

## **Dworshak-Elk City DAU (GMUs 10A, 14, 15, and 16)**

### Abstract

The Dworshak-Elk City DAU is composed of IDFG GMUs 10A, 14, 15, and 16 and was home to 11 documented resident packs during 2008 (Figure 12; Table 4). Four of 5 reproductive packs qualified as breeding pairs. The Hemlock Ridge pack was determined to be non-reproductive and the reproductive status of 5 packs was unknown. Documented mortalities ( $n = 8$ ) included unknown ( $n = 4$ ), control (agency removal and legal take;  $n = 3$ ), and other human (illegal take, vehicle collision, etc.;  $n = 1$ ) causes. Confirmed ( $n = 2$ ) and probable ( $n = 3$ ) wolf-caused losses of cattle were attributed to the White Bird Creek pack and unknown wolves. No domestic sheep losses were recorded. One dog was confirmed killed by the Pilot Rock pack. One wolf was captured by Program personnel that resulted in the placement of a new radiocollar.

### Background

That portion of the DAU encompassed by GMU 10A is three-fourths timberland and one-fourth open or agricultural lands, is bisected by canyons leading to the Clearwater River. During the 1980s and 1990s, timber harvest occurred on almost all available state and private land as demand for timber and management of these lands intensified. That portion of the DAU encompassed by GMUs 14, 15, and 16, is predominantly in public ownership with privately-owned portions at lower elevations along the Clearwater and Salmon Rivers. A small segment of this DAU is federally designated Wilderness. Productive conifer forests with intermixed grasslands characterize the majority of this area. Many forested areas have become overgrown with lodgepole pine and fir due to fire suppression during the past 40 years (IDFG 2007).

Major river drainages included in, or bordering upon, this DAU include the Salmon, South Fork Clearwater, Middle Fork Clearwater, main stem Clearwater, North Fork Clearwater/Dworshak Reservoir, lower portion of the Selway, Crooked, American, Red, and Lolo Creek.

### Management Direction

According to the Wolf Plan, the Dworshak-Elk City DAU has moderate levels of wolf-livestock and wolf-ungulate conflicts due to interspersed private and public land. The management direction for this DAU is to initially decrease the population and then stabilize it at lower numbers. Management goals include reducing wolf conflicts on private land and balancing predator and prey abundance within this DAU.

### Documented Resident Packs

#### *Chesimia*

The telemetry signal of the sole radiocollared wolf, female B222, in this pack was detected on mortality mode during the June monitoring flight. Investigation of the site did not reveal cause of death. The livestock operator in this pack's territory believed there was evidence of reproduction, but extensive efforts by Program personnel to verify the presence of pups were unsuccessful. An extended capture effort was undertaken based on persistent wolf sign detected, however no

wolves were caught. Based on tracks observed minimum estimated pack size was 3 wolves. The Chesimia pack was not considered a breeding pair for 2008.

#### *Coolwater Ridge*

Two subadult males, B344 and B346, were captured and radiocollared in 2007, but only 1 aerial location was obtained on B346 before contact was lost. B344 was monitored until February 2008, at which time it also went missing. Without the aid of radiocollared wolves, efforts to determine reproductive status were unsuccessful. B344 dispersed from the pack, as it was subsequently located north of McCall, ID. The Coolwater Ridge pack was not reported as a breeding pair in 2008 and there was no official pack size estimate.

#### *Earthquake Basin*

Wolves B274 and B275 were present with the pack through winter 2007/2008, however B275 was not located after March 2008. Investigation of a historic rendezvous site yielded a minimum pup count of 4. In addition, 3 gray and 1 black adult-sized wolves were seen, while B274 was present but not observed. Based upon field observations, this pack was estimated to contain a minimum of 9 wolves. The Earthquake Basin pack was considered a breeding pair for 2008.

#### *Eldorado*

Radio-tracking of possible breeding female B301 led a biologist to a rendezvous site where 4 gray pups were observed. Male B281 remained with the pack as well. An aerial observation provided the year-end count of 8 wolves. The Eldorado Creek pack was considered a breeding pair for 2008.

#### *Florence*

An aerial observation of 9 gray wolves, including males B200 and B201, was obtained in March 2008. This was the first known instance of this pack on the south side of the Salmon River outside of their previously defined home range. During a May monitoring flight B201's signal was detected on mortality mode at the same location where the pack was seen in March. Examination of the site revealed that B201 and a second wolf had died there (tallied for McCall-Weiser DAU). An investigation of these mortalities was opened by USFWS Law Enforcement agents. These carcasses were located within approximately 0.5 miles (0.8 km) of where B309's carcass (see Carey Dome pack in McCall-Weiser DAU) was discovered in February. Florence pack member B200 has not been located since March. Visits to historic den and rendezvous sites failed to detect wolf presence, so pack size and reproductive status were unknown. The Florence pack was not considered a breeding pair for 2008.

