



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Red Wolf News

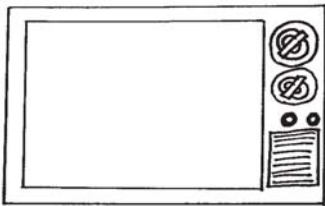
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Red Wolves In The Wild

☞ Currently, an estimated 100 red wolves populate the Pamlico-Albemarle peninsula of northeastern North Carolina, ranging over 1.5 million acres.

☞ Radio collars track 63 red wolves, 11 red wolf-coyote hybrids, and 5 coyotes within the recovery zone.



In The News

☞ On July 31st, MSNBC network aired a National Geographic Explorer special containing the 30-minute film segment, "America's Last Red Wolves." The special is being aired periodically. Check local listings for airdates.

☞ A film crew from TV Tokyo visited the Red Wolf Recovery Program for a week in August to gather material for a documentary on endangered species recovery to be aired in Japan.



Watching Wolves by Satellite: Biologists Test a New Approach to Monitoring Red Wolves

In July, Red Wolf Recovery Program biologists fastened an experimental GPS collar to a sterilized hybrid male in order to test the usefulness of this technology in monitoring the wild population of red wolves. The collar will automatically record the location of the animal up to three times a day, information which is downloaded to a receiver once a week and then analyzed by biologists. This allows biologists to gather data without having to be in the field as often and allows collection of data in areas where it is logistically impossible.

However, savings in personnel time are countered by battery life limitations of



A GPS collar uses satellites to locate red wolves.

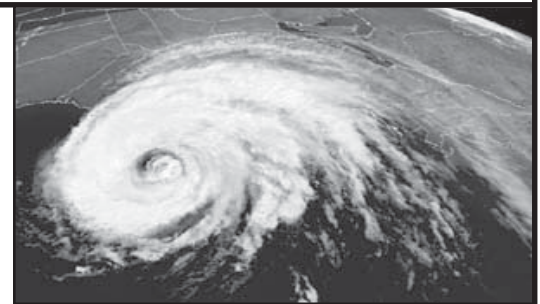
the GPS collars. While traditional telemetry collars have an average battery life of 3-4 years, the GPS collar installed by the red wolf staff is only expected to last about 1 year. The effort needed to recapture animals and replace the batteries in these collars is perhaps the least appealing aspect of the technology at this point in time. As the technology rapidly improves, the efficiency of GPS collars will likely no longer be a concern.

(Continued on page 2)

After Isabel

On September 18th, Hurricane Isabel made landfall in northeastern North Carolina. The eye of the 500 mile-wide storm directly hit the experimental red wolf restoration area, leaving her mark upon the landscape as well as the red wolf population. The category two storm ravaged the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge (ARNWR), inflicting an estimated \$5.5 million in damage. In the fury of her 100 mph winds, Isabel managed to decimate the captive red wolf facility known as Sandy Ridge, located in ARNWR.

Sandy Ridge, the second largest captive red wolf breeding facility in the nation, was nearly flattened by the high winds. Amid the chaos, only one of the 14 pens in the facility escaped damage. Out of the remaining 13 pens, 7 are repairable. Tragically, the recovery program's most



photographed and filmed wolf, 520M (also known as "Zeus" and "Hollywood") was killed when a tree fell on him as he escaped his shelter. No longer able to breed, 520M was slated to be the first resident of the Red Wolf Visitor Center, to be built on the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

During the storm, two captive-born red wolves escaped from their pens. One wolf was recovered via telemetry and the second was killed in an automobile accident before he could be recaptured. The field crew continues to assess if any damage was done to the wild population of red wolves.

Watching Wolves *-continued-*

Because the reliability of the experimental collar is not yet known, an abdominal telemetry transmitter was surgically implanted inside the hybrid to serve as a back up to the GPS collar. The abdominal transmitter is a small, rounded, self-contained unit that floats freely inside the belly and does not interfere with normal bodily functions.

Potentially, data gathered from GPS collars could answer many questions about red wolf movements and behaviors.

However, the red wolf staff is not ready to hang up their telemetry antennas just yet. As this initial experiment proceeds, the performance of the hybrid's GPS collar is likely to answer some questions the biologists have about the prospective applications of this technology. Currently, there are no plans to switch to widespread use of the collars within the red wolf population. However, the red wolf staff is keeping an open mind to this and other types of newer technology as it becomes more proven and economical.

Taking Care of Red Wolves: Volunteers Keep Captive Animals Alive and Healthy

In the wilds of the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, a low ridge rises out of the swamps. The highest land in the surrounding area, the site known as Sandy Ridge was once a bustling logging camp where, during prohibition, moonshine stills sent flumes of smoke into the forest canopy. Today, it's the home of the Sandy Ridge Captive Red Wolf Facility and is completely uninhabited except by one person: the red wolf caretaker volunteer.

Caretakers, most often students or recent graduates, commit to a 3-6 month internship to gain skills in animal husbandry and maintenance in return for humble quarters and a modest stipend. Since the beginning of the red wolf restoration in Alligator River Refuge, volunteer caretakers have been vital in the effort to keep the captive facility functioning and the animals alive and healthy. The Sandy Ridge facility, remote and off-limits to the public, contains pens to

hold captive and, temporarily, wild red wolves and canids. Wild animals requiring medical attention, awaiting blood work results, or acclimating to a matched mate are released as soon as possible.

Caretakers feed and water the wolves, inspect and repair pens, observe the animals for any unusual behavior, and remove scat and debris from the interior of the pens. On top of these routine duties, the caretakers also sanitize equipment, administer heartworm preventative, and maintain the grounds around the facility. Additional duties include track casting, skull articulation, assisting with Howling Safaris, and waiting on-call most weekends to assist field biologists on traplines.

While the work is challenging and the financial benefits are few, the red wolf caretakers play a crucial role in the success of the captive facility and the restoration of the red wolf to the



Sandy Ridge resident 520M was killed during Hurricane Isabel (see page 1 for story).

wild. The Red Wolf Recovery Program values the time and effort extended by all of those who have volunteered to work for the restoration of this important species.

Those who are interested in applying for a caretaker internship may contact Scott McLellan at: Scott_McLellan@fws.gov or by mail: Caretaker Internship Red Wolf Recovery Program PO Box 1969 Manteo, NC 27954

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