

# Oregon Wolf Program Update

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**Reports of Wolf Activity:** Only 3 wolf reports were received by ODFW during May. Two wolf reports were from the west wolf management zone (both sighting reports), and one was from the east zone (track report).

**Listing Status:** As a result of congressional action, wolves in the eastern portion of Oregon were removed from the list of federal endangered species on May 5th. Wolves in the federally de-listed portion of eastern Oregon are managed by ODFW in accordance with the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. Wolves in all of Oregon remain listed as endangered under the Oregon Endangered Species Act.

**Field Investigations/Monitoring:** ODFW expended nearly all time and effort during the month addressing depredation issues from the Imnaha pack on private lands in Wallowa County (see below). *The Oregon Wildlife Management Unit map can be viewed online at: [http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/big\\_game/units/index.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/big_game/units/index.asp)*

**Imnaha Pack:** One radio-collared wolf (OR-3) left the Zumwalt area and traveled well west of the known territory of the pack into the Sled Springs Unit. On May 10th ODFW located his signal by aircraft in the Powatka Ridge area. Later the same day ODFW (Brown) walked into his location to get a visual observation. He was observed and was alone. The wolf has not been located since that day and we believe he may have dispersed from the pack. Though many wolves disperse at a younger age than this wolf (he is estimated to be 3 years old) it is not uncommon for wolves to disperse at any age. ODFW will continue to monitor the location of OR-3.

**Aerial Monitoring:** Three aerial flights (7 hours total) were conducted in May to search for OR-3 (Imnaha pack) location. The GPS collars recently installed have clearly had the effect of reducing ODFW flight requirements for monitoring Oregon wolves.

## **Livestock Depredation, Investigations, and Livestock Producer Assistance:**

**Umatilla County:** On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, ODFW and Wildlife Services investigated a suspected wolf depredation of two domestic goats from the Couse Creek area. The goats had been in a pen when killed. Necropsy of one of the carcasses (the other had already been buried) revealed multiple pre-mortem bite marks over much of the carcass with sub-1" spacing of canine teeth. This clearly ruled out wolf depredation. Domestic dog was suspected as the culprit in this case.

**Wallowa County – Imnaha Pack:** On 5/4/11 ODFW assisted with a depredation investigation in Wallowa County – in the area of the Imnaha Pack. Though wolves were federally listed at the time, the impending delisting on May 5<sup>th</sup> necessitated ODFW involvement in the investigation. ODFW was not invited to the scene of the dead calf, but later examined the carcass remains of the calf. The muscle hemorrhage along the top of the neck and back and on hind legs clearly showed that trauma was inflicted while the calf was alive (thus, it was a depredation and not scavenging of an already dead calf). The determination that wolves depredated the calf was the location and size of the pre-mortem bite marks on the calf. The determination was also supported by the proximity of known Imnaha pack wolves to the kill site. ODFW confirmed the calf as a wolf depredation.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, ODFW was requested by an area landowner to conduct lethal control of wolves in response to the recent confirmed depredations. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, ODFW reviewed the evidence of the two most recent wolf depredations (4/30 and 5/4) and determined that the situation would correctly be classified as chronic depredation under Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 635-110-0010 and the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. After consideration of the depredation history of this

pack and the extensive non-lethal efforts to prevent depredation, ODFW decided to move to lethal control of two wolves. [NOTE: *The summary of non-lethal efforts by ODFW and area livestock producers in 2010 and 2011 is posted on this same website*] The focus of lethal removal was on uncollared wolves. This would give the best chance to remove younger wolves from the pack – which, by information collected were the most likely depredators. No GPS-collared wolves were implicated in the depredations.

ODFW wolf biologists worked daily from May 5<sup>th</sup> through May 19<sup>th</sup> and these efforts were helped greatly by many area landowners who were very cooperative by sharing information of wolf sightings and access to their lands. On May 17<sup>th</sup>, a young uncollared male wolf was trapped and killed on private land in the same area of the April 30<sup>th</sup> calf depredation. On May 18<sup>th</sup> another young uncollared female was killed on private land near the most recent calf depredation on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, ODFW and Wildlife Services personnel investigated another suspected depredation that had occurred the night before in the area near the trapped wolf. Bites, bruising, and hemorrhage in remaining tissues indicate that the animal was alive when attacked (the animal was depredated). Bite marks, wolf sign near the site, and a feeding pattern as evidenced on the remaining carcass was similar to previous depredations (by same pack). ODFW and Wildlife services confirmed the depredation as wolf. The wolf that had been trapped and killed was approximately 1.5 miles from the depredated calf (same canyon) on the same night as the depredation. It is unknown if the trapped wolf was involved in the nearby depredation.

On the morning of May 19<sup>th</sup>, while removing remaining traps, ODFW caught the alpha male of the pack known as OR-4. He had a radio collar which had not functioned since May, 2010. ODFW successfully immobilized the wolf and installed a new, functional GPS collar and he was released in good condition. This was important as ODFW tried unsuccessfully last winter to replace this non-functioning collar. The collar will help better track this pack and may assist with future investigations of depredation if they occur.

