



Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Quarterly Update

Third Quarter, 2021 (July, August, September)

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Recovery Program 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 Program 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 azgfd.gov/wolf or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf. For information on the FAIR, call (928) 338-4385 ext. 226 or visit wmatoutdoor.org. Past updates may be viewed at these websites. Interested parties may [sign up](#) to receive this update electronically by visiting 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 Mexican Wolf Recovery Program is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), 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), White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. National Park Service (NPS).

To view semi-monthly wolf location information please visit <https://arcg.is/bLyPO>

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 WMAT 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 Quarterly Updates

The USFWS continued to work with Cooperating Agencies on the court-ordered remand of the 2015 10(j) rule and development of a supplemental environmental impact statement. The USFWS has a court-ordered deadline of July 1, 2022 to deliver a final revised 10j rule to the District Court of Arizona.

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 breeding (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining breeding wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain at least one wolf wearing a radio telemetry collar. 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 end of year census for 2020 generated a minimum abundance of 186 Mexican wolves in the wild (72 in AZ and 114 in NM). This was a 14% increase in the population from the 2019 end of year census. At the end of 2019, a minimum of 163 wolves were documented, which was a 24% increase from 2018. This population has nearly doubled in size over the last five years. 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 pup mortality generally occurs in this period). Thus, the IFT summarizes the total number of wolves in the winter. Counting the population at the end of each year allows for comparable year-to-year trends at a time of year when the Mexican wolf population is most stable.

WOLF PACK UPDATES:

For each documented wolf pack in the table below, wolves fitted with functioning collars at the end of the quarter are listed by studbook number. Studbook numbers of wolves without collars or with non-functioning collars are not listed in the pack updates. Not all wolves in the population are collared or have assigned studbook numbers. Captures, mortalities, removals, and food caching are listed in the corresponding column for the given time period. If a pack was food cached at any time within the quarter, the food cache column will indicate the type of food cache. The primary reason for food caching will be noted with “S” for supplemental and “D” for diversionary; the reason for a food cache may change over time. If a wolf dies,

becomes fate unknown, or is removed in the current time period, its studbook number will be removed from the pack column in the following time period. After three months of consistent dispersal behavior away from pack territory, a dispersing wolf is no longer considered a member of its originating pack and will be added to a new row as a single wolf or member of a different pack. Packs that have raised pups in the quarter will be listed as “Yes” in the “Raising pups” column. This will remain for the calendar year if the pack was documented rearing pups in the period of April through September. Any fields that require further comment will be annotated with “*” and further comments are listed in the “Comments” column.

ARIZONA:

Wolf Pack	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
Collared Wolves							
Bear Canyon AM2563, AF1823	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Castle Rock AF1686, f2540, mp2628	2*	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	Yearling f2540 and mp2628 were captured, collared and released by the IFT in September.
Cerro Trigo	0	2*	0	0	No	No	AM2555 and F1919 were both found dead in July; the incidents are under investigation. There are no wolves remaining from the Cerro Trigo pack.
Eagle Creek M1477, F1548	1*	0	0	0	No	No	F1548 was captured, collared and released by the IFT in September.
Elk Horn AF1294, AM1838	0	1*	0	S	Yes	Yes	f1868 was found dead in July. Autopsy results confirmed the presence of canine distemper. All other wolves in the Elk Horn pack appear healthy.
Hoodoo AM1290, AF1333, M1789, F1938, f1890, m1888, f1889, mp2602	2*	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	Yearling f1889 and mp2602 were captured, collared and released by the IFT in September. f1889 was cross-fostered at 2 weeks old into the Hoodoo Pack on April 29, 2020 from the Sedgwick Zoo in Wichita KS. It continues to travel with the Hoodoo Pack.
Noble Mountain AM1571, F1918	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Panther Creek AF1683	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Prime Canyon F1920, M1921	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	F1791 was not located for a period of 3 months and is now considered fate unknown. The battery on its radio collar has failed.
Rocky Prairie AM1383, AF1489, f2534, f2536	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
Rose M1704	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Saffel M1852, M1854, AF1939	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	
Sierra Blanca AF1550	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single m2520	1*	0	0	0	No	No	m2520 was captured and translocated back within the MWEPA in August. Since the translocation, m2520 has continued to make dispersal movements within the MWEPA.

