

PROGRESS REPORT OF WOLF POPULATION MONITORING IN WISCONSIN FOR THE PERIOD

April-June 2000

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August 9, 2000

This report briefly summarizes wolf monitoring activity from April through June 2000. A more complete report on spring/summer trapping, radio telemetry monitoring and howl surveys will be prepared in the fall.

Numerous people were involved in wolf population monitoring. DNR pilots monitoring wolves from the air included: Phil Miller, Mike Weinfurter, Joe Sprenger, John Bronson, John Jorgenson and Paul Anderson. Wolf trapping and collaring was done by Ron Schultz, Bruce Kohn, Paul Keenlance, Dick Thiel, Adrian Wydeven and Wayne Hall. Kerry Beheler coordinated health surveys, and Dr. Nancy Thomas of the National Wildlife Health Lab conducted necropsies on dead wolves. Kelly Thiel and Bob Willging of USDA-Wildlife Services coordinated depredation control activity with trappers Buck Follis, Jim Rollman and Ed Zydzik.

Funding for wolf population monitoring was provided by Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project W-154-R (P.R. Funds). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Endangered Species Fund, Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests, Wisconsin Endangered Species Fund, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Timber Wolf Alliance Adopt-a-Wolf Pack, and Timber Wolf Information Network. Other contributions for wolf population monitoring were accepted from the general public.

Thirty-three wolves were monitored in the state and one wolf was monitored in Minnesota (Table 1). Wolves were located in 26 Wisconsin wolf packs, and included 2 dispersers and 2 relocated wolves. The overwinter count for the state was 248 to 259 wolves in 66 packs and 13 loners; therefore collared wolves occurred in 39% of state packs and 13% of adults and yearlings were wolves with active radio collars. Collared wolves monitored included 1 yearling male, 4 yearling females, 14 adult males, and 15 adult females.

Eight wolves were live captured and 7 were radio collared during the quarter (Table 2). Wolves 289F and 332F were live captured by USDA-Wildlife Services from a deer farm near Hazelhurst and released in Florence County in May 2000. Mean weight of 3 males was 91 lbs. and included capture of wolf 334M on 23 May 2000, the largest wolf ever caught in the state at 108 lbs. Adult females weighed 69 and 80 pounds, and a yearling female weighed 59 pounds. A 10 pound pup caught on 30 May 2000 was probably about 6 weeks old, and was released unharmed back to the wild.

Wolf 289F (adult female) was caught on a deer farm near Hazelhurst on 26 April 2000. She had originally been caught and collared 110 miles to the west in Douglas County on 28 May 1997, but was lost soon thereafter. Wolf 289F was released into the Nicolet National Forest on 2 May 2000. A satellite collar from Dave Mech was placed on this wolf. The release site was 59 miles east of the depredation site. By 10 May 2000 she had moved nearly 60 miles to the northwest to within 2 miles of Boulder Junction. She remained in central Vilas County for the next 2 1/2 weeks, but by late May had moved back to the release site area. In early June she moved into Michigan and by 12 June had moved to Delta County about 65 miles east of the release site. She remained in Michigan for the remainder of the month, and began slowly drifting back to Wisconsin.

Wolf 332F (yearling female) was caught on the deer farm near Hazelhurst on 10 May and released in the Nicolet National Forest in western Florence County on 29 May 2000. This wolf is being monitored by a traditional VHF radio collar followed by airplane. The wolf moved southeastward into southeast Oneida County, and by 21 June 2000 moved 44 miles into northwest Langlade County. By the end of the month, she moved back north to Oneida County in the Pelican Lake area.

Dispersal behavior was displayed by 3 collared wolves. Wolf 229 had been displaced from the Augustine Lake Pack, and moved north to join the West Firebreak Pack in the Bad River Indian Reservation in February and early March. She returned to the Augustine Pack area in March, but moved west and north of the pack. In April through June 229F occupied a small home range southeast of Mellen along the Gogebic Range and areas to the south. Wolf 309F dispersed northwest from Juneau County through Jackson and into Clark county. She remained in an area between Rock Dam Lake and Highway 10 for most of the period. On 6 June she was located in eastern Eau Claire county, about 50 miles northwest of the Beaver Creek pack, her probable natal pack.

