

# Wolf-like animal seen roaming in northern Arizona

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An animal resembling a gray wolf has been spotted roaming the far reaches of northern Arizona, officials said Thursday, and tests are planned to determine exactly what it is.

The animal has been seen and photographed in Kaibab National Forest north of Grand Canyon National Park with a collar similar to those used in a wolf recovery effort in the Northern Rockies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said.

The animal could be from that population of about 1,700 or a wolf-dog hybrid, said agency spokesman Jeff Humphrey. Officials will test its feces to determine further details.

Humphrey said the animal should be treated as endangered until more is known about it.

"Our immediate concern is the welfare of this animal," he said.

A group of fewer than 100 endangered Mexican gray [wolves](#) lives in portions of eastern Arizona and western New Mexico, but Humphrey said the animal does not appear to be from the Southwest population. Wolves in the Northern Rockies have fuller bodies and less pointed ears than Mexican gray wolves.

Wolves largely were exterminated early last century across the lower 48 states, except in the western Great Lakes area. They've been absent from

the Grand Canyon region since the 1940s.

The Fish and Wildlife Service in recent years lifted protections for the [animals](#) in the western Great Lakes and the Northern Rockies. A federal judge recently ordered the protections re-instated in Wyoming after wildlife advocates sued.

Grand Canyon Superintendent Dave Uberuaga said the park has received a couple of reports about an animal that resembles a wolf at the North Rim. He said park officials will be on the lookout for it.

Wolves often roam vast distances in search of food and mates. Packs from the Northern Rockies have been found as far south as Wyoming.

Environmentalists said the confirmed presence of a [gray wolf](#) around the Grand Canyon would be welcome news but remain concerned about a proposal to remove them from a list of protected species.

"There's an increasing number of people who have learned about the pivotal role wolves play in natural ecosystems, know they have been persecuted relentlessly over decades and cheer the return of wolves," said Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity. "And there are people who are fearful, concerned and opposed."

Nancy Gloman of Defenders of Wildlife said the group would like to see wolves in suitable habitat from Canada to Mexico.

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