FAIR:

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
Baldy AM1347	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Poker F1841	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Tsay-O-Ah M1559, AF1283	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Tu dil hil AM1338, AF1679	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Single F1560	0	1*	0	0	No	No	F1560 formally from the Baldy pack (had been Fate Unknown), was found dead in August; the incident is under investigation

NEW MEXICO:

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
Agua Frio AF1936, AM1875	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Aldo	0	0	0	0	No	No	

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
M2561, AF1712							
Buzzard Peak M1831, F1726	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Canovas Creek F2569	0	0	0	D	No	No	
Centerfire F1916	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Cimmaron Mesa AF1705	0	0	0	S	Yes	No	
Colibri AM1555, M1856	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Beaver Point AF1837	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Blue Canyon AF1834*, M1953	0	0	0	S	No	No	AF1834 is no longer radio collared due to a slipped collar in July. This pack is no longer exhibiting behavior associated with rearing pups.
Dark Canyon AM1354, AF1456, M1855	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
Frieborn AF1443	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Iron Creek AM1240, AF1278, m2545, m2549	0	1*	0	0	Yes	No	An uncollared male pup was found dead within Iron Creek Pack's territory this quarter. The mortality is under investigation.
Lava AM1285, AF1405	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	
Leon AM1824, AF1578	0	0	0	0	No	Yes	
Luna AM1158, AF1487, m2567	0	0	0	D	No	No	
Mangas AM1296, AF1439, mp2687	1*	0	0	D	Yes	No	In September, mp2687 was captured, collared and released by the IFT.
Owl Canyon AM1790, AF1701, fp2588, fp2589, mp2590, fp2593	5*	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	In August, AM1790 was captured, re-collared and released. fp2588, fp2589, mp2590 and fp2593 were also captured, collared and released by the IFT in August.

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
Pitchfork Canyon F1853, M2566	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Point of Rocks AM1717	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
San Mateo AF1399, mp2636	2*	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	AF1399 was captured, re-collared and released in September. mp2636 was also captured, collared and released in September by the IFT.
Seco Creek AM1693, AF1728	0	0	0	S	Yes	No	
Shepherders Baseball Park (SBP) AF1553, M2557, f2558	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Squirrel Springs AF1788	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Wagontongue M1946 and F1951	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Whiskey Creek M1842, m2556*	0	0	0	0	No	No	m2556 was not located for a period of 3 months and is now considered fate unknown.
Whitewater Canyon AF1684	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	
New Pack f2503	0	0	0	0	No	No	f2503 was documented traveling with an uncollared male wolf in September and is now a new pack.
Single F1692	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single M1859	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single M1857	0	0	0	0	No	No	

GENETIC MANAGEMENT

Captive pups cross-fostered (since 2016)	Captive pups cross-fostered in 2021	^{a,b} Cross-fosters documented alive at the end of the quarter	^a Documented mortalities of cross-fosters	^{a,b} Cross-fosters surviving to breeding age	^{a,b} Cross-fosters documented producing pups
72	22	11	7	7	4

^aThese are only **MINIMUM** values that have been documented by the IFT. The IFT does not affix radio collars on pups at the time of the cross-foster, as the pups are still too small. Pups are collared opportunistically when cross-fostered wolves are captured later in the year or in subsequent years. Not all cross-fosters that survive are captured and collared.

^bIn 2014, F1126 was released from captivity pregnant with a mate and they split up immediately. F1126 and its pups were brought back into captivity, except for two pups (AF1346 and AM1347) which were fostered into the Dark Canyon Pack and are have both been successful breeders in their own packs. These two wolves represent a successful cross-fostering event and are contributing valuable genetics to the wild population, but are not included in these totals since this event occurred prior to December 2015 and they do not count toward recovery criteria.

