



Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Quarterly Update

Third Quarter 2023 (July, August, September)

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Recovery Program activities in the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) in Arizona, including the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR), San Carlos Apache Reservation (SCAR), and New Mexico. Additional Program information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department website at azgfd.gov/wolf or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf. For information on the FAIR, call (928) 338-4385 ext. 226 or visit wmatoutdoor.org. Past updates may be viewed at these websites. Interested parties may [sign up](#) to receive this update electronically by visiting azgfd.com and clicking on the E-news Signup tab on the top left corner of the webpage. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The Mexican Wolf Recovery Program is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. National Park Service (NPS).

To view semi-monthly wolf location information please visit <https://arcg.is/bLyPO>

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: the Alpine wolf office (928) 339-4329, Pinetop wolf office (928) 532-2391 or toll free at (888) 459-9653. For sightings or suspected depredations on the FAIR, please call the WMAT wolf office in Whiteriver at (928) 338-4385 ext. 226. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AZGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at (800) 3520700.

Overall Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Quarterly Updates

On August 5, 2023, the USFWS made publicly available the most recent 5-Year Status Review of the Mexican wolf. These reviews are conducted once every five years to make sure all species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act continue to have the appropriate level of protected status. After review, no change in classification was recommended. The Mexican wolf remains "endangered wherever found, except where included in an experimental population." The 5-Year Status Review can be found on the species profile page in ECOSphere: https://ecosphere-documents-production-public.s3.amazonaws.com/sams/public_docs/species_nonpublish/5358.pdf

On September 5, 2023, the USFWS posted the Mexican Wolf 2022 Annual Progress Report to its website. This report is completed by the Service with assistance from partner agencies and provides details on recovery, monitoring, and management of Mexican wolves during the reporting period of January 1- December 31, 2022. The report can be found at: <https://www.fws.gov/media/mexican-wolf-2022-annual-progress-report>

The AZGFD distributed approximately 500 informational flyers to numerous businesses in local communities in Northern Arizona in proximity to areas where Mexican wolves have been documented in efforts to raise awareness of Mexican wolf identification among hunters.

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) are used to indicate wolves younger than 24 months. A lowercase letter “p” preceding the number is used to indicate a wolf pup born in the most recent spring. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicates breeding wolves.

Definitions: A “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory. In the event that one of the two breeding (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining breeding wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain at least one wolf wearing a radio telemetry collar. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

The end of year count for 2022 generated a minimum abundance of 242 Mexican wolves in the wild (105 in AZ and 137 in NM). This was a 23% increase in the population from the 2021 end of year count. At the end of 2022, there were a minimum of 59 packs documented (19 in AZ and 40 in NM). Annual counts are conducted in the winter as this is when the population experiences the least amount of natural fluctuation (i.e., the population increases dramatically in the spring with the birth of new pups and declines throughout the summer and fall as pup mortality generally

occurs in this period). Thus, the IFT summarizes the total number of counted wolves in winter. Counting the population at the end of each year allows for comparable year-to-year trends at a time of year when the Mexican wolf population is most stable.

WOLF PACK UPDATES:

For each documented wolf pack in the table below, wolves fitted with functioning collars at the end of the quarter are listed by studbook number. Studbook numbers of wolves without collars or with non-functioning collars are not listed in the pack updates. Not all wolves in the population are collared or have assigned studbook numbers. Captures, mortalities, removals, and food caching are listed in the corresponding column for the given time period. If a pack was food cached at any time within the quarter, the food cache column will indicate the type of food cache. The primary reason for food caching will be noted with “S” for supplemental and “D” for diversionary; the reason for a food cache may change over time. If a wolf dies, becomes fate unknown, or is removed in the current time period, its studbook number will be removed from the pack column in the following quarterly report. After three months of consistent dispersal behavior away from pack territory, a dispersing wolf is no longer considered a member of its originating pack and will be added to a new row as a single wolf or member of a different pack. Packs that have raised pups in the quarter will be listed as “Yes” in the “Raising pups” column. This will remain for the calendar year if the pack was documented rearing pups in the period of April through September. Any fields that require further comment will be annotated with “*” and further comments are listed in the “Comments” column.

