



News Release

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Canid North of Grand Canyon Confirmed to be a Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf

PHOENIX – Genetic tests of scat (feces) collected from a free-roaming canid north of Grand Canyon National Park on the North Kaibab National Forest have confirmed that the animal, first detected in early October, is a female Rocky Mountain gray wolf. The confirmation clarifies that this gray wolf is fully protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Since early October, a collared, wolf-like canid was repeatedly observed and photographed on the Kaibab Plateau just north of Grand Canyon National Park. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and National Park Service wildlife officials were unsuccessful in detecting a radio signal from an apparently inoperable radio telemetry collar.

On November 2, Fish and Wildlife Service biologists collected scat to obtain genetic information. Service biologists' attempted to capture the animal to collect blood and replace the radio collar. Those efforts were unsuccessful and have been suspended due to cold weather, as our primary concern is the welfare of this animal. Any future capture efforts will be for collar and transmitter replacement, and the wolf will be released on site.

The DNA analysis was conducted by University of Idaho's Laboratory for Ecological, Evolutionary and Conservation Genetics. The DNA analysis confirmed that the animal is a gray wolf from the northern Rocky Mountain population. The lab may be able to determine the wolf's individual identification by comparing its DNA profile with that of previously captured and sampled northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf females. This analysis will take several weeks to several months. We will provide any additional information when it becomes available.

“The DNA results indicate this wolf traveled at least 450 miles from an area in the northern Rocky Mountains to northern Arizona,” said Benjamin Tuggle, Southwest Regional Director. “Wolves, particularly young wolves, can be quite nomadic dispersing great distances across the landscape. Such behavior is not unusual for juveniles as they travel to find food or another mate.”

Gray wolves have not been observed in the area for over 70 years when the last of the animals were removed through a decades-long predator eradication campaign. This female gray wolf is not

associated with the Mexican wolf population, a subspecies of gray wolves that occurs in Arizona and New Mexico south of Interstate 40.

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