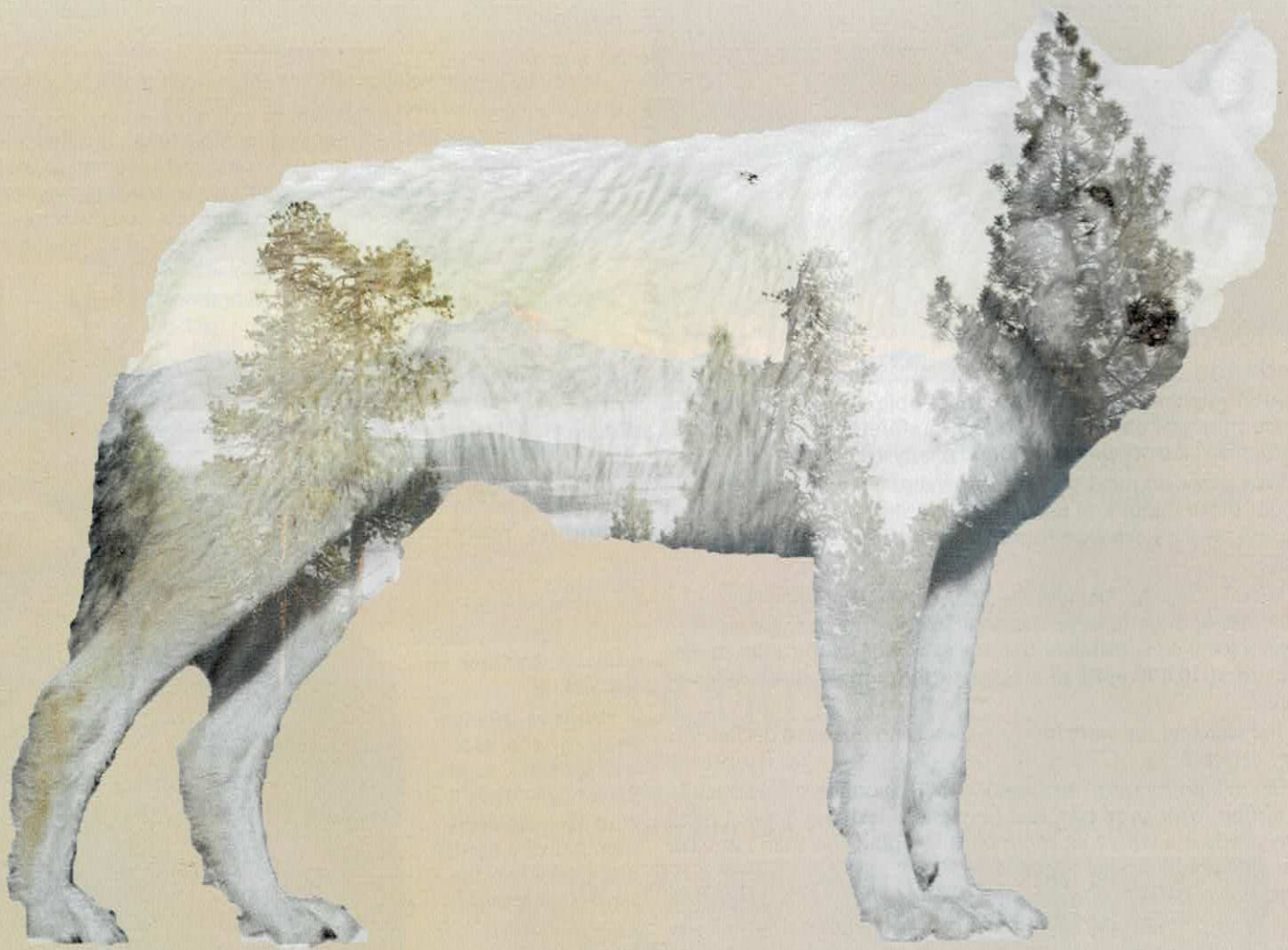


How wolves got back to Oregon

State to take over management as species delisted



By Sarah Handyside— Herald and News

Gray wolves are steadily repopulating Southern Oregon and Northern California, and area ranchers worry they pose a threat to livestock. Some ranching associations advocate lethal control, an approach that nearly exterminated gray wolves from the contiguous U.S. in the 1800s.

In 1995, gray wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park and into Idaho, and from there, they made their way — on their own — to Oregon and California.

HOW MANY ARE THERE & WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

In July, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed that the Lassen Pack had produced 8 new pups, bringing the pack to a total of 14 wolves. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, 2020



FILE This June 30, 2017 remote camera image released by the US Forest Service shows a female gray wolf and her mate with a pup born in 2017 in the wild of Lassen National Forest in Northern California

gray wolves lived in the state at the end of 2019, a 15% increase from 2018. While the majority of Oregon's wolves live in the state's northeastern corner, three distinct groups occupy territory near the Oregon-California border. The Rogue Pack, a family of 4, occupies Klamath and Jackson Counties, the Indigo Pack, a family of 5, occupies

Douglas and Lane Counties, and the Silver Lake wolves inhabit Lake County.

THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA CONNECTION

California's Lassen and Shasta Packs share a famous relative with southern Oregon's Rogue Pack. He was born into the Imnaha Pack in northeast Oregon in 2009 and ODFW gave him a GPS tracking collar in February 2011. The seventh gray wolf to be collared in Oregon, CDFW dubbed him OR-7. He dispersed from the Imnaha Pack in September of 2011 and traveled southwest. When he crossed into California's Siskiyou County in 2011, he'd traveled over 1,062 miles from his birthplace.

For 15 months, OR-7 explored the Southern Cascades, the Modoc Plateau, the Lassen and Plumas National Forests. In April 2013, OR-7 returned to Oregon, found a mate and established the Rogue Pack, western Oregon's first confirmed wolf family in nearly 70 years. The pack claimed the



FILE- This June 29, 2017, file remote camera image provided by the U.S. Forest Service shows a female gray wolf and two of the three pups born in 2017 in the wilds of Lassen National Forest in Northern California.

is the fourth consecutive year that the pack has produced offspring. First detected in 2017, the Lassen Pack roams western Lassen and northern Plumas Counties in California.

Currently, the Lassen Pack is California's only known wolf family, but it was not the first. In August 2015, CDFW discovered the Shasta Pack in eastern Siskiyou County, California's first wolf pack in a century. CDFW tracked the Shasta Pack consistently up until 2016, when they mysteriously vanished. In May of that year, CDFW spotted the Shasta Pack's last remaining member, a yearling male, in northern Nevada.

Oregon's gray wolf population has been increasing as well. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reported that 158



In this Aug. 9, 2015, still image from a video released by the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife show evidence of five gray wolf pups and two adults in Northern California.

Southern Cascades and Crater Lake National Park as their home territory.

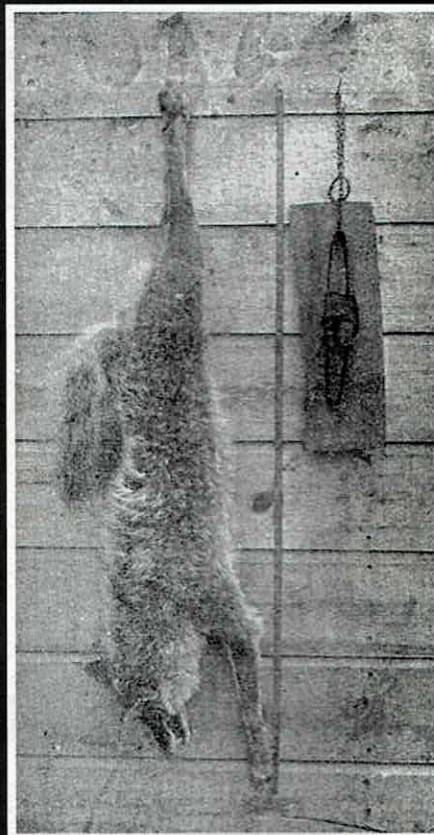
Journey produced pups each year from 2014 to 2018 and three of them migrated to California. One of those was the original breeding male of the Lassen Pack. The breeding pair of the Shasta Pack were both members of Eastern Oregon's Imnaha pack, which means they, too, were related to OR-7.

OR-7 was California's first confirmed wild gray wolf in 87 years. He lived to be almost 11 years old, about twice the lifespan of most wild wolves. His GPS collar's batteries gave out in 2014 and he hasn't been seen since October 2019. OR-7 is believed dead.



Left:
Killed by the
still hunt

Right:
A large
Wisconsin
Wolf



Images are in the public domain at: The Project Gutenberg E-book of Wolf and Coyote Trapping, by A.R. (Arthur Robert) Harding

EXTERMINATION

The Center for Biological Diversity estimates that about 2 million gray wolves once roamed the United States. But according to a timeline from International Wolf Center, the demise of the species began as early as 1630, when the Massachusetts Bay Colony began offering cash bounties for killed wolves.

Between 1838 and 1884, bounty systems sprang up in several states, with payments ranging from \$3 in Minnesota to \$5 in Montana, and wolf hunters killed an estimated 100,000 wolves per year. In 1915, the U.S. government hired its own team of wolf hunters who killed 24,132 wolves before they disbanded in 1942.

By the 1960s, gray wolves inhabited a mere 3 percent of their former territory in the lower 48 states, occupying northeastern Minnesota and the Isle Royale in Michigan.

