



California Wolf Center

Conservation, Education, Research

News Release

Primary Contact: Erin Hunt, Director of Operations
(760) 765-0030, erin@californiawolfcenter.org

Secondary Contact: Christina Souto, Director of Membership and Marketing
(510) 362-3009, christina@californiawolfcenter.org

May 26th, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mexican gray wolves born at California Wolf Center travel to Arizona

Julian, CA – California Wolf Center is celebrating the birth of a Mexican gray wolf litter at their conservation center, six puppies born two weeks ago. On May 16th two pups were transported to Arizona and placed in the den of the Panther Creek wild wolf pack. The transport did not return empty handed. Two pups from the Panther Creek litter were brought back and placed into California Wolf Center's den.

California Wolf Center has long been a critical partner in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program. However, in a historic first for the California Wolf Center, the government agency recommended that two Mexican gray wolf pups from the Center's litter and two wild-born puppies be cross fostered. This strategy, which works because of wolves' strong parenting instincts, fosters young pups into an adoptive pack that will raise them as their own. It is a resourceful method that accomplishes multiple goals:

- Enhances genetic diversity in the wild population
- Allows captive born pups to be raised in the wild to increase their chance of survival
- Ensures genetic variation in the captive population, thus preventing extinction

"Cross-fostering requires time and commitment from multiple partners" said Sherry Barrett, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mexican gray wolf recovery coordinator. "We are especially appreciative of Arizona Game and Fish Department for providing transportation to and from the captive facility and for conducting the field portion of the cross-fostering effort in Arizona, and of the California Wolf Center for their near and long-term important contributions to Mexican wolf recovery."

Historically, Mexican gray wolves were found throughout the Southwestern United States. Due to anti-predator campaigns in the 1900's, they were hunted to near extinction. Between 1976 and 1980, the last Mexican gray wolves in the wild were captured and

relocated to facilities to begin a breeding program intended to produce a population that one day would be reintroduced to the wild. As Mexican gray wolves were hunted to fewer than 15 wolves, genetic variation is a huge concern for the subspecies's survival and an important part of the captive breeding program.

Reintroduction efforts for the Mexican gray wolf, led by United States Fish & Wildlife Service, began in 1998. As of August 2016, the population of the species in captivity is 245 individuals in 53 institutions. A minimum of 113 Mexican gray wolves live in the wild in the United States and approximately 30 live in Mexico.

“The Mexican gray wolf is one of the rarest land mammals in North America and is an icon of our Southwestern landscapes” said Erin Hunt, Director of Operations for the California Wolf Center. “These young pups are now part of a vital effort to ensure a future for these unique animals, and we are wishing the best for both our resident pack and the wild pack that adopted our little ones.”

The pups currently residing at the California Wolf Center are part of a multigenerational pack of fifteen Mexican gray wolves. Their parents, Bailey and Joy, successfully raised a litter of seven last year. Their rare genetics could mean an exciting future for these individuals.

Photos are available upon request. Unfortunately, we cannot provide video or any filming opportunities at this time due to our breeding protocol which ensures the safety of our resident wolves.

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About California Wolf Center

The California Wolf Center is dedicated to the recovery of wolves in the wildlands they once roamed. We envision a landscape where wolves thrive in healthy ecosystems and wolves and people successfully coexist. Our organization is at the forefront of creating a new model for successful wolf recovery with a scientifically based, socially acceptable approach to wolf-livestock conflict that provides real and practical solutions to those sharing the landscape with wolves. We offer tours of our conservation center in Julian, CA with a reservation. Visit californiawolfcenter.org or call our office at 760-765-0030 for more information.