ARIZONA:

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
Bear Canyon AM2563, AF1823	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Castle Rock M1921, AF1686, f2632	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Eagle Creek M1477*, F1548	0	0	0	0	No	No	M1477 collar battery is expended and the collar is no longer functional.
Elk Horn AM1838, AF1866, fp2865*	1*	0	0	D	Yes	No	In September, the IFT captured, collared, and released fp2865.
Fantasia AF2759	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Firebox AM1881	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
Hoodoo M1789, M1893, AF2752, fp2868*	1*	0	0	D	Yes	No	In September, the IFT captured, collared and released fp2868.
Juniper Bench AF1920, mp2859*	1*	0	0	D	Yes	No	In September, the IFT captured, collared and released mp2859.
Pancho Spring AF1889, AM2770	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	
Panther Creek AF1683, f2768	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Prime Canyon m2848, f2849	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Rocky Prairie AM1383, F2536, m2762, f2769, mp2863*, fp2864*	2*	0	0	0	Yes	No	In September, the IFT captured, collared and released mp2863 and fp2864.
Rose AM1704	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Saffel AM1854, AF1939, M1852	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	
Sierra Blanca AF1550, AM1571	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
Warm Springs F1938, M2545*	0	0	0	0	No	No	In August, M2545, a Foster from the Iron Creek pack dispersed into the Warm Springs pack.
Single F2603*	0	1*	0	0	No	No	Fate unknown wolf F2603 was found dead in Arizona in July. The mortality is under investigation.
Single F2754	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single m2722	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single m2774	0	0	0	0	No	No	

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
Single 2866*	0	1*	0	0	No	No	An uncollared subadult wolf was located dead in September in Arizona. The mortality is under investigation.

FAIR:

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
Baldy AM1347, f2767	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Tsay-O-Ah AM2698, AF1283, m2766	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Tu dil hil AM1338, AF1679, f2758	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	

Total number of wolf packs in Arizona at end of the quarter: 19

NEW MEXICO:

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
Agua Frio AF1936, AM1875	0	0	0	0	Yes*	No	The IFT documented the Agua Frio pack raising pups in April, however, location data suggests they are no longer rearing pups.
Aldo AM2561, AF1712*	0	1*	0	0	Yes	No	In July, AF1712 was located dead in New Mexico. The mortality is under investigation.
Beaver Point AM1949, AF2753	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Burnt Peaks F1692, M2557	0	0	0	0	No	No	

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
Buzzard Peak AM1831, AF1726, f2713, m2709	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Canovas Creek AM1584, m2862*	1*	0	0	S	Yes	No	In September, the IFT captured, collared, and released m2862.
Centerfire AF1916, AM2697	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	
Chimney Canyon M2636	0	0	0	0	Yes*	No	In June, the IFT documented M2636 raising pups with an uncollared female, however, location data suggests they are no longer rearing pups.
Cimmaron Mesa AF1705, AM2702	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Colibri M1856	1*	0	0	0	Yes	No	In September, the IFT captured, re-collared and released M1856.
Cottonwood Canyon AF2503, AM1859	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Dark Canyon AM1354*, AF1456, f2743, m2739*, fp2832*	1*	2*	0	S	Yes	Yes	In September, m2739 and fp2832 were documented dead in New Mexico in separate incidents. Both mortalities are under investigation. In September, the IFT captured, re-collared and released AM1354.
Dillon Mountain AF1865	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
El Torro AF2861*	1*	0	0	0	No	No	In September, the IFT captured, re-collared and released AF2861.
Frieborn AF1443, AM2765	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Gallinas Canyon AF2588, AM2700	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Hail Canyon AF2690, AM2764*	1*	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	In September, the IFT captured, re-collared and released AM2764

