home range in the north and central portion of the ASNF.

##### **Rim Pack (collared AF858 and f1104)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF. On October 17, the IFT observed one adult-sized wolf and one pup. On October 19, the IFT captured a female pup, fitted it with a radio collar, assigned it studbook number f1104, and released it on site. On October 21, the IFT recovered the remains of F1048 west of Hannagan Meadow in Arizona. The USFWS suspects the wolf died of natural causes and is investigating the cause of death. On October 27, the IFT heard one adult and two pups howling.

#### **ON THE FAIR:**

##### **Bacho Pack (collared AM990)**

Throughout October, the IFT located AM990 on the FAIR.

##### **Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)**

Throughout October, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR.

##### **Paradise Pack (collared M1044, M1045 and M795)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the pack on the FAIR.

#### **IN NEW MEXICO:**

##### **Aspen Pack (collared AF667, AM863 and F1046)**

On the October 15, 23, and 29 telemetry flights, the IFT located the pack north of their traditional home range area in the vicinity of the Durango pack. On October 15, 22 and 31, the IFT determined that AF667, AM863 and F1046 were involved in confirmed depredations of three calves resulting in the third, fourth and fifth depredation incidents for AF667, AM863 and F1046 (see "Incidents" below). As a result, the USFWS issued a Removal Order on October 26 for AM863 and F1046.

**Durango Pack (collared AM973)**

Throughout October, the IFT located AM973 in the northeastern portion of the GNF. During October, a permittee located tracks and scats near a residence, likely belonging to AM973. As a result, the IFT reinitiated hazing efforts. On the October 15, 23 and 29 telemetry flights, the IFT located AM973, with F1047 of the Luna pack, in the northeastern portion of the GNF.

**Luna Pack (collared AM583, F1047 and uncollared AF562)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Luna pack in the central portion of the GNF. On the October 15, 23 and 29 telemetry flights, the IFT located F1047, with AM973 of the Durango pack, in the northeastern portion of the GNF.

**Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the pack in the northeastern portion of the Gila Wilderness. During the first and second week of October, the IFT made attempts to count and trap potential pups in the Gila Wilderness, but were unsuccessful.

**San Mateo Pack (collared AF903)**

On the October 9 and 15 telemetry flights, the IFT located AF903 in central portion of the Apache National Forest (ANF). On the October 23 telemetry flight, the IFT located AF903 over 30 miles east of the previous week's location and approximately nine miles outside of the BRWRA boundary. On the October 29 telemetry flight, the IFT located AF903 within the BRWRA in eastern Arizona.

**F923 (collared)**

Throughout October, the IFT located F923 with M992 in the central portion of the GNF.

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**M1038 (collared)**

During October, the IFT located M1038 in the northwestern portion of the ANF in the San Mateo pack territory.

**M1039 (collared)**

The IFT was not able to locate M1039 on the October 1, 9, 15 or 23 telemetry flights, despite search efforts. On October 17, the IFT located M1039 south of U.S. Highway 60, near Alegres Mountain, outside of the BRWRA. On the October 29 telemetry flight, the IFT located M1039 approximately 45 miles outside of the BRWRA, near the Acoma Indian Reservation.

**F1040 (collared)**

Throughout October, the IFT located F1040 in the southeastern portion of the Gila Wilderness. On the October 15 telemetry flight, the IFT located F1040 northwest of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

**INCIDENTS**

On October 1, the IFT discovered a dead sheep in Apache County, Arizona. The IFT investigation revealed that the sheep died of natural causes and was not a wolf-related mortality.

On October 2, the IFT received a report of a dead cow on the FAIR in Arizona. The IFT investigation determined that a coyote killed the cow.

On October 15, 22 and 31, the IFT confirmed that AF667, AM863 and F1046 of the Aspen pack were involved in confirmed depredations of three calves in Catron County, New Mexico. This marks the third, fourth and fifth depredation incidents for this pack. Based on all available evidence, the IFT assigned the depredations to AF667, AM863 and F1046. This is the third, fourth and fifth depredation incidents for the pack within a 365-day period. As a result of these incidents, the USFWS issued a Removal Order on October 26 for AM863 and F1046 in an effort to stop the pack from preying on calves. If the IFT captures AF667 or pups during these removal efforts, they will be fitted with radio collars, if necessary, and re-released within the reintroduction area.

### **CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

On October 10, Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility project personnel transferred M904 from the facility to the New York Wolf Conservation Center for retirement. M904 was the former Francisco pack alpha male that the IFT removed for depredation incidents in the summer of 2005.

On October 16, Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility project personnel gave annual exams to M1019 and F886 and transferred them to the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility. Project personnel separated M730, M731 and F638 from their pack due to aggression issues. Additionally, project personnel separated male and female wolves that were not selected for breeding for the upcoming breeding season. However, due to limited space at the Sevilleta and Ladder Ranch facilities, project personnel administered Deslorelin, a drug that temporarily suppresses the reproductive endocrine system, to F638, F797 and F886, thereby allowing them to remain together with their pack mates.

On October 31, Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility project personnel transferred M636, formerly a Bluestem pack offspring of 2000, to the Dakota Zoo in North Dakota.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

On October 4, Dan Groebner provided a presentation on wildlife viewing opportunities and potential economic benefits related to the Mexican wolf and other endangered species, to 12 participants at the Watchable Wildlife National Conference in Tucson, Arizona.

On October 6 and 7, Shawna Nelson and Dan Groebner contacted approximately 275 members of the public while working a wolf project information booth at the Second Annual Woodland Wildlife Festival in Pinetop, Arizona.

On October 12, Dan Groebner talked with 90 Blue Ridge Junior High students at their Career Day program in Pinetop, Arizona, about what is required to become a wolf biologist.

On October 13, Dan Groebner and Shawna Nelson provided a Mexican Wolf Natural History Workshop to 25 local participants at the Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area in Arizona.

On October 13 and 20, NMDGF employees provided Gaining Access Into Nature (GAIN) programs in New Mexico to participants spending a day with a wolf biologist in the field.

On October 16, Dan Groebner provided a wolf project presentation to 260 third and fourth-grade students at the 2007 Heritage Fair in Show Low, Arizona.

On October 16, Shawna Nelson provided a wolf project update and addressed issues and concerns with 10 employees of the Wilderness Ranger District in New Mexico.

On October 18, Dan Groebner provided a wolf project presentation to 23 fifth-grade students in Show Low.

On October 25, John Oakleaf answered questions about the wolf project for 100 participants at the Southwest Consolidated Sportsman Group in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

On October 27, Dan Groebner provided a wolf project presentation to 150 attendees at a fund-raising event of the Heritage Park Zoological Sanctuary Annual Zoofari in Prescott, Arizona.

On October 27, John Oakleaf provided a wolf project update near Alpine, Arizona, to 15 wildlife management students from the University of Arizona.

### **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

On October 15, Jeannine Carlin, former USFWS volunteer, completed her temporary position with the wolf project.

On October 23, the AGFD completed interviews for the Wildlife Specialist I position and are now reviewing the candidate selections.

On October 27, J. Brad Miller, USDA APHIS WS, provided his two-week termination notice. J. Brad has been working as the Apache County agent for the past 12 years and has been the Wolf Depredation Specialist since 2004. J. Brad has been an asset to the project and will be sorely missed. Thank you, J. Brad, for all of your hard work with the wolf project!

### **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 \$500 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 \$33,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$44,500, 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, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700; or NMDGF 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.