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To Carol Seitz Warmuth <cseitzwarmuth@fs.fed.us>
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Subj Wolf Population estimation
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Hi Carol,

I hope all is well with you folks over at the SO. We were busy this summer and fall both with the wolf population project and the fawn mortality study. Since June, 2010, I collected wolf scats from the portion of Prince of Wales Island extending north to Sakar Lakes, east to Clarence Strait, south to Kasaan Bay, and west to Nossuk Bay. I established 8 approximately circular sampling zones within that area. During summer and fall I spent approximately 4 weeks in the field surveying those sampling zones. I also trained my dog to assist with locating scats, which increased scat detection substantially. Nonetheless, we have collected very few scats suitable for DNA extraction and indeed, found very few scats regardless of condition. Evidence of wolves within the study area is much less than my previous experience during monitoring wolves during 1999-2004. Wolf sign is ubiquitous but the density of sign is very low. Without use of my dog, I would not have detected the presence of wolves at all within much of my study area. To improve our ability to obtain fresh scats, I established a network of scent posts in October that covers my study area. Our objective is to use the scent posts to detect wolf activity and also to induce them to deposit scats along our road and trail transects. A total of 126 scent posts were created along 15 separate transects that involved about 65 miles of logging roads and 15-17 miles of wolf trails. The scent posts should overlap home ranges of 7 wolf packs including several remote groups such as Honker Divide and Sarkar Lakes. We survey scent posts every 2-3 weeks. Ray Slayton from the Thorne Bay Ranger District assisted me with the scent posts and was a tremendous help. Our November survey showed wolf activity along only 2 of the 15 transects and no new scats. We will continue with the scent posts and scat collection throughout winter as long as snow does not prevent access. If snow occurs, we will also fly to look for tracks and evidence of wolf activity.

My impression is that wolf numbers within the central portion of Prince of Wales Island are at a low level. Not only can we not find many fresh scats, we have difficulty finding old scats deposited over months. The only exception has been Honker Divide, which shows indications that a healthy pack still inhabits the area. I cannot determine if individual packs are gone and evidence of wolves is distributed widely, but the density of sign is extremely low compared to previous years. That impression was supported

Sub. Larry
Edwards

by testimony from a SE RAC member at the November Alaska Board of Game meeting in Ketchikan. It may also be reflected by the recent decline in reported wolf harvest. We (ADFG) modified hunting and trapping regulations by shortening the time period within which trappers and hunters must report their harvest and we lowered the annual harvest quota from 85-90 wolves to 50. If that level of harvest is reached, we will close the state season by emergency order.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call me. I'll be in my office most of this month but will be gone for much of January.

Take care and thanks for everything,

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