

Lone wolf crosses into California

January 2 2012, By Matt Weiser

A gray wolf was confirmed to be roaming California for the first time in 87 years when a young male migrating in search of a mate crossed over the state line from Oregon on Wednesday.

The 2-year-old wolf, known as "OR7", has roamed more than 750 miles, crossing the length of Oregon in search of a new territory to call his own.

On Thursday morning, the wolf's GPS collar reported [location data](#) from the previous 24 hours. [Wildlife officials](#) said he is now in Siskiyou County, just a few days after he had been near Keno, Ore.

"It might just be sort of a drive-by experience or he could become a resident of Siskiyou County," said Mark Stopher, a special assistant to the director of the California Department of Fish and Game, which is now monitoring the wolf. "He's more like an interesting ghost right at the moment."

[State officials](#) don't yet have a plan to manage wolves, but an initial planning document is being prepared and is expected to be released in January.

Regardless, because OR7 is migrating, he is considered endangered under the federal [Endangered Species](#) Act. Disturbing him in any way could be considered a federal crime. As long as OR7 is in California, he will be jointly managed by the Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. [Fish and Wildlife Service](#).

Stopher warned people not to look for the wolf, or approach it if they see it. But if anyone thinks they saw the wolf, Stopher urged them to report a detailed description of the animal to the Redding regional Fish and Game office.

Wild wolves were exterminated from the West in the early 1900s because they were viewed as a threat to livestock. Biologists now recognize that wolves play an important role in managing deer and elk herds and, in turn, the forests they live in.

The last wild wolf confirmed in California was killed by a trapper in Lassen County in 1924.

(EDITORS: STORY CAN END HERE)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began a controversial \hat{A} - and successful \hat{A} - wolf reintroduction program in 1995. An initial relocation of 66 wolves from Canada has now produced a total wolf population in the western United States of more than 1,600 wolves. Most of those animals were removed from the endangered species list in October.

"Whether one is for it or against it, the entry of this lone wolf into California is an historic event and the result of much work by the wildlife agencies in the West," Fish and Game Director Charlton H. Bonham said in a written statement. "If the [gray wolf](#) does establish a population in California, there will be much more work to do here."

OR7 was born to a wolf pack in northeast Oregon. His mother became the first wolf to recolonize Oregon when she crossed from Idaho several years ago.

Fish and Game emphasized that concerns about public safety generally arise from inaccurate folklore about wolves. The animals generally seek

to avoid people.

Stopher said Fish and Game plans to meet with livestock and land management groups to discuss what a wolf will mean for California.

Current rules allow wolves, even those protected by the Endangered Species Act, to be killed if they prey on livestock.

That has not been an issue for OR7. Stopher noted that OR7 migrated apparently without , being seen by any people or harming any livestock.

Stopher said OR7 is unlikely to find the kind of habitat he needs in his current location, where there is too much farming, too many roads and too many people. He may find better habitat by continuing to move south, Stopher said, or by turning back to Oregon.

Then there is the issue of a mate. He is thought to be traveling alone, based on tracking evidence. And he probably won't find any sign or scent of a mate in California.

In the meantime, OR7's location is still being recorded four times a day by his GPS collar. That information is delivered daily at 6 a.m., via satellite if weather permits.

"At the moment, he's a California [wolf](#). Tomorrow may be different," Stopher said.

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