



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

September 1 - 30, 2018

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project (Project) activities in the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) in Arizona, including the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR), San Carlos Apache Reservation (SCAR), and New Mexico. 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 website at [www.azgfd.gov/wolf](http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf) or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at [www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf). For information on the FAIR, call (928) 338-4385 ext. 226 or visit [www.wmatoutdoor.org](http://www.wmatoutdoor.org). Past updates may be viewed at these websites. Interested parties may [sign up](#) to receive this update electronically by visiting [www.azgfd.com](http://www.azgfd.com) and clicking on the E-news Signup tab on the top left corner of the webpage. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The Project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), 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).

To view semi-monthly wolf location information please visit <http://arcg.is/0iGSGH>.

**Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to:** the Alpine wolf office (928) 339-4329, Pinetop wolf office (928) 532-2391 or toll free at (888) 459-9653. For sightings or suspected depredations on the FAIR, please call the FAIR wolf office in Whiteriver at (928) 338-4385 ext. 226. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AZGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at (800) 352-0700.

### **Overall Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Monthly Updates**

On September 5, the USFWS hosted an Executive Committee meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Representatives from the Lead Agencies and Cooperating Entities attended, as well as representatives from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF). The Executive Committee meets at least twice a year to discuss actions and resources necessary for the recovery and management of Mexican wolves.

On September 27 and 28, representatives from the AZGFD, NMDGF, and USFWS met with government officials from Mexico's National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP

by its Spanish acronym) and with Mexican biologists to discuss Mexican wolf recovery in the United States and Mexico.

**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) are used to indicate wolves younger than 24 months. A lowercase letter “p” preceding the number is used to indicate a wolf pup born in the most recent spring. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicates breeding 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. Studbook numbers listed in the monthly update denote wolves with functioning radio collars. 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**

The year-end minimum population count for 2017 was 114 wolves in the wild in Arizona and New Mexico. Annual surveys are conducted in the winter as this is when the population experiences the least amount of natural fluctuation (i.e. in the spring the population increases dramatically with the birth of new pups and declines throughout the summer and fall as mortality is particularly high on young pups). Thus, the IFT summarizes the total number of wolves in the winter at a fairly static or consistent time of year. Counting the population at the end of each year allows for comparable year-to-year trends at a time of year that accounts for most mortality and survival of young pups. At the end of September, there were 75 wolves with functioning radio collars that the IFT was actively monitoring.

### **IN ARIZONA:**

#### **Bear Wallow Pack (collared AM1338 and f1683)**

In September, the IFT documented the Bear Wallow Pack in their territory on the east central portion of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (ASNF) and occasionally on the SCAR and the FAIR. Yearling f1683, M1676, and AM1338 were documented traveling separately. Subadult male 1676 made dispersal movements across the central and western portion of the ASNF and on the Coconino National Forest, and was located dead in September. The incident is under investigation.

#### **Bluestem Pack (collared f1686)**

In September, the IFT documented the Bluestem Pack in the pack’s traditional territory in the east central portion of the ASNF. Yearling f1686 made dispersal movements from the pack’s territory this month within the eastern portion of the ASNF.

**Eagle Creek Pack (collared M1477)**

In September, M1477 continued to be documented traveling with an uncollared wolf. The pair has been holding a territory in the east central portion of the ASNF.

**Elk Horn Pack (collared AF1294, f1668, m1671, and fp1697)**

In September, the Elk Horn Pack was located within their traditional territory in the northeastern portion of the ASNF. A female pup, fp1697, was captured, collared, and released in September.

**Hoodoo Pack (collared AM1290, AF1333, m1677, m1681, and mp1789)**

In September, the Hoodoo Pack was located within their traditional territory in the northeastern portion of the ASNF. A male pup, mp1789, was captured, collared and released in September.

**Panther Creek Pack (collared AM1382)**

Panther Creek AM1382 was not located during the month of September.

**Pine Spring Pack (collared AM1394, AF1562, and fp1794)**

In September, the Pine Spring Pack was located within their territory in the north central portion of the ASNF. The IFT maintained a diversionary food cache for this pack to reduce potential for wolf-livestock conflict. A female pup, fp1794, was captured, collared and released in September.

**Prime Canyon Pack (collared AM1471, AF1488, mp1790, and fp1791)**

In September, the IFT documented the Prime Canyon Pack within their territory in the east central portion of the ASNF. The IFT maintained a diversionary food cache for this pack in a proactive attempt to reduce the potential for human-wildlife interactions near residences. Two pups, mp1790 and fp1791, were captured, collared, and released in September.