#### *Grandad*

A report received from mid-September 2007 indicated a possible location of a rendezvous site and 2 gray wolves were purportedly observed there. This site was examined in 2008 and evidence of pup presence elevated this group's status from a suspected to documented pack. Based on wolf sign, at least 1 pup was produced, but the Grandad pack did not qualify as a breeding pair for 2008 and pack size was a minimum of 3.

### *Hemlock Ridge*

In January 2008, B207, B210, B329, and B330, were being monitored in this pack. However, after January only B330 was detected in this pack's home range while the others were unaccounted for. All previously known home sites were visited, but no evidence of reproduction was found, although wolf sign indicated that at least 4 wolves still resided in the area. A capture effort in mid-August resulted in the radiocollaring of male B397. Ground monitoring of B397 failed to lead to evidence of a litter. B210's radio signal was eventually detected and monitored in adjacent pack territories for a brief period during summer before going missing again. The Hemlock Ridge pack was not considered a 2008 breeding pair.

### *O'Hara Point*

Very little wolf sign was detected in a brief survey along the American River and adjacent roads surrounding their known home sites. Pack size and reproductive status of the O'Hara Point pack were not known and it was not reported as a breeding pair in 2008.

### *Pilot Rock*

Adult female wolf B342 was radiocollared by WS personnel in 2007. B342's aerial locations for January through August 2008 were north of previous locations and overlapped those of the suspected Tahoe pack, making pack affiliation of this wolf difficult to ascertain. Inspection of known home sites was conducted in mid-September, but no evidence of wolf occupancy was located at those sites, and B342's telemetry signal was not detected. While conducting field work in the area, a Program biologist spoke with U.S. Forest Service personnel stationed there and viewed video footage of at least 6 gray pups, as well as 2 adult-sized wolves. The Pilot Rock pack was confirmed to have killed 1 hunting dog. Minimum pack size was estimated to be 8 wolves based on the video. This pack qualified as a breeding pair for 2008.

### *Red River*

Sole radiocollared pack member B318 was not located during 2008 and was considered a missing wolf by the end of the year. The absence of radiocollared wolves in this pack during 2008 made monitoring difficult. Investigation of the likely 2007 den site suggested, based upon amount of wolf sign observed, that the pack had re-used this site in 2008, but had already vacated it. Further ground tracking efforts failed to locate evidence of reproduction. In late July, 3 adult wolves were heard howling in the vicinity of the Red River Wildlife Management Area, confirming the continued presence of the pack. A subadult wolf was legally killed in this pack's territory. The Red River pack was not considered a breeding pair for 2008.

### *White Bird Creek*

Radiocollared male B285 was searched for in the vicinity of his May aerial locations in the hope that he would lead biologists to a rendezvous site. His signal was never detected in this area, but biologists did locate a litter of 4 pups, as well as observe 3 adult-sized wolves. Due to 2 confirmed cattle losses, 2 wolves were lethally controlled within this pack's territory that were assigned as White Bird Creek pack members, including a black individual (no black wolves were previously documented in this pack). A hunter discovered a radiocollared wolf dead on the eastern edge of this pack's home range in November, which was eventually identified as wolf NW243, a disperser from the Ashley Lake pack in northwestern Montana. The White Bird Creek pack was reported as a breeding pair in 2008.

### Suspected Packs

#### *Tahoe*

Female B320 was captured in May 2007 during a control action implemented by WS. B320 was aurally monitored until August 2007, at which time her signal was detected on mortality mode. For much of 2008, B342 (captured as a member of the neighboring Pilot Rock pack) was aurally located in areas almost completely overlapping those previously occupied by B320. Private land inhibited efforts to ground monitor B342, so no data was collected pertaining to number of wolves present or reproductive status. It was not known whether B342 left the Pilot Rock pack and joined the wolves of the Tahoe group, the Pilot Rock pack expanded its territory to encompass the Tahoe group's, or some other scenario.

### Other Documented Wolf Groups

#### *B310*

Originally a member of the Tangle Creek pack, male wolf B310 dispersed in winter 2007/2008 and has localized south of Dworshak Reservoir.

