

Wolf Management Update

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

July-September 2019



Field Work

Lassen pack

Pup scats were collected to genetically identify individual 2019 pups after the pack vacated one of its pup rearing areas. One male and three female pups were identified, and all were offspring of the same breeding pair that produced the 2017 and 2018 litters. We have not been able to confirm the presence of the breeding male since spring, and in June we began to document a black male wolf regularly traveling with the pack. We do not yet have his genetic profile and will continue to monitor the pack through time to determine if the animal becomes a new breeder. At the end of the quarter, the Lassen pack was estimated to consist of 2 adults, 1 yearling, and 4 pups.

CDFW and USDA Wildlife Services staff captured and collared LAS14F, a 53-pound female pup, on September 15. Radio collars are important to better record population demographics and to help CDFW and Wildlife Services deter conflicts with livestock.

Fall pups are typically large enough to fit with radio collars. A collar placed on a pup is fit for an adult-sized wolf and allows the pup room to grow. The extra space is filled with foam padding which degrades and falls out over time. While this approach is widely used by wildlife agencies and researchers, it is not perfect, and pup collars can slip off if the foam or tape prematurely degrades (e.g., littermates may chew on the new collar and foam while playing).

The pack's breeding female (LAS01F) was collared on 6/30/17. Although we estimated the collar's battery would fail in July, it continued to work through September. However, because it will likely fail soon, and because LAS02F may disperse from the pack next year, efforts to collar additional wolves in the pack will continue into October.

Dispersing wolves

OR-54

During the quarter, OR-54 traveled a minimum distance of 1,055 miles, covering Lassen, Nevada, Plumas, and Sierra counties in California, as well as Washoe County in Nevada. She first left her natal pack on January 23, 2018, and since then she has covered a minimum distance of 7,646 miles at an average of 12 miles/day. On September 27 she crossed to the south side of Interstate 80 for the first time. She crossed briefly into Nevada and the Tahoe Basin before returning to California on September 28, crossing I-80 again, and continuing north. OR-54's specific interstate crossing locations are not clear, but she may have used a large culvert under the highway and/or sites where the highway crosses the Truckee River. Her recent travels represent the southernmost documented California wolf locations since wolves returned to the state in 2011.

More information about these and other wolves can be found on CDFW's gray wolf web page in a document called "*California's Known Wolves – Past and Present*".

CDFW continues to receive and investigate reports of wolf presence from many parts of California. Public reports are an important tool for us. Please report wolves or wolf sign on the CDFW Gray Wolf web page: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Gray-Wolf/Sighting-Report>.

Livestock Interactions

Depredation investigations

CDFW and USDA Wildlife Services (WS) staff investigated 12 reports of suspected wolf depredations during the quarter. The results are as follows:

Date	Determination ¹	Type	Wolf/Pack Area	County	Investigators
7/13	Confirmed	1 calf dead	Lassen	Lassen	CDFW, WS
7/15	Confirmed	1 calf dead, 3 injured	Lassen	Lassen	CDFW, WS
8/4	Confirmed	1 calf dead	Lassen	Lassen	WS
8/16	Confirmed	1 calf injured	OR-54	Plumas	WS, CDFW
8/16	Confirmed	1 calf dead	OR-54	Plumas	WS, CDFW
8/16	Unknown	1 calf dead	OR-54	Plumas	WS, CDFW
8/28	Probable	1 calf dead	OR-54	Plumas	WS
9/12	Non-depredation	1 calf dead	Lassen	Lassen	WS
9/12	Non-depredation	1 calf dead	OR-54	Plumas	WS
9/21	Unknown	1 calf dead	Lassen	Lassen	WS, CDFW
9/25	Unknown	1 calf dead	Lassen	Lassen	CDFW
9/30	Unknown	1 calf dead	Unknown	Plumas	WS

¹The individual Determination reports are available at www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/mammals/gray-wolf

Use of deterrent tools

An electronic scare box that broadcasts noises like gunfire, sirens, etc. at random times was used in a pasture in the Lassen pack territory in response to 7/13-7/15 depredation events.

Communication

CDFW biologists have been in regular and frequent communication and coordination with CDFW wardens, US Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Wildlife Services, US Forest Service, livestock producers, range riders, conservation organizations, and private timberland owners and managers.

Engagement events:

- July 23 – Participated in a panel discussion on the “Importance of Communication” at Livestock Protection Tools Field Day held by UC Cooperative Extension unit. Susanville, CA.
- August 13 – Update to Lassen County Board of Supervisors. Susanville, CA.
- August 20 – Update to the Working Circle (conference call).
- August 28 – CDFW staff met in field with ranchers, timberland managers, and county officials operating in wolf territory in Lassen and Plumas Counties. Westwood, CA.
- September 5 – Interagency Wolf Coordination Meeting. Redding, CA.
- September 5 – Update to Sierra Pacific Industries biologists. Westwood, CA.
- September 17 – Update to Wolf Haven International (Tenino, WA) (video conference).
- September 19 – Update to Livestock Protection Tools Field Day held by UC Cooperative Extension. Auburn, CA.
- September 24 – Presentation on wolf biology, roads, and connectivity at the International Conference on Ecology and Transportation. Sacramento, CA.