

Gray wolf travels more than 500 miles, then gets shot in Utah

December 30 2014, by Matt Pearce, Los Angeles Times

Long trip, sad ending. A 3-year-old female gray wolf, after traveling more than 500 miles from Wyoming, was shot and killed in southwestern Utah after a hunter apparently mistook her for a coyote, state officials said Monday.

The wolf had been radio-collared in January near Cody, Wyo., and was shot on Sunday near the south end of the Tushar Mountains, near Beaver, Utah, according to the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. The hunter notified officials after noticing the wolf's tracking collar, officials said.

The wolf could be the same one from the northern Rocky Mountains spotted just north of the Grand Canyon National Park in November, said one area wildlife activist, Kirk Robinson, executive director of the Western Wildlife Conservancy, a nonprofit in Utah.

"There were at least two wolves in the region that had radio collars," Robinson told the Los Angeles Times. "This could be either of them, or it could be a third one."

Gray wolves are endangered in much of the U.S. and are not generally known to inhabit most of Utah. Killing endangered animals can incur fines or prison time under the Endangered Species Act.

"We are still investigating, but it seems initially that it was a case of mistaken identity," said Division of Wildlife Resources director Greg

Sheehan told the Salt Lake Tribune, adding that federal officials would handle the investigation.

State and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment Monday afternoon.

The Tribune reported that this was the first reported death of a [gray wolf](#) in Utah since [gray wolves](#) were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park and Idaho in the 1990s.

Robinson raised doubts that the gray wolf could easily be mistaken for a [coyote](#).

"Wolves are quite a bit bigger than coyotes," Robinson told the Times. "Even a small wolf like this is twice as big as your average coyote."

Robinson added that a Utah state program that pays out \$50 bounties to hunters for killing coyotes - in order to keep down the predator population - may create greater risks for other animals, like wolves, that could potentially be mistaken for coyotes.

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