

# Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery 2008 Interagency Annual Report

*A cooperative effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nez Perce Tribe, National Park Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Idaho Fish and Game, Blackfeet Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and USDA Wildlife Services*



*photo by Dan Stahler, NPS*

*This cooperative annual report presents information on the status, distribution and management of the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008.  
It is also available at:*

**<http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/annualreports.htm>**

This report may be copied and distributed as needed.

***Suggested Citation:*** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nez Perce Tribe, National Park Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Blackfeet Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Idaho Fish and Game, and USDA Wildlife Services. 2009. Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery 2008 Interagency Annual Report. C.A. Sime and E. E. Bangs, eds. USFWS, Ecological Services, 585 Shepard Way, Helena, Montana. 59601.

***Note to Readers:***

Because of the transition to state-led wolf management in Montana and Idaho in 2005, the 2008 Interagency Annual Report is comprised of separate sections, one each for the individual annual reports from the states of Montana and Idaho, federal agencies for Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park combined, and the overall U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northern Rockies Recovery Program. This makes for some degree of overlap and duplication between sections. However, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requires Montana and Idaho to submit an annual report each year. By incorporating their state annual reports in this modified structure, the public can still access information about gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains in a single, comprehensive report or by individual state.

You can download the Interagency Report in its entirety and cite the Interagency Report as suggested on the cover. Alternatively, you may download a state report or section of the Interagency Report and cite it individually. I hope you find this format useful.

Thank you,

Ed Bangs

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northern Rockies Wolf Recovery Program Coordinator

## INTERAGENCY REPORT TABLE OF CONTENTS

NORTHERN ROCKIES SUMMARY (see this document) .....	5
NORTHERN ROCKIES BACKGROUND (see this document) .....	6
<b>MONTANA</b> (see web for separate file) .....	XXX
Montana Executive Summary .....	XXX
Introduction and Background .....	XXX
Statewide Program Overview .....	XXX
Pack Summaries .....	XXX
Outreach and Education .....	XXX
Research, Field Studies, and Project Publications .....	XXX
Law Enforcement .....	XXX
Funding .....	XXX
Personnel and Acknowledgements .....	XXX
Appendix 1: Montana Contact List .....	XXX
Appendix 2: Gray Wolf Chronology in Montana .....	XXX
Appendix 3: N. Rockies Wolf Pack Tables (see web for separate files) .....	XXX
Appendix 4: N. Rockies Wolf Pack Distribution Maps (see web for separate files) .....	XXX
Appendix 5: N. Rockies Wolf Population Graphs (see web for separate files) .....	XXX
<b>IDAHO</b> (see web for separate file) .....	XXX
Idaho Executive Summary .....	XXX
Acknowledgements .....	XXX
Introduction .....	XXX
Statewide Summary .....	XXX
Regional Summaries .....	XXX
Literature Cited .....	XXX
Appendix A: Population Estimation Techniques used to Determine Wolf Population Numbers in Idaho .....	XXX
Appendix B: Contacts for Idaho Wolf Management .....	XXX
<b>WYOMING and YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK</b> (see web for separate file) .....	XXX
Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park Summary .....	XXX
Personnel .....	XXX
Monitoring .....	XXX
Research .....	XXX
Wolf Management .....	XXX
Outreach .....	XXX
Law Enforcement .....	XXX
Acknowledgements .....	XXX
<b>U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE</b>	
<b>NORTHERN ROCKIES PROGRAM</b> (see web for separate file) .....	XXX
Northern Rockies Funding .....	XXX
Northern Rockies Planning and Legal Issues .....	XXX
Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	XXX
Contacts .....	XXX
Websites .....	XXX
Acknowledgements .....	XXX
Literature Cited (Rocky Mountain Wolf Publications, 2001-2008) .....	XXX

## NORTHERN ROCKIES LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1a. Montana wolf packs and population data for Montana's portion of the Northwest Montana Recovery Area, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 1b. Montana wolf packs and population data for Montana's portion of the Greater Yellowstone Experimental Area, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 1c. Montana wolf packs and population data for Montana's portion of the Central Idaho Experimental Area and Montana statewide totals, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 2a. Wyoming wolf packs (outside of Yellowstone National Park) and population data for Wyoming's portion of the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Area, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 2b. Yellowstone National Park (YNP) wolf packs and population data for YNP's portion of the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Area, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 2c. Wolf population data for the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Area, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 3a. Idaho wolf packs and population data for Idaho's portion of the Central Idaho Recovery Area, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 3b. Idaho wolf packs and population data for Idaho's portion of the Northwest Montana Recovery Area, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 3c. Idaho wolf packs and population data for Idaho's portion of the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Area, 2008. (see web for separate files)
- Table 3d. Wolf population data for the Central Idaho Experimental Area, 2008.
- Table 4a. Northern Rocky Mountain minimum fall wolf population and breeding pairs, 1979-2008, by Federal Recovery Area. (see web for separate files)
- Table 4b. Northern Rocky Mountain minimum fall wolf population and breeding pairs, 1979-2008, by State. (see web for separate files)
- Table 5a. Northern Rocky Mountain States confirmed wolf depredation, 1987-2008, by Federal Recovery Area. (see web for separate files)
- Table 5b. Northern Rocky Mountain States confirmed wolf depredation, 1987-2008, by state. (see web for separate files)

