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# Gray Wolf

## *Canis lupus*

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Mammalia — Carnivora — Canidae

### CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide: Apparently secure (G4)  
Statewide: Imperiled (S2)  
ESA: Endangered; Experimental non-essential  
USFS: Region 1: No status; Region 4: Endangered  
BLM: Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate (Type 1)  
IDFG: Big game animal

### BASIS FOR INCLUSION

Endangered and Non-essential under the U.S. Endangered Species Act; major portion of regional distribution in Idaho.

### TAXONOMY

Two competing subspecific taxonomies are in use for the gray wolf. The traditional concept (e.g., Hall 1981) is that 24 subspecies occur in North America and that the subspecies historically occurring in Idaho would have been *C. lupus irremotus*. Recently an alternative taxonomy (Nowak and Federoff 1996) has been proposed in which 5 subspecies occur in North America, and the subspecies historically occurring in Idaho would have been *C. lupus nubilus*. However, the origin of reintroduced animals was Alberta. The subspecies occurring in that area would be *C. lupus occidentalis* within either of these taxonomies.

### DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

The gray wolf is circumboreal in distribution, occurring in North America, Asia, and Europe. In North America the gray wolf currently occurs throughout Canada and Alaska and in Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. Within Idaho populations occur in central and northern Idaho, and some individuals occur along the Wyoming-Idaho border. An estimated 500 individuals occurred in the state during 2004 (Mack et al. 2005). Wolves in the northern portion of the Panhandle (i.e., north of Interstate 90) are classified as endangered, and those elsewhere in the state are classified as an experimental non-essential under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

### POPULATION TREND

Populations are increasing.

### HABITAT AND ECOLOGY

The gray wolf occurs in parts of Idaho characterized by a mosaic of dry and mesic conifer and subalpine forest, as well as grassland and shrubland habitats. Large areas are required by individual wolves (Mech 1970; Fuller et al. 1992). Den sites are often in wooded, protected sites near water. The gray wolf is a carnivore that primarily depends on ungulates as a food source. Smaller mammals and scavenging (Forbes and

Theberge 1992) supplement the diet, particularly during wolf denning and rendezvous site activities (Paquet and Carbyn 2003). It is considered a keystone species in the ecosystems in which it occurs.

## **ISSUES**

The primary threats to wolves is human persecution. Since 1995, human-caused mortality, including government control measures, illegal shooting, and illegal poisoning, was the greatest source of documented mortality in Idaho. Wolves are especially prone to persecution and local extirpation in areas with high densities of livestock (Bangs and Fritts 1996; Bangs et al. 1998, 2001). Wolves are perceived by some portions of the human population as significant predators on livestock and big game, respectively. Conversely, others consider wolves as valued and essential components of Idaho's fauna. As a result they are highly controversial.

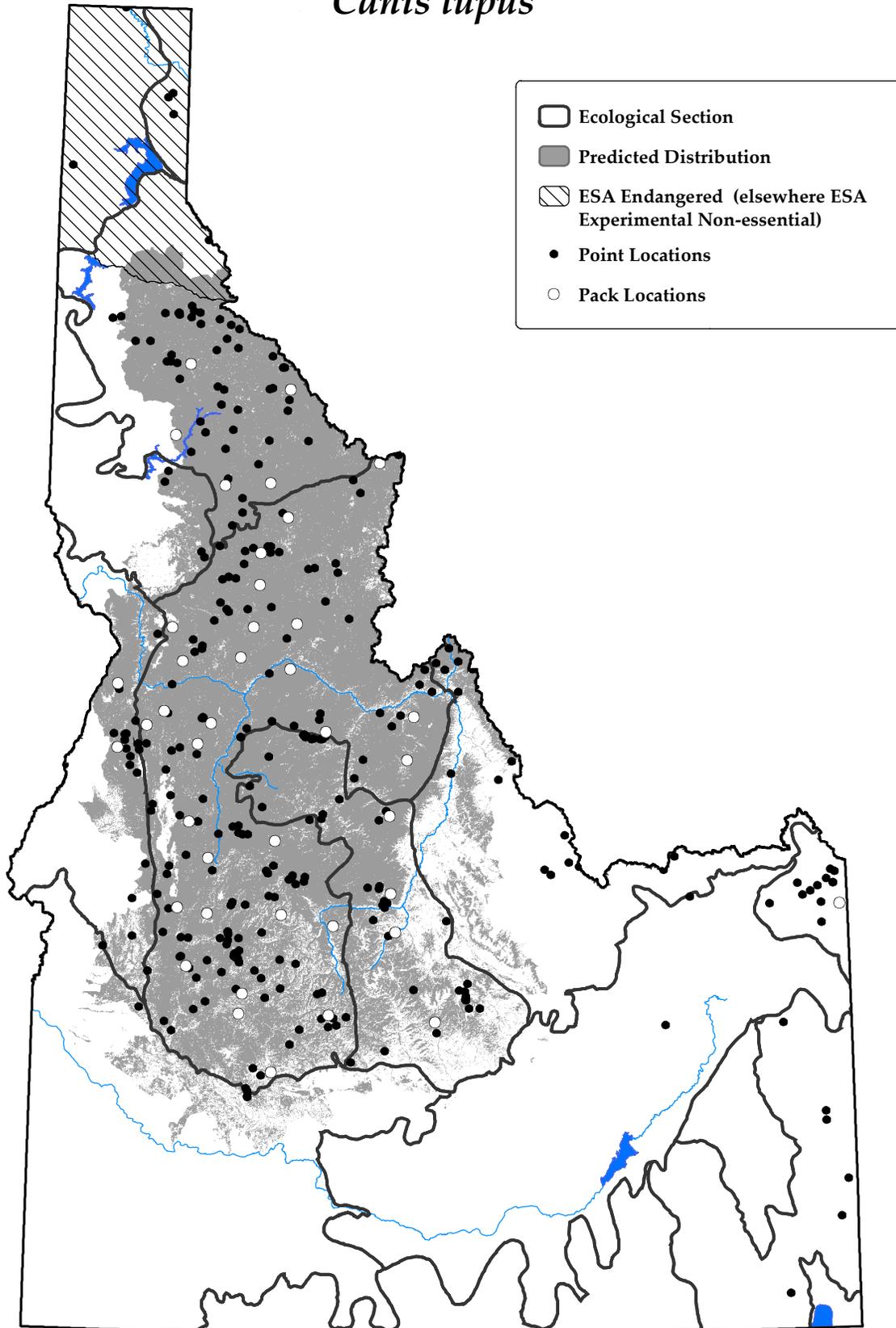
Diseases such as parvo virus and sarcoptic mange are common in some areas. Most wolves within Idaho have tested positive for parvo virus, whereas mange is more common in Montana populations.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Law, policy, and enforcement have been the primary conservation actions for wolves. Education to increase awareness and public acceptance is essential to the success of recovery programs in Idaho. Communication and cooperation among involved agencies, organizations, and individuals (Mack et al. 2005) continue to be important aspects of wolf recovery in Idaho. The continuation of conservation actions on public lands is important due to the potential for human conflict on private lands (Mech 1995).

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Map created on September 26, 2005  
 and prepared by Idaho Conservation Data Center.  
 Sources: Pack and point locations are from Idaho Department  
 of Fish and Game (2004). Predicted distribution  
 is from the Wildlife Habitat Relationships Models (WHR),  
 A Gap Analysis of Idaho: Final Report. Idaho Cooperative Fish  
 and Wildlife Research Unit, Moscow, ID (Scott et al. 2002).  
 Predicted distribution is approximate (for more information, go to  
[http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap\\_report.asp](http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap_report.asp)).