Wolf 333F was caught as a yearling female on 23 May 2000 in the Wilson Flowage Pack of Price County. It was not clear if this was her natal pack or if she was just passing through. She was located in the pack territory on 25 May, but by 31 May was 11 miles north of her capture site, about 8 miles east of Park Falls. She remained in this area for about 2 weeks, and by 12 June began to move to the southeast. During the remainder of June, Wolf 333F remained mainly in the Little Rice River area, and on 30 June was as far east as 1 mile west of highway 51 and just south of the Hazelhurst deer farm.

Along with the deer farm depredations, single calf kills occurred on 4 farms in Burnett, Sawyer, Iron and Washburn counties. The kill in Burnett county was on a farm that had calf kills in 1995-1998, but none in 1999 when a shock collar was used to keep the alpha female wolf (724F) off the farm. Attempts had been made in April 2000 to recapture this wolf, but were unsuccessful. No depredations on dogs occurred during this quarter. A total of 25 reports of "possible" and "probable" wolf observations were received by the general public and agency personnel. This was half the reports from the previous quarter (50) and less than observations from the same quarter last year (33). Highest observation rates were for Ashland, Lincoln and Sawyer counties. Reporting of wolf observations seems to be declining as the wolf population continues to rise. These reports may provide information as to general distribution of wolves.

Plans for Next Quarter

Additional livetrapping and radio collaring will be continued until mid September when bear hunting and small game seasons begin. Howl surveys will be conducted until late September to determine pup production and location of summer home sites. Collared wolves will be located weekly by DNR pilots, but dispersing wolves may be located 2-3 times per week.

***Note:** This report is a preliminary progress report and figures in this report should not be cited without contacting the authors.*

Table 1
Radio-collared wolves monitored in northern
and central Wisconsin
April - June 2000.

Wolf Number	Age^a	Pack/Area	Counties	Date Captured	Last Date	Location^b
002F	Y	Pray/Nock Hanai	Jackson	10 May 98	Ongoing	111
155M	A	Moose Road	Douglas/Pine	6 May 97	Ongoing	263
229F	A	Disperser?	Ashland	17 July 98 ^c	Ongoing	346
241F	P	Ghost Lake	Bayfield	20 Nov 97 ^d	Ongoing	125
244F	A	North Willow	Oneida	23 Jul 97	Ongoing	141
245F	P	Hoffman Lake	Iron/Price	30 Jul 97	Ongoing	153
248M	A	Torch River	Ashland	28 June 00	Ongoing	2
266F	Y	Bird Sanctuary	Douglas	7 Aug 96	Ongoing	333
267M	A	North Empire	Douglas	28 Aug 96	Ongoing	323
268M	Y	Truck Trail	Douglas/Pine	11 Jun 97 ^e	Ongoing	252
269M	P	Dead Creek	Jackson/Juneau	17 Sept 99	Ongoing	43
280M	Y	MN pack	Pine	13 May 98	Ongoing	144
282F	Y	Little Rice River	Oneida	10 May 98	Ongoing	117
285F	A	Ranger Island	Lincoln	24 Aug 98	Ongoing	95
286F	Y	Brunet River	Sawyer/Ashland	5 Sep 98	Ongoing	90
289F	A	Relocated	Florence/Vilas/MI	26 Apr 00 ^f	Ongoing	39
291M	A	Chain Lakes	Douglas/Washburn	27 Jun 99	Ongoing	58
292M	Y	Tranus Lake	Washburn	21 May 99	Ongoing	68
293F	A	Frog Creek	Washburn	23 May 99	Ongoing	67
294M	A	Totagatic River	Burnett	23 May 99	Ongoing	66
295F	Y	Totagatic River	Burnett/Douglas	25 May 99	Ongoing	67
296M	Y	Crotte Creek	Douglas	28 May 99	Ongoing	66
297M	A	South Empire	Douglas	2 Jun 99	Ongoing	66
298M	Y	North Empire	Douglas/Pine	8 Jun 99	Ongoing	62
309F	P	Disperser	Jackson/Clark	15 Nov 99	Ongoing	44
310M	P	Brush Creek	Ashland	2 Nov 97 ^g	Ongoing	68
315F	P	Averill Creek	Lincoln	4 Sep 99	19 Apr 00 ^h	37
316F	A	Wintergreen	Price	20 Oct 99	Ongoing	45
318F	Y	Nineweb Lake	Vilas	11 May 00	Ongoing	16
332F	A	Relocated ⁱ	Forest/Oneida/Lan glade	10 May 00	Ongoing	18
333F	Y	Disperser	Price/Oneida	23 May 00	Ongoing	16
334M	A	Wilson Flowage	Price	23 May 00	Ongoing	11
351M	A	Chippewa River	Ashland/Iron	17 Jun 00	Ongoing	5
724F	A	Chase Brook	Burnett	26 April 99 ^j	Ongoing	259

