

2021-2022 Management Activities

Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population (ENC RWP)

During November-December 2021, nine captive adult red wolves (two pairs and a family group of five – a breeding pair, two yearlings and one pup) were transferred to the Service from Red Wolf Species Survival Program/Saving Animals from Extinction (SSP/SAFE) facilities and held at the Service's remote captive facility to begin acclimation for planned release into the wild.

During January-February 2022, movable, hard-sided acclimation pens were constructed in remote locations of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge (ARNWR) and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (PLNWR).

During January-February 2022, all captive-born red wolves to be released were collared with orange GPS/VHF collars with orange reflective material as they were moved into the remote acclimation pens where they were to be released from, at a later date.

On February 1, 2022, the Service hosted a virtual public meeting to talk about the status of Red Wolf recovery, the planned release of captive adult red wolves, coyote sterilization, Prey for the Pack, and increased community engagement. During that meeting, a recommitment to the Red Wolf Recovery Program was announced, including the ENC RWP.

In early February 2022, a wild female Red Wolf was captured on private land with landowner permission. Service staff took this opportunity to attempt pairing her with a captive male Red Wolf from the Red Wolf SSP/SAFE for release together within her territory on PLNWR. This brought the number of adult red wolves to be released to 10. The female was the last known wild Red Wolf without an orange collar. All known adult red wolves are currently fitted with an orange collar.

Also in early February 2022, mobile electronic message signs, purchased by the Service and the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, were placed along highways and roads in closest proximity to remote Red Wolf release sites. When needed, these signs were moved to areas where tracking/monitoring indicated Red Wolf use near roads. Areas where signs were placed included multiple locations on Highway 64, Highway 264, Highway 94 and Shore Drive.

From early February through early April 2022, the release of captive red wolves from remote acclimation pens began:

- February 8, 2022 – Red Wolf pair (2272F and 2141M) was released on north ARNWR.
- March 15, 2022 – Red Wolf pair (2262F and 2157M) was released on south ARNWR.

- March 31, 2022 – The family group of 5 red wolves (2133F, 2145M, 2340F, 2339M and 2384M) was released in central PLNWR.
- April 4, 2022 – The wild female Red Wolf (2280F) and captive born male Red Wolf (2267M) were released within her territory on east PLNWR.

Every newly released Red Wolf was tracked, monitored and their status assessed on a daily basis following release.

Service staff contacted landowners of private lands where red wolves were known to be spending time, based on tracking/monitoring. This was done to make landowners aware of the presence of red wolves and to address any potential concerns or issues. In addition, Service personnel promptly responded to all calls, texts, or emails received from landowners regarding their concerns, sightings, and potential issues, including addressing time sensitive calls – 24/7.

On March 10, 2022, the male Red Wolf (2141M) released on north ARNWR was captured because he had moved into a residential area and would not leave. Upon capture, it was determined he had an injury to one of his legs (possibly a trapping injury) and was transferred to North Carolina State University School of Veterinary Medicine for treatment and recovery. On May 12, 2022 after he was medically cleared by veterinarians, he was transferred back to the Service for the last few weeks of his recuperation. He was placed in a remote acclimation pen on south ARNWR before being re-released into the wild on June 6, 2022. Despite being re-released significantly further south than his original release location, he returned to the same town where he was previously captured. On June 22, 2022, he was recaptured and returned to captivity due to concerns over his ability to survive in the wild and his complacency around human development, despite repeated efforts to deter his behavior.

On March 11, 2022, the female (2272F) released on north ARNWR was found deceased after Service staff received a mortality notification from her GPS collar with general location information. No broken bones or bullet fragments were detected on the initial x-rays. A necropsy was performed, but results were unable to determine a cause of death.

On April 2, 2022, Service staff received a report that a Red Wolf was seen along a highway. Service staff tracked the area and shortly afterwards, found the female Red Wolf (2262F) that was released on south ARNWR in the area of the report with no visual or apparent injuries. She was tracked closely throughout the day in a wooded area as she continued to move. A GPS point was received for her the following morning on April 3, 2022, but despite extensive searching for her on multiple occasions from the ground and air, no VHF signal or GPS points have been received for her since that day. As a result, her fate is currently unknown.