## **NORTHERN ROCKIES LIST OF FIGURES**

- Figure 1. (map) Central Idaho, Northwest Montana and Greater Yellowstone wolf recovery areas (Key: Tables 1 - 3). (see web for separate files)
- Figure 2. (map) Northwest Montana Wolf Recovery Area (Key: Table 1a, 3b). (see web for separate files)
- Figure 3. (map) Greater Yellowstone Wolf Recovery Area (Key: Tables 1b, 2a, 2b). (see web for separate files)
- Figure 4. (map) Central Idaho Wolf Recovery Area (Key: Tables 1c, 3a, b, c, d). (see web for separate files)
- Figure 5. (graph) Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population trends 1979-2008, by recovery area. (see web for separate files)
- Figure 6. (graph) Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population trends 1979-2008, by state. (see web for separate files)

## NORTHERN ROCKIES SUMMARY

The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) population in the Northern Rocky Mountain (NRM) states (Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming) continued to increase [8% growth in 2008] but overall distribution remained similar to past years (Figure 1, Tables 4a, 4b). Estimates of wolf numbers at the end of 2008 were 914 wolves in the Central Idaho Recovery Area (CID), 449 in the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Area (GYA), and 282 in the Northwest Montana Recovery Area (NWMT) for a total minimum estimate of 1,645 wolves (Figure 1, Table 4a). By state boundaries, there were an estimated 846 wolves in the state of Idaho, 302 in Wyoming and 497 in Montana (Table 4b). Of approximately 217 packs (groups of 2 or more wolves with territories), 95 packs met the definition of “breeding pair,” [an adult male and adult female raising 2 or more pups until December 31] (Tables 4a, 4b). This made 2008 the eighth year in which 30 or more breeding pairs were documented and well distributed within the 3-state area. Biological recovery criteria have been met for removing NRM wolves from the list of Endangered and Threatened Species. By the end of 2008, no confirmed wolves or wolf packs were documented within the NRM DPS in states adjacent to Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. But lone wolves occasionally disperse long distances throughout the NRM as exemplified by one lone GYA wolf that moved through Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, and back to Wyoming between October 2008 to March 2009. A new wolf pack with 6 pups formed in north central Washington by wolves that dispersed from south central British Columbia.

Wolves in the NRM subsisted mainly on elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose, and bison but livestock are also attacked. Livestock depredations in 2008 included 184 cattle, 355 sheep, 14 dogs, and 18 other (llamas, horses, and goats) that were confirmed as killed by wolves (Tables 5a, 5b). Approximately of 77 out of 238 NRM wolf packs that existed in 2008 (32%) were involved in confirmed livestock or pet depredations, 21 of those packs no longer existed by the end of 2008. In response to depredations, 264 wolves were lethally removed within the 3-state area (about 14% of the 2008 wolf population). No wolves have been relocated since 2001. In Montana, about 34% of packs were confirmed to have killed livestock. Nine of these packs were removed by the end of 2008. In Wyoming outside of Yellowstone National Park, about 38% of wolf packs had confirmed livestock kills. Four entire had to be removed. In Idaho, 32% of wolf packs had confirmed livestock kills and 8 entire packs were removed. As new packs form within the original core recovery areas and individual animals routinely disperse, the 3 subpopulations function as a single, large meta-population (Figure 1). Numerous research projects are underway, examining wolf population dynamics, predator-prey interactions and livestock depredation.

## NORTHERN ROCKIES BACKGROUND

Gray wolf populations were extirpated from the western U.S. by the 1930s. Subsequently, wolves from Canada occasionally dispersed south into Montana and Idaho but failed to survive long enough to reproduce. Eventually, public attitudes toward predators changed and wolves received legal protection with the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973. Wolves began to successfully recolonize northwest Montana in the early 1980s. By 1995, there were 6 wolf packs in northwest Montana. In 1995 and 1996, 66 wolves from southwestern Canada were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park (YNP) (31 wolves) and CID (35 wolves). From 1989-2001, we also relocated wolves 117 times to reduce conflicts with livestock, including moving wolves among different recovery areas. This included 10 wolf pups from northwestern Montana whose pack was involved in chronic livestock depredation were relocated to Yellowstone National Park. They were released from their holding pen in spring 1997.

The NRM wolf population contains 3 core recovery areas: the NWMT (Figs. 1, 2) includes northern Montana and the northern Idaho panhandle; the GYA (Figs. 1, 3) includes Wyoming and adjacent parts of Idaho and Montana; the CID (Figs. 1, 4) includes central Idaho and adjacent parts of southwest Montana. Wolves in the 3 recovery areas are managed under different guidelines, depending upon their designated status under the ESA.

The wolf population in northwestern Montana and the Idaho panhandle began from wolves that naturally dispersed from Canada in the early 1980's. They remain listed as endangered. The GYA and CID wolves are classified as nonessential experimental populations (as allowed by section 10(j) of ESA) and managed with more flexibility than an endangered population. In 2005 a new 10(j) experimental population regulation allowed even more management flexibility for wolves in the experimental population areas in states with approved wolf management plans (Montana and Idaho). That 2005 rule was liberalized again in early 2008. The states of Montana and Idaho have managed wolves in their entire states since 2005, with federal funding and according to federal guidelines.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is responsible for administering the ESA for terrestrial and freshwater species and some marine mammals. It determined that at a wolf metapopulation of least 30 or more breeding pairs composed of at least 300 wolves, with an equitable distribution among the 3 states for at least 3 successive years, constituted a viable and recovered wolf population. Those criteria (including the temporal element) were met at the end of 2002 and at that time 663 wolves in 49 breeding pairs were present. Because the wolf population has been recovered and all future threats to it have been resolved, the USFWS is obligated to delist wolves throughout the NRM DPS (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon and a small part of north central Utah]. However, in Wyoming the state law did not adequately protect wolves and ESA protections will remain in place. The final delisting rule should become effective in late April 2009.