#### *B360*

This wolf was captured as an adult member of the Marble Mountain pack in September 2007. It remained with that pack until January 2008, at which time contact with it was temporarily lost. B360 was located again in April near the northern portion of Dworshak Reservoir's Little North Fork Clearwater River arm. It crossed the reservoir and remained in the vicinity on the south side at least through mid-June when it again went missing. The wolf was found again in September approximately 33 miles (53 km) south of its previous location. During October monitoring flights, B360 was observed with a second gray wolf and was believed to have formed a potential breeding pair for 2009.

#### *NW243*

This wolf's carcass was discovered by a hunter in November on the eastern fringe of the White Bird Creek pack's territory; the mortality site was approximately 175 miles (282 km) from the last known location in the Ashley Lake pack territory (Northwest Montana Recovery Area) in September 2007. Cause of death was unknown at the time of discovery.



Table 4. End of year summary of estimated pack size, natality, mortality, dispersal, monitoring status, wolf captures, and livestock depredations for documented and suspected wolf groups within Idaho Department of Fish and Game Dworshak-Elk City Data Analysis Unit, 2008.

Wolf group <sup>a</sup>	Min. no. wolves detected <sup>b</sup>	Reproductive status			Documented mortalities				Known dispersal	Monitoring status			Confirmed & (probable) wolf-caused livestock losses			
		Min. no. pups prod. (died) <sup>c</sup>	Reported as		Natural	Control <sup>e</sup>	Other human <sup>f</sup>	Unknwn <sup>g</sup>		Active radio collars	No. wolf captures <sup>h</sup>	No. wolves missing <sup>i</sup>	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	
			reprod. pack	breeding pair <sup>d</sup>												
<b>DOCUMENTED PACKS</b>																
Chesimia	3	?	NO	NO	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coolwater Ridge	?	?	NO	NO	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Earthquake Basin	9	4	YES	YES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Eldorado Creek	8	4	YES	YES	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Florence	?	?	NO	NO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Grandad	3	1	YES	NO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hemlock Ridge	4	0	NO	NO	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0
O'Hara Point	?	?	NO	NO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pilot Rock	8	6	YES	YES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Red River	3	?	NO	NO	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
White Bird Creek	7	4	YES	YES	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>19</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>SUSPECTED PACKS</b>																
Tahoe	?				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>OTHER DOCUMENTED GROUPS</b>																
Border DAU (Giant Cedar)							1									
Border DAU (Spirit Ridge)								1	0							
B310	1				0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
B360	2				0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
NW243	0				0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>UNKNOWN</b>																

Wolf group <sup>a</sup>	Min. no. wolves detected <sup>b</sup>	Reproductive status			Documented mortalities				Known dispersal	Monitoring status			Confirmed & (probable) wolf-caused livestock losses		
		Min. no. pups prod. (died) <sup>c</sup>	Reported as		Natural	Control <sup>e</sup>	Other human <sup>f</sup>	Unknwn <sup>g</sup>		Active radio collars	No. wolf captures <sup>h</sup>	No. wolves missing <sup>i</sup>	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs
			reprod. pack	breeding pair <sup>d</sup>											
GMU 10A					0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0(1)	0	0
GMU 14					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0(2)	0	0
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0 (3)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
DAU TOTAL	48	19			0	3	1	4	1	9	1	6	2(3)	0	1

<sup>a</sup> Documented packs = territorial groups of wolves usually consisting of an adult male and female and their offspring from one or more generations, and has the potential to reproduce (2 adults of opposite sex). Suspected packs = geographic areas where wolf pack presence was suspected but not verified, or where wolf presence was verified but did not meet documented pack status. Other documented groups = verified groups not meeting either documented or suspected pack status (e.g., lone wolves, potential mated pairs, etc.). Unknown = geographic areas where wolf presence was previously unverified and/or no data on group status was known.

<sup>b</sup> Summing this column does not equate to number of wolves estimated to be present in the population.

<sup>c</sup> Number in parentheses indicates known pup mortality; pup mortalities tallied in the appropriate column in “documented mortalities.”

<sup>d</sup> Breeding pairs are the measure of Federal and State wolf recovery and management goals. A breeding pair is defined as “an adult male and a female wolf that have produced at least 2 pups that survive until December 31 of the year of their birth...”.

<sup>e</sup> Includes agency lethal control and legal take.

<sup>f</sup> Includes all other human-related deaths.

<sup>g</sup> Does not include pups that disappeared before winter.

<sup>h</sup> Includes wolves captured for monitoring purposes during 2008. Most, but not all, were radiocollared.

<sup>i</sup> Radiocollared wolves that became missing in 2008.