

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Bulletin

Washington Fish & Wildlife Office

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Forensic Investigation of Wolf Struck on I-90 Near North Bend, Washington Complete

Examinations confirm the wolf was killed by vehicle.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has completed a forensic investigation on a wolf killed by a vehicle on Interstate 90 near North Bend, Washington, this year.

On April 27, 2015 the Service was notified by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) that a wolf may have been killed on Interstate 90, west of Snoqualmie Pass. WDFW retrieved the carcass and the Service sent it to the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Lab in Ashland, Oregon, for cause of death and DNA analysis.

The carcass underwent a number of tests to determine how the animal had died and to confirm the species identity.

A physical examination of the carcass was completed in June 2015 by forensic scientists. The cause of death of the adult female animal was concluded to be a blunt force collision with a vehicle. The exam also revealed evidence of a previous gunshot injury in a rear leg.

A genetic analysis was also completed in September 2015 using two separate DNA tests. Genetic samples from the animal were compared against samples in the National Wildlife Forensics Laboratory wolf database. The results of these tests indicate that the DNA is consistent with that of a western gray wolf.

Wolves frequently disperse long distances, and their expansion into the western part of Washington is not unexpected as they naturally re-establish in the state. In other areas of the country, wolves are occasionally struck by vehicles attempting to cross roadways.

The gray wolf is federally listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and the Service is the primary agency responsible for managing wolves in the western two-thirds of Washington, including the area where this wolf was killed. In the eastern one-third of the state, wolves are listed as endangered by the State of Washington.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continues to work with our partners, including State and Federal agencies, Tribes, industry and private landowners to minimize conflict and benefit wolf conservation across the State.

To learn more about gray wolves in Washington, visit: <http://www.fws.gov/wafwo/graywolves.html>

The National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory is a facility of the US Fish & Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement. The Lab provides scientific analysis of evidence in investigations of violations of federal wildlife protection laws, including the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act and others. The Lab is not involved in enforcement of state hunting laws, unless federal laws are also violated. Lab staff includes analysts in the disciplines of genetics, chemistry, pathology, morphology, and criminalistics. These analysts respond to requests for species identification, cause of death, analysis of chemicals including poisons and pesticides, and examination of bullets. To learn more about the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory, visit: <http://www.fws.gov/lab/>

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