

2014 Mexican Wolf Population Exceeds 100

In its annual survey, the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team has documented a minimum of 109 Mexican wolves in the wild in Arizona and New Mexico at the end of 2014, as compared to 83 wild wolves counted at the end of 2013. This is the fourth consecutive year with at least a 10 percent increase in the known population.

The survey's results reflect the end-of-year minimum population. Results come from population data collected on the ground from November through December 2014, as well as data collected from an aerial survey conducted in January and February 2015. This number is considered a minimum number of Mexican wolves known to exist in the wild; other Mexican wolves may be present but uncounted during surveys.

“In 1982, the Mexican wolf recovery team recommended a population of at least 100 animals in the wild as a hedge against extinction. Until we initiated the first releases in 1998, there had been no Mexican wolves in the wild in the United States since the 1970s,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Regional Director Benjamin Tuggle.

In spring 2014, the Interagency Field Team (IFT) successfully implemented a field technique in which genetically valuable pups were transferred to a similarly aged litter of an established pack. During the count operation, the IFT captured one of two pups placed in the established pack, which confirmed that “cross-fostering” can be another way for the IFT to improve the genetics of the wild population.

In addition, the IFT conducted 14 releases and translocations during 2014, some of which hold promise for improving the wild population's genetic health.

The results from an aerial survey, coupled with a ground survey, confirmed that there are 19 packs, with a minimum of 53 wolves in New Mexico and 56 wolves in Arizona. The 2014 minimum population count includes 38 wild-born pups that survived through the end of the year. This is also considered a “minimum known number” since it might not reflect pups surviving but not documented.

For more information about the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/> or www.azgfd.gov/wolf.