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
Iron Creek AM1240*, AF1278, M2549, F2756, f2746	0	1*	0	S	Yes	Yes	In September, AM1240 was located dead in New Mexico. The incident is under investigation.
Lava AF1405, M2750	0	0	0	0	No	No	All known members of the Lava pack are fate unknown and the pack no longer exists.
Leon AM1824, AF1578, f2763, mp2809*	1*	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	In September, the IFT captured, collared and released mp2809.
Leopold AF1346, AM1855	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Lonesome AF2694, AM2755	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Luna AF1487, M2567	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Manada del Arroyo F1828	0	0	0	0	Yes*	No	The IFT documented the pack raising pups in May, however, denning behavior ceased in June and location data suggests F1828 is no longer rearing pups.
Mangas f2775	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	
Milligan Gulch AF2688, AM2687	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Noble Mountain AF1918, M2597*	0	1*	0	0	Yes	No	In August, M2597 was found dead in New Mexico. The mortality is currently under investigation.
Owl Canyon AM1790*	0	1*	0	0	No	No	AM1790 was located dead in Arizona in September. The mortality is under investigation. AM1790 was the last remaining member of the Owl Canyon pack, though it had been traveling as a single animal for all of 2023. The pack no longer exists.
Pitchfork Canyon AF1853, AM2566	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
Point of Rocks AM1717, AF2515	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
Potato Canyon M2590	0	0	0	0	No	No	

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
Saddle Mountain F2540	0	0	0	0	No	No	
San Mateo AF1399	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Sawtooth M2704	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Shepherders Baseball Park (SBP) AF1553, AM2703	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Squirrel Springs AF1788	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Wagontongue AM1946, m2773	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Whiskey Creek AM1842, m2760	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	
Whitewater Canyon m2719*	1*	0	0	0	No	No	In September the IFT captured, collared and released m2719, a captive born foster from 2022.
Willow Creek AF1890*, M2867*, m2772	2*	0	0	0	No	No	In September, the IFT captured, re-collared and released AF1890 and captured, collared and released M2867 in September.
Single M1888	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single F2593	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single M2847	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single f2742	1*	0	0	0	No	No	In September, the IFT captured, collared and released f2742, a 2022 wild born pup from the Dark Canyon pack.
Single M2701*	0	1*	0	0	No	No	On September 28, 2023, M2701 was found dead by an Interagency Field Team (IFT) member due to an IFT trapping-related incident. The incident is under investigation and no other details are available at this time. Additional actions have been implemented and

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Foster (April/May)	*Comments
							protocols are being revised to reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Total number of wolf packs in New Mexico at end of the quarter: 38

MORTALITIES

Nine Mexican wolf mortalities were documented in the third current quarter (3 in AZ and 6 in NM), which brings the total number of documented mortalities in 2023 to 21 (10 in AZ and 11 in NM). Of the 9 documented mortalities this quarter, cause of death for 2 of the 9 are suspected to be from illegal take. The annual mortality total for 2022 (12) was substantially lower than 2021 (25 mortalities) and 2020 (29 mortalities) and was the lowest annual total of documented Mexican wolf mortalities since 2017 (12 mortalities) when the Mexican wolf population was significantly smaller (minimum of 114 wolves).

GENETIC MANAGEMENT

Captive pups fostered (since 2016)	Captive pups fostered in 2023	^a Fosters documented alive at the end of the quarter	^a Documented mortalities of fosters	^a Fosters surviving to breeding age	^a Fosters documented producing pups	^a Documented litters produced by fosters
99	16	14	12	15	10	21

^aThese are only **MINIMUM** values that have been documented by the IFT. The IFT does not affix radio collars on pups at the time of the foster, as the pups are still too small. Pups are collared opportunistically when fostered wolves are captured later in the year or in subsequent years. Not all fosters that survive are captured and collared.

INCIDENTS

The following are investigations of livestock depredations conducted by Wildlife Services during the quarter that were determined to be caused by wolves. Investigations of dead and injured livestock conducted by Wildlife Services during this time period that were determined to be from causes other than wolves (i.e., vehicle strike, illness, coyote predation, bear predation, or unknown cause) are not listed in this quarterly update.

