

Oregon Wolf Program Update

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Reports of Wolf Activity: Eleven wolf reports were received by ODFW during the reporting period, all from the east wolf management zone. Wolf reports received were categorized as sighting reports (7), track/scat reports (3), and howling reports (1).

Field Investigations/Monitoring: All or part of 16 days were spent in February investigating reports of wolf activity or monitoring known wolf activity.

The Oregon Wildlife Management Unit map can be viewed online at: http://www.dfn.state.or.us/resources/hunting/big_game/units/index.asp

Imnaha Pack: ODFW spent all or part of 14 days monitoring Imnaha wolves during the period. Wolves (or fresh sign) were detected on six of those days. Five of those days wolves were detected using the greater Zumwalt area (north of Little Sheep Creek). Two active radio collars remained in the pack (OR-2, and OR-3) until late February (see Wolf Capture and Radio Collaring below). The radio signal of OR-5 (young wolf that had not been detected since 11/29) was discovered in the north Blue Mountains of Washington by WDFW personnel in January. No data was collected that indicated she had come back into Oregon during the period.

Wenaha Pack: In a cooperative project with the Umatilla National Forest, Wallowa Whitman National Forest, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, USFS and ODFW personnel conducted 13 days of wolf survey in the Wenaha Unit covering 788 miles of snow tracking transects. This extensive effort was intended to identify current use areas of the Wenaha pack to aid the planned February helicopter capture and radio-collaring of a Wenaha wolf. Fresh sign of the pack was located on 6 days during the month and one sighting of a wolf was documented. However, no sign was found after February 21, indicating the pack had moved to unknown areas. Three remote cameras were placed and operated throughout the month with wolf photo's captured on a single night.

Walla Walla Unit (new): ODFW and USFS personnel spent three days in the Walla Walla Unit in February. Two remote cameras were placed in an attempt to continuously monitor areas with previously documented wolf activity. No photos of wolves were captured and no wolf sign was detected during the month. ODFW will continue to monitor the area for wolves.

Wolf Capture and Radio-Collaring: On February 25 and 26, ODFW conducted an aerial capture operation in Wallowa County for the purpose of installing additional radio-collars on individual wolves within the Imnaha and Wenaha packs. Three wolves were captured by helicopter darting and radio collared from the Imnaha pack as follows:

OR-7, 2/25/11 Gray, Male, Est. Age 1 ½ Yrs, Weight 90 lbs, Collar: GPS
OR-8, 2/25/11 Gray, Female, Est. Age 1 ½ Yrs, Weight 74 lbs, Collar: VHF
OR-9, 2/26/11 Gray, Male, Age 1 ½ - 2 ½ Yrs, Weight 90 lbs (est), Collar: GPS

All three wolves were captured on US Forest Service lands and all were released in good condition. However, on March 1 ODFW found OR-8 dead, approximately 5 miles from the release site. OR-8 was found because her collar emitted a signal indicating it had been motionless for several hours, a possible sign of mortality. No visible indications of the cause of this wolf's death were observed.

OR-8 was delivered to the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory for a complete examination. The lab tested the

animal for injuries, diseases, and toxins but could not establish a definitive cause of death. The only abnormal finding was some hemorrhage in the wolf's chest cavity and that this may have contributed to the wolf's death. The hemorrhage may have been related to the capture several days prior.

Capturing wildlife always involves a risk of injury or death to the animal and many steps are taken to reduce this risk. In this case, a veterinarian was on site to assist with any medical needs of captured wolves, among other actions taken. No problems were observed when OR-8 was released.

For the Imnaha pack, additional radio collars were necessary to address livestock depredation issues with the pack and for overall monitoring efforts. The Imnaha pack now has four functioning collars, including two GPS collars due to this year's capture effort. Collars are also required to be placed on some Oregon wolves under the state's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

On 2/26/11 a brief attempt was made to capture individuals from the Wenaha pack. However, no wolves could be located by air or ground and the attempt was called off.

Aerial Monitoring: Five aerial flights with fixed-wing aircraft were conducted by ODFW wolf personnel in February. All were related to the late February wolf capture. Three flights were made to locate the pack prior to capture and two were made as part of the helicopter capture operation. It is important to note that applying the two new GPS collars to the Imnaha pack will have the effect of reducing the overall flight requirement (and aerial monitoring cost) in the future. This is because the GPS location data can now be received by ODFW without the need to physically download data.

Livestock Depredation and Investigations: On February 15, two adult cows owned by Karl Patton were found dead in the Upper Wallowa Valley. An investigation of the scene by Wildlife Services, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and ODFW confirmed that wolves were responsible for the depredations. Under current federal listing status, the US Fish and Wildlife has regulatory authority over depredating wolves. In response to the depredations, a cooperative project was initiated between Wallowa Resources and US Fish and Wildlife Service to install additional fladry around calving pastures of several livestock operators in the area of the Imnaha pack. To date, an estimated 9-10 miles of fladry have been installed on 9 landowners' properties. ODFW also placed a radio activated guard device on the Patton Ranch to deter the wolves from the area.

Media and Presentations:

- On 2/11/11 Morgan and Brown attended the Oregon Chapter, The Wildlife Society annual conference in Bend. A wolf presentation was given.
- On 2/16/11 Morgan gave a wolf presentation to the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation in Portland. 138 people were in attendance.

Agency Coordination/Miscellaneous:

- Several days of the month were devoted to coordinating, planning, and preparation for the helicopter capture.
- ODFW supplied Oregon wolf information to be included in the Northern Rocky Mountain Annual Report. The report can be viewed at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolf/annualrpt10/index.html>