



Mexican wolf, F954 (Noel)  
Photo by Julie Lawrence

## MEXICAN WOLF PROGRAM – WOLF HAVEN INTERNATIONAL

### Overview

The Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) is the most genetically distinct subspecies of the gray wolf. Once abundant in the mountains of Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, the Mexican wolf nearly went extinct by the early 1970s. The Endangered Species Act prevented the complete eradication of the Mexican wolf, but their population was so low at the time that wildlife officials felt the only option for the restoration of this unique subspecies was captive breeding and reintroduction to historical ranges.

A Mexican Wolf Species Survival Plan (SSP) program was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to manage and oversee a captive breeding program and to lend support to the reintroduction and recovery efforts of the species in the wild. In 2023, the SSP program transitioned into a Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) program. Only 241 Mexican wolves are known to be living in the wild today, mainly along the Arizona-New Mexico border and in Mexico.

### Wolf Haven's Role

Wolf Haven has participated in the Mexican Wolf SSP/SAFE program since 1994, as both a captive breeding facility and a pre-release facility (one of only three in the United States). Pre-release enclosures are designed to prepare wolves for life in the wild, and meet the size, space, and privacy requirements outlined by the program. Interactions with humans are kept to a minimum and most observations are done by remote camera.

### Outcome

In 1998, three packs of Mexican wolves were released into Arizona's Apache National Forest after being absent from the wild for nearly 30 years. One of those packs — the Hawk's Nest pack — came from Wolf Haven. They successfully hunted an elk in less than a week. Including this pack, a total of ten litters of Mexican wolves have been born at Wolf Haven. Two packs have been released into the wild in the United States, and another has been released into the wild in Mexico.

Wolf Haven also hosted the annual binational Mexican Wolf SSP/SAFE Meeting in 2012, where delegates from the United States and Mexico came together to discuss the status of the Mexican wolf recovery plan and made recommendations for breeding, transfers, and releases. The Mexican wolf recovery program currently manages a captive population of over 400 Mexican wolves in 60 facilities across the United States and Mexico.



*Red wolf, M2214 (Cedar)  
Photo by Julie Lawrence*

## RED WOLF PROGRAM – WOLF HAVEN INTERNATIONAL

### **Overview**

The red wolf is one of two wolf species indigenous to North America. They are smaller than gray wolves and typically weigh between 50-80 pounds. Aggressive predator control, habitat loss, and hybridizing with coyotes reduced the wild red wolf population to a mere 14 wolves by the late 1970s. The Endangered Species Act prevented the complete eradication of the red wolf and today, only 19 to 21 red wolves are estimated to roam their native habitat in the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina. This is the world's only wild population of red wolves.

The original red wolf range extended throughout the southeast, up and down the eastern seaboard, and as far west as Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas. As gray wolves were eradicated, coyotes experienced a population explosion and radically expanded their range east. Simultaneously, as the red wolf population fell, coyotes and red wolves began to interbreed. A Red Wolf Species Survival Plan (SSP) program was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to manage and oversee the recovery of this endangered species through captive breeding, housing, and releasing into suitable habitat. In 2023, the SSP program transitioned into a Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) program.

### **Wolf Haven's Role**

In 2003, Wolf Haven was approved to participate in the Red Wolf SSP/SAFE program as a captive breeding facility. USFWS is responsible for potential releases into the wild while the recovery program team is tasked with the captive management of red wolves. Wolf Haven follows strict guidelines for the care and maintenance of these animals — interactions with humans are kept to a minimum and most observations are done by remote camera. There are currently eight red wolves living at Wolf Haven, which is one of the largest captive red wolf populations in the program.

### **Outcome**

Since 2005, four litters of red wolf pups have been born at Wolf Haven. The most recent litter was born in the spring of 2017. Our participation in the red wolf recovery program provides us with the opportunity to teach about the historical and current range of the red wolf; support conservation efforts; and sustain a surplus population of animals who are behaviorally and genetically appropriate for restoring the species in the wild if it were to go extinct. There is currently a captive population of 238 red wolves among 47 facilities in the United States.