INCIDENTS

The following are investigations of livestock depredations conducted by Wildlife Services during the quarter that were determined to be caused by wolves. Investigations of dead and injured livestock conducted by Wildlife Services during this time period that were determined to be from causes other than wolves (i.e. vehicle strike, illness, coyote predation, bear predation, or unknown cause) are not listed in this quarterly update.

DEPREDATIONS

	Confirmed Wolf (Current Quarter)		Yearly Total Confirmed Wolf killed or died from injuries	Probable Wolf (Current Quarter)		Yearly Total Probable Wolf by State
	Killed or died from injuries	Injured		Killed or died from injuries	Injured	
Arizona	21	0	31	0	0	1
New Mexico	16	0	64	0	0	2
2021 Total			95			3

White cells contain totals for the given time period, grey cells contain totals for the year.

PUBLIC INCIDENTS

On July 16, 2021, the IFT received a report of an uncollared wolf that had been observed following a moving vehicle on the Water Canyon road on National Forest south of Eagar. On July 18, 2021, the IFT received a second report of an uncollared wolf that had been observed following a vehicle in the same area as the report on the 16th on the Water Canyon road. The reporting party stated the wolf was observed running behind the vehicle, then stopped approximately 10 to 15 feet from the road and did not respond to yelling and honking of a car horn. The reporting party stated they did not exit their vehicle and drove away. An AGFD officer responded to the area and was unable to locate the animal or any wolf tracks in the area.

On July 20, 2021, the IFT received an ongoing report of an uncollared wolf on private property in Milligan Valley in proximity to domestic animals and a residence. This location was within several miles of the two previous incidents reported on the Water Canyon Road. The IFT responded and located an uncollared sub-adult wolf along the forest road that accesses the property where it had been observed near the domestic animals. The wolf was hazed by the IFT member using less than lethal ammunition (rubber bullets) and cracker shells. The IFT did not receive any additional reports of this animal until September when the IFT received a delayed report of three sightings of an uncollared wolf observed following vehicles at close distance on the Water Canyon road in August. In response the IFT initiated efforts to capture the wolf; however, the wolf was not captured and was never observed by the IFT during the capture efforts. At the time this quarterly update was prepared, there have been no further sightings or incidents reported to the IFT.

On September 6, 2021, the IFT received a report of sheep killed in a corral on private land in Alpine. Wildlife Services investigated 5 dead sheep and 4 injured sheep and determined the incident was a confirmed wolf depredation. The IFT assigned the depredation incident to uncollared wolves, deployed fladry and conducted nightly monitoring following the incident. No wolves were observed or documented in the area during the IFT's management actions. On September 21, 2021 the same livestock owner reported additional sheep had been killed within a separate corral that was approximately 20 yards from his residence in Alpine. Wildlife Services investigated 4 dead sheep and 3 injured sheep and determined the incident was a confirmed wolf depredation. The IFT immediately reinitiated intensive monitoring efforts and initiated trapping at the depredation site to stop the depredations and nuisance wolf behavior of predating on domestic animals in a residential area. At the time this update was prepared, no wolves have been captured nor documented at the depredation site. Monitoring efforts continue in the area. Both incidents in Alpine were assigned to uncollared wolves.

PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT

State	Hazing efforts (separate attempts to haze wolves)	Hazing events (successful hazing of a wolf)	Diversionsary food caches*	Carcasses removed	Proactive Equipment Issued (RAG boxes, fox lights, fladry)
Arizona	71	5	5	16	2

State	Hazing efforts (separate attempts to haze wolves)	Hazing events (successful hazing of a wolf)	Diversionsary food caches*	Carcasses removed	Proactive Equipment Issued (RAG boxes, fox lights, fladry)
New Mexico	19	6	10	1	0

All cells contain totals for the given time period.

*Includes supplemental food caches, as these also served as diversionsary food caches this year.

PROGRAM PERSONNEL

During the third quarter, Annie Barkan and Ashley Everroad joined the IFT, Annie as a Mexican wolf technician with the AZGFD and Ashley as a range rider working for the AZGFD to reduce wolf/livestock conflict in Arizona. Welcome Ashley and Annie!

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 additional funding for a total reward amount of up to \$37,000, 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.