

Upper Snake DAU (GMUs 60, 60A, 61, 62, 62A, 64, 65, 67)

Abstract

The Upper Snake DAU was occupied by 3 documented resident packs during 2008 (Figure 19; Table 11). Three border packs attributed to adjacent states (2 for Wyoming and 1 for Montana) were believed to spend some time within the border of Idaho. Two of 3 packs reproduced, both of which qualified as breeding pairs; the reproductive status for the Biscuit Basin pack was not known. Documented mortalities ($n = 6$) included control (agency removal and legal take; $n = 4$), other human (illegal take, vehicle collision, etc.; $n = 1$), and unknown ($n = 1$) causes. Confirmed ($n = 3$) and probable ($n = 1$) wolf-caused losses of cattle were attributed to the Biscuit Basin, Bishop Mountain, and Bitch Creek packs. Confirmed ($n = 16$) wolf-caused losses of domestic sheep were attributed to the B394 pair. Five wolves were captured by Program personnel that resulted in the placement of 4 new radiocollars.

Background

Topography within the Upper Snake DAU is comprised of 3 elk management units: the Island Park, Teton, and Palisades Zones. The topography consists of gentle to moderately sloping terrain, but does contain portions of several mountain ranges. At relatively high elevation, winters are often severe, with associated deep snow accumulations. The habitat community is comprised of a mixture of forest types (lodgepole, Douglas fir, quaking aspen) associated with adequate moisture, but the DAU also contains some high-desert shrub-steppe habitat indicative of a drier climate. Land ownership consists of a checkerboard of state, federal, and private property, roughly half being under federal/state ownership. Dominant land use activities include timber harvest, livestock grazing and production, and agriculture.

Management Direction

The Wolf Plan identifies current wolf-ungulate conflict levels as low and wolf-livestock conflict levels as moderate within this DAU. Therefore, wolf numbers in the Upper Snake DAU are slated to be stabilized at 2005-2007 levels unless conditions change. Maintaining connectivity between the Yellowstone and Central Idaho Nonessential Experimental Population Areas is also stated management goal.

Documented Resident Packs

Biscuit Basin

This pack's status was unknown for most of 2008 following the disappearance of the suspected breeding female 340F after December 2007 (340F's radiocollar was located and retrieved in September 2008 in the suspected territory of the newly documented Bitch Creek pack, and appeared to have been chewed off by other wolves). After 2 depredation incidents of 1 confirmed and 1 probable cattle kills, a wolf was trapped and radiocollared. Reproduction in this pack was not verified. December monitoring flights indicated a minimum of 7 wolves in this pack.

Bishop Mountain

The Bishop Mountain pack was an uncollared suspected pack in 2007. Pack status was verified in February of 2008, when 2 wolves were darted from a helicopter and radiocollared. One of these radiocollared wolves (SW79) was discovered to be a wolf previously trapped and radiocollared as a member of the Wedge pack of southwest Montana, but had gone undetected since June 2006. In April, SW79 and an uncollared wolf were legally killed during the short period when wolves were delisted. An adult female wolf was trapped and radiocollared in August after this pack was confirmed to have killed a domestic calf. A pup with severe mange was also trapped and released after being eartagged. One adult wolf was lethally controlled. Four pups were verified in this pack, thus the Bishop Mountain pack was counted as a breeding pair. Year-end monitoring flights determined at least 5 wolves comprised this pack.

Bitch Creek

This newly formed pack was discovered in September after 340F's chewed off collar was retrieved in this area. During October, on-the-ground investigation determined this pack to have 5-7 members, including at least two pups. In late October an adult female was found shot on private land in this area (investigation continuing). During early December one adult was lethally removed from this pack by Wildlife services during a collaring attempt. As of January 2009 this pack contains three adults and two pups.

Documented Border Packs

Bechler (WY)

See Yellowstone National Park's annual report for information on this pack.

Chagrin River (WY)

See the respective State's annual report for information on this pack.

Sage Creek (MT)

See the respective State's annual report for information on this pack.

Suspected Packs

Henry's Lake

Reports during 2008 indicated the likely presence of a new pack of 7 wolves in the Henry's Lake area. While tracks of these wolves have been verified by agency personnel, reproductive status has not. There was one herding/guard dog confirmed killed in November. Additional field effort will be required to determine whether this is a confirmed Idaho resident pack.

Other Documented Wolf Groups

B394

Wolf B394 (gray) was trapped and radiocollared in response to several depredation incidents at the U.S. Sheep Research Station near Humphrey, Idaho, that resulted in 16 confirmed dead sheep. As of January 2009 this wolf is affiliated with an adult black wolf.

Table 11. 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 Upper Snake Data Analysis Unit, 2008.

Wolf group ^a	Min. no. wolves detected ^b	Reproductive status			Documented mortalities				Known dispersal	Monitoring status			Confirmed & (probable) wolf-caused livestock losses		
		Min. no. pups prod. (died) ^c	Reported as		Natural	Control ^e	Other human ^f	Unknwn ^g		Active radio collars	No. wolf captures ^h	No. wolves missing ⁱ	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs
			reprod. pack	breeding pair ^d											
DOCUMENTED PACKS															
Bechler (WY) ^j															
Biscuit Basin	7	?	NO	NO	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1(1)	0	0
Bishop Mountain	5	4	YES	YES	0	3	0	0	0	2	4	0	1	0	0
Bitch Creek	5	2	YES	YES	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Chagrin River (WY) ^j															
Sage Creek (MT) ^j															
SUBTOTAL	17	6			0	4	1	0	0	3	5	0	3(1)	0	0
SUSPECTED PACKS															
Henrys Lake	?												0	0	1
SUBTOTAL					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
OTHER DOCUMENTED GROUPS															
Border DAU (B394)														16	
SUBTOTAL	0				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0
UNKNOWN															
GMU 65	?				0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUBTOTAL	0				0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DAU TOTAL	17	6			0	4	1	1	0	3	5	0	3(1)	16	1

^a 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.

^b Summing this column does not equate to number of wolves estimated to be present in the population.

^c Number in parentheses indicates known pup mortality; pup mortalities tallied in the appropriate column in “documented mortalities.”

^d 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...”

^e Includes agency lethal control and legal take.

^f Includes all other human-related deaths.

^g Does not include pups that disappeared before winter.

^h Includes wolves captured for monitoring purposes during 2008. Most, but not all, were radiocollared.

ⁱ Radiocollared wolves that became missing in 2008.

^j Border pack officially tallied to (STATE); territory known/likely shared with Idaho. Data on these packs can be found in Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery 2008 Annual Report; data for mortalities and/or depredations by non-Idaho border packs that occurred within Idaho are presented here.