**Saffel Pack (collared AM1441, AF1567, m1661, m1680, and fp1792)**

In September, the Saffel Pack was located in their territory in the northeastern portion of the ASNF. Two pups, fp1792 and mp1793, were captured, collared, and released in September. Later in the month, mp1793 was found dead. This incident is under investigation. The IFT initiated a diversionary food cache for the Saffel pack in an effort to reduce potential for wolf-livestock conflict.

**Sierra Blanca Pack (collared M1571 and F1550)**

In September, the Sierra Blanca Pack was located in their territory in the northeastern portion of the ASNF.

**Single collared F1489**

In September, the IFT documented F1489 traveling in the north and east central portion of the ASNF.

**Single collared M1574**

In September, the IFT documented M1574 traveling in the east central portion of the ASNF, the SCAR, and the eastern portion of the FAIR.

## **ON THE FAIR:**

### **Baldy Pack (collared AM1347 and F1560)**

In September, the Baldy Pack was documented traveling in the eastern portion of the FAIR and the north central portion of the ASNF.

### **Maverick Pack (collared AF1291)**

In September, the Maverick Pack was located within their traditional territory both on the FAIR and east central portion of the ASNF.

### **Tsay-O-Ah Pack (collared AF1283 and f1674)**

In September, the Tsay-O-Ah Pack was located within their traditional territory in the eastern portion the FAIR.

### **Tu dil hil Pack (collared M1559 and F1679)**

In September, the Tu dil hil Pack was documented traveling in the eastern portion of the FAIR.

## **IN NEW MEXICO:**

### **Copper Creek Pack**

During September, the Copper Creek Pack was located via a remote camera traveling in the western portion of the Gila National Forest (GNF). Currently, there are no functioning collars in this pack. Single M1673 was documented traveling with F1444 in September.

### **Dark Canyon Pack (collared AM1354 and AF1456)**

During September, the Dark Canyon Pack was documented traveling together within their traditional territory, in the west central portion of the GNF. The Dark Canyon Pack continued to exhibit behavior and movements consistent with rearing pups during September.

### **Datil Mountain Pack (collared M1453 and F1685)**

During September, the Datil Mountain Pack continued to travel in the western portion of the Cibola National Forest (CNF).

### **Frieborn Pack (collared AM1447, AF1443, and fp1702)**

During September, the Frieborn Pack was documented within their territory in the east central portion of the ASNF in New Mexico and Arizona. The IFT maintained a food cache near the den to support cross-fostered pups and to reduce the potential for wolf-livestock conflict. A female pup, fp1702, was captured, collared, and released in September.

### **Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM1038 and F1473)**

During September, F1437 returned to the Hawks Nest territory in the north central portion of the GNF. AM1038 was not located in September. The IFT is trying to document if this pair is still traveling together.

### **Iron Creek Pack (collared AM1240, AF1278, M1555, M1556, f1670, m1821, and fp1721)**

During September, the Iron Creek Pack continued to utilize their territory in the northern portion

of the Gila Wilderness and the southern portion of the GNF. The Iron Creek Pack continued to exhibit behavior and movements consistent with rearing pups during September. Wolves fp1721, m1821, and M1556 were captured, collared, and released in September.

**Lava Pack (collared AM1285 and AF1405)**

During September, the Lava Pack was located within their traditional territory in the southeastern portion of the GNF.

**Leopold Pack (collared AM1293 and AF1346)**

During September, the IFT documented the Leopold Pack within their territory in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness.

**Luna Pack (collared AM1158, AF1487, and f1684)**

During September, the Luna Pack remained in their traditional territory in the north central portion of the GNF. The IFT maintained a diversionary food cache for the Luna Pack to reduce potential for livestock conflict.

**Mangas Pack (collared AM1296, AF1439, f1664, and f1705)**

During September, the Mangas Pack was located within their territory in the northwestern portion of the GNF. The IFT maintained a diversionary food cache for the Mangas Pack to reduce potential for conflict with livestock. The Mangas Pack continued to display behavior consistent with rearing pups within their traditional territory during September.

**Prieto Pack (collared AM1398, AF1251, F1565, m1669, and m1678)**

During September, the Prieto Pack was located within their traditional territory in the north central portion of the GNF. The IFT maintained a diversionary food cache for the Prieto Pack and implemented continuous hazing efforts to reduce potential for conflict with livestock. The Prieto Pack continued to display behavior consistent with rearing pups within their traditional territory during September.

