

Idaho Wolf Management Progress Report

July 2009

Monitoring

Our 2008 annual report on Wolf Conservation and Management in Idaho is available on our website at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/manage/>. The minimum year-end population estimate for 2008 for Idaho is 846 wolves, in 88 packs, with 39 documented breeding pairs.

In July, Idaho Fish and Game, the Nez Perce Tribe and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services personnel captured 14 wolves. Ten previously uncollared wolves were radio-collared; one previously marked wolf that had shed its collar was recollared; and two pups were captured, marked with ear tags, and released; and one pup was released unmarked.

As a result of these captures, radio collars were placed in four packs (Pond Peak, Kootenai, Grandad, Bitch Creek) that were previously documented but without radio-collared wolves. Additionally, a new pack of wolves was detected and radio-collared by Wildlife Services (Little Wood River pack) during a control action north of Carey.

By the end of July, reproduction had been confirmed in 37 packs (minimum of 113 pups confirmed so far); of those, 31 packs met breeding pair criteria (of at least two pups). Pup counts were incomplete in several packs that were determined to be reproductive, so their breeding-pair status may still be confirmed with additional effort.

Oregon – Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife received a call about an adult black wolf and three pups southeast of Wallowa Lake and subsequently found a rendezvous site and began trapping. On July 17 B300 (Idaho disperser with a dead radio collar) was captured by Oregon Fish and Wildlife wolf coordinator Russ Morgan. She was in good shape, weighed 77 pounds and was nursing pups.

Washington – Based on multiple reports from loggers, biologists verified the presence of a new pack in Pend Oreille County, adjacent to the Idaho Panhandle. A howling survey on July 9 detected both adults and pups. Sightings by local loggers and remote camera images suggest the pack is comprised of the alpha pair and three to five pups. In cooperation with Washington Department of Wildlife, on July 31 Idaho Fish and Game wolf biologist Carter Niemeyer captured and radio-collared the alpha male and captured and released two pups. This is the first reproductive pack confirmed in northeastern Washington.

Management and Control Actions

During July, Wildlife Services confirmed that wolves killed 10 calves, 70 sheep and three dogs and injured one calf, six sheep and a dog. Wildlife Services also determined that three sheep were probable wolf kills. During the same time frame, Wildlife Services confirmed that black bears killed 11 sheep, and grizzly bears killed two calves. In response to these and previous depredations, Wild Services killed 16 wolves, and radio-collared and released three wolves and two grizzly bears. For comparison, in July 2008, Wildlife Services confirmed wolves killed two cows, 15 calves, 46 sheep and six dogs; black bears killed 38 sheep; and grizzly bears killed one cow and one calf.

Table 1. Confirmed wolf depredations and wolf mortality in Idaho from 2003 to July 31, 2009.

YEAR	Depredations ¹				Wolf Mortality			
	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	Total	WS ²	10j / 36-1107 ³	Other	Total
2003	7	130	3	140	7	0	8	15
2004	19	176	4	199	17	0	21	38
2005	29	166	12	207	24	3	16	43
2006	41	237	4	282	35	7	19	61
2007	57	211	10	278	43	7	27	77
2008	104	215	14	333	94	13	44	151
Jan 1 – Jul 31, 2009	51	145	8	204	34	4	22	60

¹ Includes confirmed wolf depredations resulting in death or injury.

² Authorized take by USDA Wildlife Services.

³ Authorized take under 10j; or legal take after delisting under Idaho Code 36-1107 for protection of stock and dogs under state law.

Research

Idaho Fish and Game wildlife research staff in the Lowman and North Fork Clearwater study areas continue to monitor wolves with GPS/ARGOS collars and have observed that dispersals have occurred at most times of the year - fall, spring, and summer. ARGOS technology has enabled us to track several dispersing wolves whose fate would otherwise have gone undetermined. Unfortunately, however, the ARGOS collars placed in both study areas this winter and spring have been plagued by high failure rates. Trapping efforts will continue as opportunities arise in the research study areas throughout August and September.

The University of Montana research crews continued their work developing monitoring techniques for wolves. Crews conducted scat surveys, deployed howl boxes and rub pads, and obtained pup counts in the Salmon and Lowman areas. Much of August will be spent surveying for wolves in the St Joe drainage (GMU 6). For more info on this research see:

<http://www.umt.edu/mcwru/PERSONNELPROFILES08/PPDaveAusband2008.htm>

Information and Education

Further information and updates are at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

A reminder: wolves are fully protected under state law. For more detailed information on the laws and policies protecting wolves in Idaho, and what people are allowed to do to protect livestock and pets, please visit the Idaho Fish and Game Web site or call the local Fish and Game office.

Please help us manage wolves by reporting wolf sightings on our Fish and Game observation form found at: http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf_report/

Delisting: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Status (Wyoming, Montana, Idaho): “The Final Rule to Establish a Gray Wolf – Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct

Population Segment and Remove it from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species” **became effective May 4**. The rule delisted wolves in Montana, Idaho, the eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and a small part of north central Utah. Wolves in Wyoming will remain under the adequate regulatory mechanisms of the Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to manage wolves in all of Wyoming under the provisions of the 1994 nonessential experimental population rules.

In Idaho, wolves are being managed as a big game animal. They are protected by state laws already approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Idaho legislature and Idaho Fish and Game Commission. The Fish and Game Commission approved 2009 wolf hunting season dates in March and set harvest limits on August 17.

Delisting Litigation Status

On June 2, a lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Missoula by a coalition of 13 environmental and animals rights groups. A separate lawsuit challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisting criteria was filed shortly after by the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. Those two cases have been consolidated in the U.S. District Court in Missoula under District Judge Donald W. Molloy. Their complaint asserts the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population is not recovered and that the delisting violates the Endangered Species Act for many legal reasons, including that delisting cannot occur without an adequate Wyoming regulatory framework in place. A request for a preliminary injunction has been filed.

You may review information, past wolf updates, and publications on our wolf webpage at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>