Outline Notes for red wolf science update

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1. background – lack of ecological information about red wolves – poorly studied compared to gray wolves, despite starting 8 years earlier

2. science vacuum made it easy for wolf opponents to spread misinformation – and they did – starting in 2012/2013 – "worst wildlife disaster in NC history"

3. WN – decided to do something about it – launched 20 cameras in fall 2015 – idea to document the wildlife patterns in the national wildlife refuges where the wolves have lived for 30 years

4. cameras have been in the field for 6 years now at some locations – we've replaced the older Moultrie cameras with newer Reconyx models

5. 2019-2020 – expanded to include ~20 sites on private land – hoping to build coverage and build credibility for what we're seeing

6. taken the unusual step of trying to put all of our camera trap images up on the internet for the public to be able to see – transparency – link – last updated in 2020, hard to keep up during the pandemic

www.flickr.com/photos/redwolfreality/albums (each album is a camera)

7. while doing the camera project, we noticed that in summer trips – not only a lot of bears, sometimes as many as 40 in a single day – also hearing and seeing a lot of bobwhite quail.

8. quail are a popular gamebird that have been in serious decline for decades. A big part of that is habitat loss – as farms have reverted to forests and the remaining farms have intensified and dropped their wildlife-friendly practices – ditch to ditch cropping

9. but also believed that over-abundant mesopredators may be playing a role – quail nest on the ground and so their nests are relatively easy prey – raccoons, possums, etc

10. Alligator River NWR – has both large amounts of high quality habitat – huge fields with cover strips – and the red wolves, which are known to eat the mesopredators

11. we expanded our camera trapping efforts in summer 2020, and hired two interns to conduct quail surveys at all of our camera sites, plus a set of road-based transects across the peninsula to add context

12. expanded that effort even more in 2021 – 32 cameras at alligator River – distributed according to what we hoped was a gradient of the predation risk posed to raccoons by the wolves – 8 cameras on narrow forest trails with escape trees everywhere, 8 cameras on forest roads with more room for the wolves to hit speed, 8 cameras on forest-field edges, and 8 cameras on posts out mid-field where raccoons would have a long run to get to a tree – monitored cameras, did quail surveys on refuges, and did more road surveys.

13. results so far – indicate pretty ridiculous numbers of quail at Alligator River – so many that our interns couldn't count them all in some instances

14. still working on camera data processing – so we can compare quail data to wolf, raccoon detection rates – working in partnership with Roland Kays lab, NC Museum to get the photos entered into database for processing. This will allow us to complete the quail project, and it will let us start to address some of our original questions about red wolves vs. deer

15. so stay tuned! This summer, I'm taking a sabbatical, so not doing another field season with the quail project, - but we hope to develop more research once we have a good idea what the results show so far

16. communicating this work, doing outreach is critical – so turning it back to Nikki so she can update you on our outreach efforts.