

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Red Wolf Recovery Program

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Update on the North Carolina Nonessential Experimental Population (NC NEP)

- The current known population of wild red wolves (e.g. radio-collared individuals) in the NC NEP is 8 with the estimated total population approximately 15-17 red wolves. Seven of the collared red wolves have orange collars, including one that is a GPS collar.
- There has been no known wild red wolf mortalities since our last call Partners call in October. There were 7 wild red wolf mortalities in 2021. Five vehicle strikes, one gunshot mortality and one unknown cause of death.
- Tracking
 - o Aerial monitoring is still not being conducted because the aviation company we had under contract was sold and the contract with the new owners has not been finalized. However, there is currently a FWS pilot/plane in the area that we will be able to conduct a flight or two with over the course of the next couple of weeks, weather permitting.
 - o Ground telemetry is being conducted several days a week to get locations for all collared red wolves and sterilized coyotes.
 - o All collared red wolves are within their areas of expected use, including remote camera footage indicating that some of the fostered pups have survived to this point, though the number of exactly how many is unknown at this point.
 - o The red wolf pair that formed on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge late last winter that consists of a resident female and a male translocated from St. Vincent NWR remain together and we continue to believe they will likely produce their first litter this spring.
 - o We currently have about 40 remote sensing cameras deployed throughout the NC NEP on refuges and on private lands where we have landowner permission.
- Management
 - o In late November/early December, 9 captive-born red wolves were transferred to FWS from the SSP by way of Zoo Knoxville, Western North Carolina Nature Center, Rowan Wild, North Carolina State University and the Endangered Wolf Center and placed in acclimation pens for release later this winter. Two pairs will be released on Alligator River NWR in separate areas and a family group of 5 will be released onto Pocosin Lakes NWR.

- Each of these animals has been fitted with an orange GPS collar and we have attached orange reflective material on it to help in making them visible along roadways.
- The mobile electronic message boards will be deployed along key stretches of road prior to their release.
- We are currently in the middle of trapping season with the highest priorities for trapping being the red wolf pups that were fostered last spring to try and collar them, the last remaining red wolf with a black collar and capturing/sterilizing coyotes in the areas around the acclimation pens as part of the adaptive management plan.

Trapping has been significantly hampered so far this year because for the safety of the animals we do not trap on nights when the temperature falls below freezing and it has been consistently doing that for most of January, which is not the norm for eastern North Carolina. To date we have captured and sterilized two coyotes, one on Pocosin Lakes NWR and one on Alligator River NWR.

- The male red wolf that was transferred from the Wolf Conservation Center to St. Vincent NWR in October was released from the acclimation pen this past Saturday, January 15th. The two female red wolves had interacted with him through the fencing on multiple occasions and the hope is that he will pair with one of them. As of this morning we have remote camera footage of him with one of the females.+

Outreach

- FWS will be holding a virtual public information meeting on February 1st to discuss the upcoming red wolf releases, the current status of the population, coyote sterilization, etc. More specifics on the meeting and how to register to come.

Questions?