On April 11, 2022, the 2-year-old male Red Wolf (2339M) released on central PLNWR as part of the family group was captured. He was returned to captivity due to concern for his survival in the wild, based on his continued behavior in close proximity to people and development, despite repeated efforts to deter his behavior. On April 15, 2022, the male Red Wolf (2267M) released on east PLNWR was discovered dead on private property during routine daily radio telemetry tracking. This death is under an [active investigation](#) by law enforcement.

On April 19, 2022, a wild Red Wolf litter of 6 pups (4F, 2M) was confirmed on ARNWR from Red Wolf pair 2225F and 2323M – the first wild Red Wolf litter born since 2018! 2225F is a resident wild Red Wolf and 2323M was born in the wild on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge (SVNWR), a Red Wolf island propagation site off the Gulf Coast of Florida. 2323M was translocated by the Service to the ENC RWP in late 2020 and was released onto ARNWR in February 2021.

On April 20, 2022, the yearling male Red Wolf (2384M) from the family group released on central PLNWR was reported dead from a gunshot wound on private land. This death is under active investigation by law enforcement.

On May 8, 2022, a notification was received via the GPS collar that the breeding female (2133F) from the family group released on central PLNWR was in mortality mode. An immediate field investigation located her. Her cause of death is currently undetermined, but it is suspected that her death is the result of a vehicular strike. Necropsy results are pending.

On May 10, 2022, the breeding male (2145M) from the family group was captured and removed from the wild due to substantial concerns that he would be unable to survive in the wild as a result of his unwillingness to leave developed areas and a concerning complacency around people, despite repeated efforts to deter his behavior.

On June 14, 2022, a notification was received via the GPS collar that the two-year old female (2340F) from the family group released on central PLNWR was in mortality mode on private land. An immediate field investigation located her. A necropsy is pending and this death is under active investigation by law enforcement.

On June 27, 2022, during routine tracking/monitoring, the male Red Wolf (2157M) released from south ARNWR was found in mortality mode on county property adjacent to ARNWR. There were no indications of the cause of death. Necropsy results are pending.

On October 7, 2022, one of the female pups from the litter born at ARNWR in April 2022 was found dead on Hwy. 264. Her death is the result of an apparent vehicle strike.

During capture operations (December 2021 through early April 2022):

- Two of the four pups fostered from Akron Zoo into a wild den on May 1, 2021 were caught; both were females (2359F and 2361F). Both were collared with orange VHF collars and released near where they were captured.
- As a result of the Service's trapping efforts during this time period, 12 additional coyotes were sterilized and released back to where they were captured (including on private land with prior landowner permission) under a permit issued by NCWRC. They were fitted with white VHF radio collars. There are currently 24 sterilized coyotes with active radio collars being tracked/monitored within the ENC RWP.

Service staff have continued to develop additional Prey for the Pack agreements that, when completed, will add just under 16,000 acres to the program in key locations adjacent to PLNWR. Prey for the Pack agreements are tailored to each landowner and include technical and financial assistance to them to implement habitat improvement projects that benefit the landowner and wildlife. Each agreement includes a commitment by the landowner to allow red wolves to use their property without harassment. Depending on the comfort of the landowner, additional activities, such as trapping and coyote sterilization, may also be included.

Service staff have worked closely with multiple local, regional and national media outlets on articles, news stories, and videos to get the word out about the release of red wolves and Red Wolf recovery in general. Outlets include, but are not limited to, Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom, National Geographic, CBS News Sunday Morning, Coastal Review, and Right of Passage, among others.

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, Florida (SVNWR)

In October 2021, a captive male Red Wolf was transferred from the SSP/SAFE to SVNWR and placed in an acclimation pen within the territory of the resident wild female red wolves.

On January 15, 2022, the male was released and paired with one of the wild females. Remote camera footage from SVNWR indicated mating between the breeding pair. Potential denning is suspected but a litter has not been confirmed.