In Oregon, during the 19th Century, gray wolves lived in The Dalles and the Southern Cascades and roamed along the Deschutes and Columbia Rivers and through the Umpqua National Forest. The last gray wolf bounty was paid in Oregon in 1946. By 1972, the species had been eradicated from the state.

Historical maps of California present differing depictions of gray wolf territory, but researchers have determined based on settler reports that they once inhabited the Modoc Plateau, the Klamath Mountains, the southern Cascades and the Sierra Nevada and North Coast mountain ranges. California's last gray wolf was killed in Lassen County in 1924.

REINTRODUCTION & PROTECTION

The gray wolf's fortunes began to change when the federal government granted the red wolf, the eastern timberwolf and the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf protection under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966. It was the first piece of federal legislation to protect endangered wildlife, and seven years later, it became the Endangered Species Act. In 1978, the 3 subspecies were consolidated and gray wolves were listed under the federal ESA as a single species.

Reintroduction began in Yellowstone National Park, where gray wolves had been absent for about 60 years according to International Wolf Center. On January 12, 1995, eight gray wolves were brought to Yellowstone from Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada, and by December 2019 their numbers had stabilized, ranging from 80 to 108.

USFWS reintroduced gray wolves into Idaho at the same time. The state's governor was adamantly against reintroduction and he threatened to use the national guard to block a shipment of wolves. Despite his opposition, four animals were released into Idaho's Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.

By the end of 2013, there were 1,691 wolves, 78 breeding pairs and 320 packs in the Northern Rocky Mountain region, which includes Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington.



Three of the four pups born in spring 2013 to the Wenaha wolf pack appear in northeastern Oregon. Photo courtesy of ODFW

RECOVERY IN OREGON AND CALIFORNIA

Deliberate reintroduction wasn't necessary on the west coast. In 1999, gray wolves migrated to eastern Oregon from Idaho and British Columbia and Oregon's first wolf family, the Imnaha pack, was confirmed in 2008.

As gray wolves repopulated Oregon, they also migrated to California, the famous OR7 being the first to arrive. In 2015 and 2017, the CDFW confirmed the Shasta Pack and the Lassen Pack respectively. By 2016, the Shasta Pack had vanished, making the now 14-member Lassen Pack California's only wolf family.

In 2019, the USFWS submitted a proposal to delist gray wolves from the federal ESA, and that rule was finalized October 29, 2020. After 45 years, the USFWS has removed federal protection from gray wolves throughout the contiguous U.S., except for a small population of Mexican gray wolves in Arizona and New Mexico. The rule was published in the federal register on Nov. 3, but it does not take effect until Jan. 4, 2021. Once it is implemented, states become responsible for gray wolf management and protection.

In California, gray wolves are still protected by the state's endangered species act, which prohibits lethal take. But in Oregon, things are more complicated. ODFW's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan divides the state into an eastern and a western zone, separated by highways 395, 78 and 95.

Most of Oregon's wolf packs live in the eastern zone, which is in phase 3 of recovery. ODFW issues temporary permits authorizing ranchers to kill wolves in the eastern zone in cases of chronic depredation, which is defined as two confirmed depredations by the same wolf pack in a period of nine consecutive months. Illegally killing a wolf in the eastern zone is a violation of Oregon State Game law punishable by a fine of \$6,250 and one year in county jail. On top of that, Oregon courts may also impose a civil restitution fine of \$7,500.

Oregon's western zone is in phase 1 of recovery. According to Michelle Dennehy, Communications Coordinator for the ODFW, lethal action against wolves in the western zone is illegal unless ODFW has confirmed at least four livestock depredations within a 6-month period by the same wolf or wolves, and the landowners impacted were using non-lethal prevention measures at the time.

Derek Broman, carnivore coordinator for the ODFW, said that removal of federal protections will not change Oregon's wolf management plan in any way. This means lethal take of gray wolves in the western zone will become an option in cases of chronic depredation, but it will be a last resort.

While the Trump Administration announced the successful recovery of the species, gray wolf advocates with the Center for Biological Diversity said in a press release that the USFWS "made its decision despite the fact that wolves are still functionally extinct in the vast majority of their former range across the continental United States."

"It is far too early to declare wolves recovered and to strip protections from them in the Western two-thirds of Oregon," said Danielle Moser, wildlife program coordinator for Oregon Wild. "Removing wolves from the endangered species list would turn their management entirely over to Oregon's embattled Department of Fish and Wildlife, which continues to push for hunting and trapping of the state's already fragile wolf population."

However, Derek Broman said that the federal delisting will not mean open season on gray wolves and that Oregon's 5-person wolf management staff has the resources to take over management and sustain gray wolf recovery.

"Oregon's wolf management plan was designed to take over if federal protections were removed," he said.

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