



## Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

December 1 - 31, 2008

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 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 December 2008, the collared population consisted of 29 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 12 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.

On December 19, Project personnel translocated a single wolf (F1106) within the BRWRA in New Mexico near Ghost Lake. This translocation was implemented to potentially provide a mate for M1045, a wolf whose radio-collar signal disappeared in the same area in early 2008.

Project personnel are preparing for the annual end of the 2008 calendar year population count and capture. This project is scheduled for the third week of January 2009, and the results will be released the first week of February. A helicopter and experienced pilot have been contracted for approximately one week to locate every radio-collared pack and single wolf in the Project area and visually count all wolves associated with radio-collared wolves. An AGFD pilot and fixed-wing plane will also assist in the effort. Uncollared and radio-collared wolves with collars older than two years may be captured if opportunities permit. Radio-collar batteries normally last four years, and collar replacement is recommended in years three or four to maintain continuous monitoring capabilities. The year-end count and capture project involves extensive pre-planning activities. They include private landowner contacts, agency coordination on survey flight protocols and locations, and pre-survey observations of selected packs and individual wolves to assist in the prioritization of flight and capture activities. We will be very busy in January.

### **IN ARIZONA:**

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

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

#### **Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and AF1056)**

During December, the IFT located AM795 with AF1056 from the Lofer Pack. Throughout the month, the two wolves continued to be located primarily within the Paradise Pack's traditional territory on the western portion of the ASNF and the northern portion of the FAIR. The two wolves are now considered the alpha pair of the Paradise Pack.

#### **Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM1107)**

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

**Moonshine Pack (collared F836 and M619)**

In early December, the IFT located F836 on the western portion of the GNF. However, in mid-December, F836 traveled west and was located in Arizona, just north of Greer. The IFT located M619, previously designated a single wolf, with F836 in mid-December. For the remainder the month, the two have been travelling together. Although F836 has only been in the recovery area for six weeks, M619 has significant wild experience, and we are cautiously optimistic that F836 will learn good habits from M619. The IFT is monitoring them closely.

**M1039 (collared)**

Since separating from F836 in late November, M1039 has been traveling through the east-central portion of the ASNF and western portion of the GNF. M1039 is now considered a single wolf, since F836 is now associating with M619.

**ON THE FAIR:****Bacho Pack (collared AM990 and fp1154)**

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

**Lofer Pack**

During December, the IFT located AF1056 with AM795 from the Paradise Pack. The two wolves continued to be located primarily within the Paradise Pack's traditional territory on the western portion of the ASNF and the northern portion of the FAIR. They are now considered the alpha pair of the Paradise Pack. The IFT documented other wolves as being associated with AF1056 when it was considered a member of the Lofer Pack. The IFT will begin efforts to locate and capture these wolves 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 December, the IFT located the Dark Canyon Pack within its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF. In mid-December, the IFT found mp1160 dead within the normal pack territory.

**Laredo Pack (collared F1028)**

In early December, the IFT documented AF1028 north of the Gila Wilderness in the central portion of the GNF. As December progressed, the IFT also located AF1028 within the Gila Wilderness.

**Luna Pack (collared F1118 and M1156)**

Throughout December, 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 December, the IFT located the Middle Fork Pack in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness and central portion of the GNF. Female wolf F1115 has continued to travel

separately from the other members of the Middle Fork Pack, and the IFT now considers this wolf a single animal, separate from the Middle Fork Pack.

**San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)**

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

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

Throughout December, the IFT located the Fox Mountain Pack in the northwestern portion of the ASNF and the western portion of the GNF.

**F1115 (Collared)**

Throughout December, the IFT located F1115 in the Gila Wilderness. Since October, F1115 has continued to travel separately from the other members of its former pack, Middle Fork, and the IFT now considers this wolf a single animal, separate from the Middle Fork Pack.

**F1106 (Collared)**

On December 19, personnel translocated single wolf F1106 into New Mexico near Ghost Lake. Since being released, F1106 has travelled north of Ghost Lake and has been located both on and off of the GNF.

**MORTALITIES**

In mid-December, the IFT found mp1160 dead within the normal territory of the Dark Canyon Pack in New Mexico. Law enforcement agents investigated the site and collected the carcass for necropsy. This case is under investigation.

**INCIDENTS**

The IFT did not investigate any potential livestock depredation incidents during the month of December.

**CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

On December 11, Project personnel captured F667, M863, and F1046 at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility. They transported the pack to the California Wolf Center where it will be retired from the reintroduction program.

On December 12, Project personnel transported M660, F749, m1130 and m1133 from the California Wolf Center and placed the wolves in a pen at the Sevilleta Facility.

On December 19, Project personnel captured F1106 at the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility. They transported it to a translocation site in the Gila Wilderness that same day.

**COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

Project personnel coordinated with a private landowner and livestock producer in the Springerville/Eagar area of Arizona to work proactively and install electrified, fladry fencing

around portions of the property to exclude wolves from calving operations during the next few months. This area is utilized by wolves during the winter months on an infrequent basis, primarily as they follow elk herds from summer range to winter range habitats. The IFT will be maintaining the fencing for the next several months in an effort to avoid potential livestock depredation incidents.

Chris Bagnoli and Paula Capece have been busy contacting numerous private landowners in Arizona and New Mexico regarding permission to conduct helicopter-based wolf count and capture activities in January within and adjacent to the BRWRA.

### **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

Chris Bagnoli was named team leader for the Arizona Game and Fish Department on the IFT. Congratulations on your appointment!

Paula Capece was named team leader for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish on the IFT in October. We apologize for the oversight regarding your new appointment in the monthly wolf project update announcement, Paula. Welcome to the team, and we look forward to your leadership on the 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 \$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.