During the period, in response to chronic depredation by the Imnaha pack, ODFW issued 28 “caught-in-the-act” permits to livestock producers with livestock in the area of the depredating pack. These permits authorize the holder of the permit, or their agents, to shoot a wolf if it is found in the act of biting, wounding, or killing livestock. We recognize that it is unlikely for a rancher to see a wolf attacking livestock but the permits are an additional tool that may be used if they do. The permits are valid through the grazing season and permit holders are required to continue implementing non-lethal actions to minimize or avoid wolf-livestock conflict. No wolves were taken using these permits during May.

On May 27<sup>th</sup>, at 3pm ODFW investigated a suspected wolf depredation at the Enterprise ODFW office. The remains of a dead calf had been brought in by an area rancher to look at. Very little of the carcass remained; nearly all muscle tissues had been consumed. The carcass remains consisted of a head, spine, and partial ribs. ODFW examined the remains and could find no pre-mortem bites or wounds which suggest the animal was alive when attacked. The carcass was also inspected by a local veterinarian who also did not locate pre-mortem wounds. It is important to note that, in cases without adequate remaining tissue, pre-mortem bites may not always be present. The only feeding bite marks seen on the carcass were clearly from coyote (several places – jaw, ribs, and spine) and this may have simply been from scavenging. No wolf bite marks could be identified on any portion of the remaining carcass. ODFW then drove to the site to look at the area where the calf was found and no additional evidence was found, though heavy rain and some snow had recently fallen. However, on May 29<sup>th</sup>, ODFW was informed that the area searched was not where the calf had been. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, Morgan and Brown returned to the area with the rancher and investigated the correct site of the dead calf. No evidence of a kill or struggle scene could be found. No wolf sign was found in the area. ODFW looked at the GPS data from radio-collared wolves for the two days previous the dead calf and the data did not show that a collared wolf had been at the site. Based on lack of evidence that the animal had been attacked, lack of struggle or kill scene, and no information of wolves at the site, ODFW did not confirm this as a wolf depredation. Instead the calf was classified as “possible/unknown”.

[Note: *To facilitate depredation investigations, ODFW urges livestock producers to leave livestock carcasses whenever found. If wolf depredation is suspected, immediately contact ODFW, Wildlife Services, OSP, or county officials to initiate an investigation. To preserve the scene, carcasses can be secured and protected with a tarp if available and any evidence of tracks or scat should be preserved by covering if necessary. This allows for the most complete inspection of the scene. Carcasses should only be removed after the investigation is complete.*]

The range rider who began in April continued throughout the month to actively monitor wolves, patrol livestock and haze wolves from livestock where necessary. The rider worked at least part of every day of the month and wolves were hazed from areas with cattle on four of those days. To increase effectiveness, ODFW provides daily information to the range rider so that efforts can be targeted to where the wolves are and work directly with the potentially affected livestock producer. Defenders of Wildlife and area producers continue to plan for additional range rider presence after the ODFW funding runs out.

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, after receiving morning GPS collar data on the imnaha wolves, ODFW learned that one of the collared wolves was on private land near cattle in the Kinney Lake area. ODFW contacted the range rider and asked if he would start the morning in that area and haze any wolves present away from the livestock. ODFW also contacted the affected producer. At approximately 8am the wolf was successfully hazed and though no wolves were seen by the range rider due to fog conditions, the radio signal left the area. It is unknown if other (uncollared) wolves were with the collared wolf. Later in the afternoon the affected producer informed ODFW that the cattle (approximately 150 head) had gone through approximately 200 yards of fence and he believed they had been chased by wolves. GPS data collected later from the wolf showed that the hazing had the effect of moving the animal approximately 4 miles over a 6 hour period, and the wolf moved an additional 10 miles the following day.

ODFW continues to text area livestock producers to inform them of wolf locations in relation to their livestock. By the end of the month the text list had grown to 36 livestock producers receiving text messages on a seven day/week basis. This is done so that producers understand where wolves have been in relation to their livestock. During the month a total of 759 text messages were sent to area ranchers. In addition to texting, ODFW shares weekly wolf location information (map) with livestock producers who have been affected by depredation events associated with the Imnaha pack. A minimum of 87 personal contacts (in-person or by phone) were also made with area ranchers regarding wolves.

**Wolf Legislation:** There are currently 5 bills related to wolf management under consideration by the Oregon Legislature. Interested people may view and track bills in the Oregon Legislature at [http://www.leg.state.or.us/bills\\_laws/home.htm](http://www.leg.state.or.us/bills_laws/home.htm)

A summary of the bills as follows:

- HB3560. A bill to establish a compensation program for wolf-caused loss or injury of livestock.
- HB3561. A bill to establish a wolf population objective of 4 breeding pairs statewide and prohibiting the Commission from listing wolves as long as there are 4 breeding pairs in the state.
- HB3562. A bill which would specifically allow take of a wolf in defense of a person's own life or the life of another person.
- HB 3563. A bill to allow a person to take a wolf without a permit if the wolf is within 500' of their residence or if a wolf is chasing, harassing, wounding, or biting livestock or pets.
- SB583. A bill to prohibit the Commission from listing gray wolves as threatened or endangered regardless of population status