

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Red Wolf Recovery Program

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Update on the Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population (ENC RWP)

- Population

- The current known population of wild adult/subadult red wolves (e.g., radio-collared individuals) in the ENC RWP is 18, with the estimated total population of approximately 20-22 red wolves. All known adult red wolves are collared with orange collars.
- Both red wolf family groups are within their areas of expected use. There are also multiple dispersing wild red wolves, including 2 year olds and 1 year olds.
- Monitoring indicates denning by 1 wild female red wolf and we expect a second one to den. We will be going into the dens to verify if there is a litter when any pups are an estimated 9-10 days old. We will pup foster if possible, but to do various factors such as landownership and the timing of litters in the wild with the birth of litters in SAFE, we may not be able to.
- The wild red wolf pair on St. Vincent NWR has not shown any evidence of denning so far this spring.

- Management

- Ground telemetry conducted several days a week to get locations for all collared red wolves and sterilized coyotes. Aerial telemetry conducted periodically.
- There are currently 43 sterilized coyotes, 22 of which are additional sterilized coyotes this past trapping season that ended at the beginning of April, including 15 from four different parcels of private lands.
- Over 50 remote sensing cameras deployed and monitored on a weekly basis throughout the ENC RWP on refuges and private land with landowner permission.

- Conducting an aerial telemetry flight this morning, April 18 with a FWS plane and pilot. May be awhile before we're able to take another flight.
- We are continuing the implementation of the 2023-2024 release plan. Includes:
 - Increasing the number of breeding pairs in the wild. On January 29, 2024, we released a SAFE male into the Milltail territory after 3 months in an acclimation pen within that territory. All monitoring indicates that he has paired and bred with the resident wild red wolf female whose prior mate was a vehicle strike mortality in September 2023.
 - We currently have 4 active acclimation pens with red wolves in them. Two consist of a wild female red wolf and a SAFE male, one is two wild red wolves that were previously unpaired and one wild red wolf female that we were unable to capture the wild male we were planning on placing with her. However, she was captured late and may have been pregnant when captured so she will remain in the pen for potential pup fostering. Generally speaking acclimation pens without pups will be considered for released in early May and pens with pups will be released when the pups are approximately 6 weeks old.
 - Pup fostering whenever possible. No pup fostering opportunities to date, but there is still potentially for some.
- We are working with a multi-agency group (e.g., FWS, NC DOT, WRC) discussing potential wildlife crossings within the ENC RWP, particularly one along Highway 64, to address the ongoing need and best way forward on applying for the various grants available to help fund the design and construction of a wildlife crossing.
- Due to ongoing concerns regarding the habituation of red wolves on Alligator River NWR from the volume of people that were remaining near them throughout the day, in close coordination with Refuge leadership the areas of use by the red wolf family groups have been closed to the public for the past several months. Closures have made a positive difference in the behavior and movements of red wolves. These closures are re-evaluated on a regular basis. We reopened up a portion on Alligator River NWR, but it has been causing issues for bears mostly, but red wolves as well, so we are evaluating options.
- Meet with WRC multiple times a month, and as needed, to coordinate canid management within the ENC RWP.

- NCSU engineering students working on a collar to help reduce vehicle strike mortalities made a prototype to test on a coyote but it was ready after trapping season was over so it will be used next year.

- Outreach
 - Through a grant obtained by Wildlands Network and working collaboratively with NCWF and FWS, over 1400 mailers were sent out this week across the 5-county area of the ENC RWP regarding Prey for the Pack. As of yesterday afternoon, Luke had already received a handful of inquiries via phone and email.