^aAge at time of capture (P=Pup,Y=Yearling,A=Adult)

^bTotal locations from the time of capture

^cRecaptured wolf, first captured as a yearling in Sawyer County on 9 Jul 1993

^dRecaptured wolf, first captured in Ashland County on 23 Jun 1997, 19 lb. pup too small to collar

^eRecaptured wolf, first captured as a pup in Douglas County on 28 Aug 1996

^fRecaptured wolf, first captured in Douglas County on 5 Jun 1998, captured in deer farm in Oneida County, relocated to Florence Cty.

^gCaptured in Houghton County, Michigan

^hMortality

ⁱCaptured in deer farm in Oneida County, relocated to Forest County

^jRecaptured wolf, first captured in Douglas County 28 May 1997

Table 2
Wolves captured and radio-collared in Wisconsin April - June 2000

Wolf Number	Sex/Age^a	Weight (lbs)	Pack/Area	County	Date Captured
248	M/A	78	Torch River	Ashland	28 Jun 00
289 ^b	F/A	80	Relocated	Oneida	26 Apr 00
318	F/Y	60	Nineweb Lake	Vilas	11 May 00
332 ^c	F/A	69	Relocated	Oneida	10 May 00
333	F/Y	59	Wilson Flowage	Price	23 May 00
334	M/A	108	Wilson Flowage	Price	23 May 00
335 ^d	M/P	10	Bootjack Lake	Oneida	30 May 00
351	M/A	86	Chippewa River	Ashland	17 Jun 00

^aAge at time of capture assuming birth date 1 April (P = Pup, Y = Yearling, A = Adult)

^bCaptured by Wildlife Services on game farm, relocated to Florence County 2 May 00.

^cCaptured by Wildlife Services on game farm, relocated to Forest County 29 May 00.

^dNot collared, too small.

Table 3
Wolf observations by the general public and
resource agency personnel April - June 2000.

County	No. of Sightings	Wolves Seen	Track or Sign Observations	Total Wolf Observations
Ashland*	3	4	0	3
Bayfield*	2	3	0	2
Burnett	1	1	0	1
Forest*	0	0	2	2
Iron*	1	3	0	1
Juneau*	1	1	0	1
Langlade	1	1	0	1
Lincoln*	2	3	1	3
Marathon	1	1	0	1
Oneida*	2	2	0	2
Portage	2	2	0	2
Price*	1	1	0	1
Sawyer*	3	11	0	3
Shawano	1	1	0	1
Washburn*	1	1	0	1
Totals	22	35	3	25

* Counties with known breeding packs. No observations from Douglas, Jackson, Monroe, Rusk, Taylor and Vilas Counties where breeding packs are know to exixt.