*The Patrick Vance Dunn  
Memorial Prairie in bloom*

## PRAIRIE CONSERVATION – WOLF HAVEN INTERNATIONAL

### **Overview**

Prairies are one of the rarest ecosystems in Washington and over 90% of highly threatened prairie land has already been lost. Once native prairie is converted to other use, such as housing or industry, it becomes inhospitable and often uninhabitable to its original residents. As prairies dwindle, so do the number of native species who thrive on them.

Prairies have long offered Indigenous people an open landscape where game can be easily hunted and a great diversity of edible foods and medicinal plants can be gathered. Conservation and restoration of remaining prairie fragments is crucial to the long-term survival of this unique ecosystem.

### **Wolf Haven's Role**

In addition to our wolf sanctuary, Wolf Haven's acreage includes 36 acres of rare Mima mound prairie, 8 acres of Garry oak/conifer woodlands, and 8½ acres of wetlands. This mosaic of habitats makes up the Patrick Vance Dunn Memorial Prairie. In 2001, Wolf Haven began its prairie restoration project with the goal of strengthening its role as a host for rare and threatened species. Restoration activities on our prairie are conducted through working partnerships with Center for Natural Lands Management, Ecostudies Institute, U.S. Department of Defense, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Black Hills Audubon Society.

### **Outcome**

Through our working collaboration with state/federal agencies and conservation organizations, Wolf Haven's prairie has seen a remarkable resurgence of native flora and fauna. Hundreds of native plants have been donated and planted at Wolf Haven. Volunteers routinely collect seeds from larkspur, early blue violets, goldenrod, blue camas, lupine, and strawberry runners to be planted on other prairie preserves throughout the area. We also regularly remove invasive species, like scotch broom, and conduct annual prescribed prairie burns.

More than 190 plant species have been identified on Wolf Haven's prairie and 332 Mazama pocket gophers have been relocated from sites under development to mounds on our prairie. Fifty-four kinds of birds have been sighted and bat boxes on site are heavily used by native bat populations. Wolf Haven also hopes to become a reintroduction site for the rare Taylor's checkerspot butterfly.



*A wolf from the Teanaway pack  
Photo by WDFW*

## WASHINGTON WOLF CONSERVATION – WOLF HAVEN INTERNATIONAL

### **Overview**

Following their extirpation in the 1930s, wolves were absent from the Washington landscape for over 80 years. They gradually began returning to the state from neighboring British Columbia, Idaho, and Oregon. In 2008, a pack with pups was confirmed in western Okanogan County and northern Chelan County. Since then, the state's wolf population has increased at an average rate of 28% per year and many other wolf packs have been confirmed.

State and federal wildlife authorities continue to monitor resident wolf activity to assess population expansion across the state and to learn more about habitat usage and behaviors. In their 2022 year-end count, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) reported 37 confirmed wolf packs and 26 successful breeding pairs, for a total of at least 216 wolves across the state. Of these known wolf packs, 81% were not involved in any documented livestock depredations.

Packs range across public and private land in Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties in the northeast corner of the state and Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, and Walla Walla counties in southeast Washington. Increasing numbers are also present in Okanogan, Chelan, and Kittitas counties in the north-central and central Washington region. Washington's first pack to recolonize the South Cascades was documented in 2022.

### **Wolf Haven's Role**

Wolf Haven instructs thousands of people annually on wolf ecology and the importance of maintaining a balanced ecosystem, complete with top predators. This type of education dispels many myths surrounding wolves and is vital to promoting human acceptance of them. Science-based knowledge also empowers wolf supporters to speak out for wolves with their legislators, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, and WDFW.

Wolf Haven was a member of the Wolf Working Group that provided recommendations to WDFW as they developed the Washington Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. This plan was approved and adopted by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2011. The state plan is applicable across all of Washington state, regardless if wolves are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act or not. Wolf Haven also served as a member of the Wolf Advisory Group, tasked with advising WDFW on the implementation of the adopted wolf management plan.