DEPREDATIONS

	Confirmed Wolf (Current Quarter)		Yearly Total Confirmed Wolf Killed or Died from Injuries	Probable Wolf (Current Quarter)		Yearly Total Probable Wolf by State
	Killed or Died from Injuries	Injured		Killed or Died from Injuries	Injured	
Arizona	15	0	31	0	0	1
New Mexico	5	1	68	4	0	12
2023 Total			99			13

Unshaded cells contain totals for the given time period, gray cells contain totals for the year.

PUBLIC INCIDENTS

On July 12, 2023 the IFT received a call about a wolf observed in close proximity to a horseback rider in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest north of Crescent Lake. The reporting party (RP) stated that they were on horseback when they noticed the animal, which approached within 10 yards. The RP's dogs barked at it and chased it off. Shortly after, the animal appeared again but seemed to be fleeing the area. The RP's dogs chased after the animal again and it did not come back. GPS locations showed that no collared wolves were present in the area at the time of the incident. The IFT was unable to determine if the animal was a wolf.

On July 16, 2023 the IFT received a report of two wolves observed chasing a dog on a private property near Springerville, AZ. The RP yelled at the animals, which stopped and looked at them, then proceeded to retreat. The IFT responded and conducted a site visit and investigation. There were no

signals from collared wolves in the immediate or surrounding areas, but a single track was located that could have been from a wolf. There were no subsequent interactions or sightings of wolves in this area following the incident.

On July 19, 2023 the IFT received a call about wolves being near a residence in Alpine, AZ. The RP stated that around 3am, they heard two animals howling nearby. GPS locations showed that members of the Prime Canyon pack were in the vicinity around the time of the incident.

On July 24, 2023 the IFT received a call about an ongoing interaction with a wolf in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest near the incident reported on July 12. The RP stated that while on horseback, they again saw an animal that approached within 60-70 yards and began to circle the RP and their dog. The RP yelled at the animal causing it to retreat. The RP proceeded to follow the animal and was able to obtain a photo of it. The IFT immediately responded to the area, investigated and found only coyote tracks. After reviewing the photo, the IFT concluded that this animal was a coyote.

On July 29, 2023 the IFT received a call about a wolf being present near a Travel Lodge in Ruidoso, NM. The RP stated that while walking their dog, the animal appeared, seemed unafraid and approached. The IFT determined there were no GPS points in the area and no additional reports from Travel Lodge employees, NMDGF Area Conservation Officers, or the general public. Based on the information the IFT does not have evidence to indicate the animal was wolf.

On August 3, 2023 the IFT received a report of a wolf observed at the Black Canyon Campground on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest south of Heber, AZ. The RP stated that they saw what looked like a dog off in the trees. They stated the animal remained in the trees at approximately 50 yards from the RP for about one minute then moved out of the area. The IFT was unable to determine if the animal was a wolf.

On August 21, 2023 the IFT received a call from Forest Service Ranger staff at the Lower San Francisco Plaza in New Mexico regarding wolves howling close to an area occupied by livestock and several homes. GPS locations showed that there were no wolves present in area at the time of the incident.

On August 30, 2023 the IFT received a report of a possible wolf near a private residence at the base of Mount Lemmon, north of Tucson, AZ. The RP stated that they let their dog out into the yard and noticed the animal near their fence. When the animal became aware of them, it fled from the area. Based on the description provided by the RP, the IFT was able to determine that this animal was a domestic dog and not a wolf.

PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT

State	Hazing efforts (separate attempts to haze wolves)	Hazing events (successful hazing of a wolf)	^a Diversionary food caches maintained	Carcasses removed	Proactive equipment projects (RAG boxes, fox lights, fladry)
Arizona	68	16	6	39	2
New Mexico	2	2	9	0	0
2023 Totals	323	114	16	95	6

Unshaded cells contain totals for the given time period, gray cells contain totals for the year.

**Includes supplemental food caches, as these also served as diversionary food caches this year.*

PROGRAM PERSONNEL

There are no personnel updates this quarter.

REWARDS OFFERED

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000, the AZGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000, and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged additional funding for a total reward amount of up to \$37,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Pinetop, Arizona, at (346) 254-0515, in Chandler, Arizona at (480) 967-7900, in or in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AZGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of state law and the Federal Endangered Species Act and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000, and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.