**San Mateo Pack (collared AF1399 and f1578)**

During September, the San Mateo Pack continued to utilize their territory in the north central portion of the GNF. The IFT discontinued the diversionary food cache for the San Mateo Pack. The breeding female (AF1399) was captured, re-collared, and released in September.

**Sheepherders Baseball Park (SBP) Pack (collared AF1553)**

During September, AF1553 continued to use the traditional territory of the SBP pack in the north central portion of the GNF. During September, M1561 was located dead in New Mexico. This incident is under investigation.

**Squirrel Springs Pack (collared F1788)**

During September, the Squirrel Springs pack continued to travel in the north central portion of the GNF.

**Single collared M1486**

During September, M1486 traveled throughout the northern and central portions of the CNF.

### **Single collared M1673**

During September, M1673 was located via a remote camera traveling in the western portion of the Gila National Forest (GNF) with F1444 in August. The IFT continued monitoring efforts to determine if M1673 has joined the Copper Creek Pack.

### **MORTALITIES**

During the month of September, M1676 of the Bear Wallow Pack and mp1793 of the Saffel Pack were located dead in Arizona. Male 1561 of the SBP Pack was located dead in New Mexico during September. The incidents are all under investigation.

From January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2018 there have been a total of 11 documented wolf mortalities.

### **INCIDENTS**

During the month of September, there were four confirmed wolf depredation incidents on livestock. There was one nuisance incident in September. From January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2018 there have been a total of 58 confirmed wolf depredation incidents in New Mexico and 26 confirmed wolf depredation incidents in Arizona.

On September 6, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow and calf in Catron County, NM. The investigation concluded the cow and calf were a confirmed wolf kill.

On September 8, Wildlife Services investigated a dead calf in Catron County, NM. The investigation concluded the calf was a confirmed wolf kill.

On September 13, Wildlife Services investigated a dead calf in Apache County, AZ. The investigation concluded the cause of death was unknown.

On September 14, the IFT took a nuisance report involving wolves on the ASNF near Lee Valley Reservoir. The reporting party told the IFT he had four bird dogs running 200 to 300 yards away from him when he observed a pack of eight wolves moving toward his dogs. The dog handler called his dogs back to his location and the wolves followed the dogs to within 20 yards of the dog handler and his truck. The dog handler stated the wolves' attention was focused on the dogs and indicated the wolves appeared startled when they saw him and his wife at which point the wolves retreated to a distance of 50 to 60 yards. The dog handler stated the wolves remained barking and howling for approximately 10 minutes. The dog handler stated he did not make any efforts to haze or scare the wolves away during this time. There was no physical interaction between the dogs and the wolves.

The IFT investigated the incident and determined the Saffel Pack had GPS collar locations in the area of the incident on September 14. It is not uncommon for wolves to interact with dogs even when people are present. Wolves will often exhibit aggressive behavior toward dogs when young

pups are present with the pack, as was the case with the Saffel Pack in this incident. Yelling at, throwing sticks and rocks in the direction of wolves and scaring wolves away from an area are all allowable forms of opportunistic harassment (under the Final 10(j) Rule), provided that the wolves are not purposefully sought out to harass. The IFT encourages members of the public to report all interactions when wolves display unacceptable behavior using the contact information provided at the beginning of this document. Any person may take (which includes killing as well as nonlethal actions such as harassing or harming) a Mexican wolf in self-defense or defense of the lives of others. Any form of take must be reported within 24 hours to the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program, USFWS by telephone 505-346-2525; or fax 505-346-2542.

On September 19, Wildlife Services investigated a dead calf in Apache County, AZ. The investigation concluded the calf was a confirmed wolf kill.

On September 28, WMAT investigated a dead cow on the FAIR. The investigation concluded the cow died from unknown causes.

On September 29, Wildlife Services investigated a dead calf in Apache County, AZ. The investigation concluded the calf was a confirmed wolf kill.

On September 29, Wildlife Services investigated a second dead calf in Apache County, AZ. The investigation concluded the calf was killed by coyotes.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

On September 26, USFWS participated in a panel discussion at the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington. The discussion was entitled "Keys to Successful Reintroduction - Beyond the Biology."

### **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

No activity to report.

### **REWARDS OFFERED**

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000; the AZGFD 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 \$46,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$58,000, 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; AZGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of state law and 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.