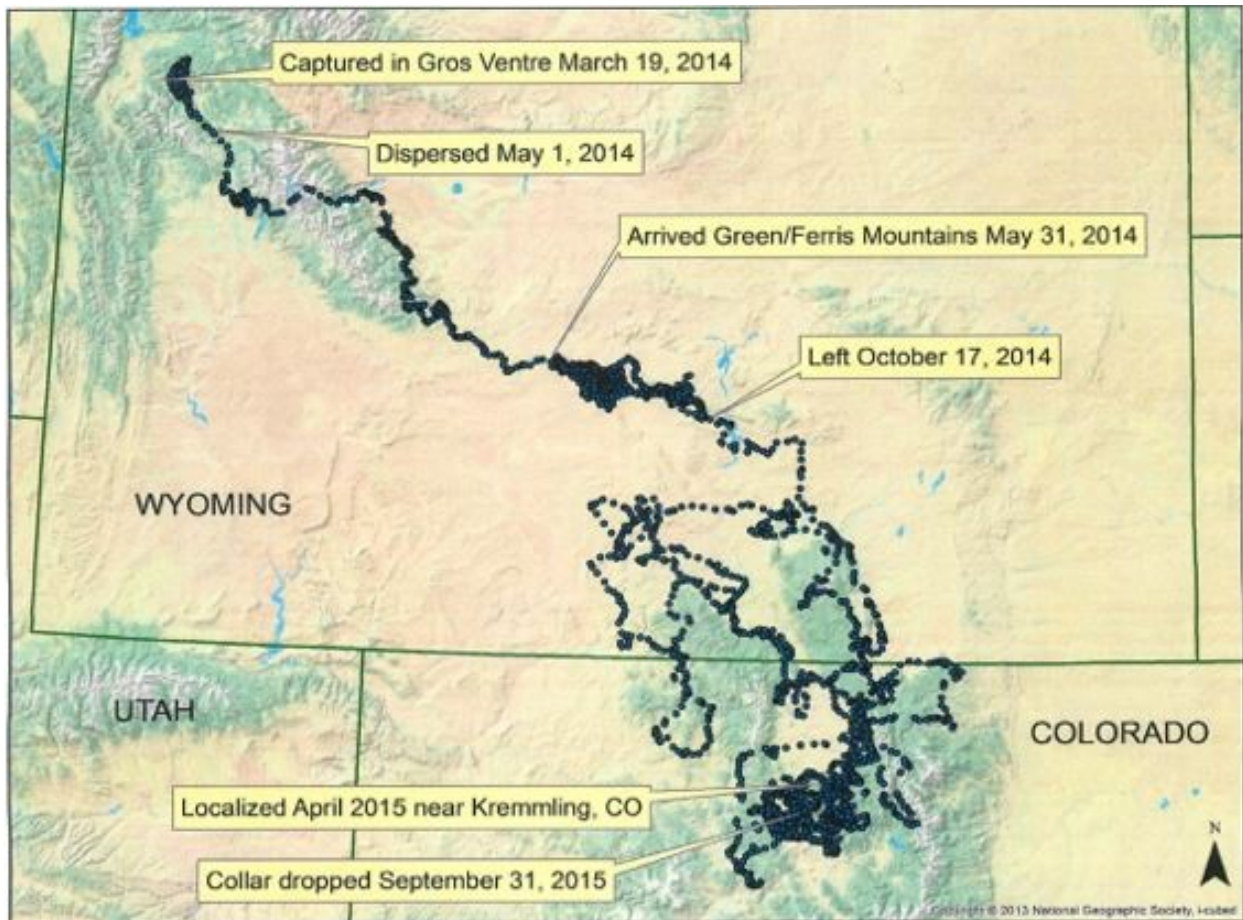


Wolves in Colorado

Shrinking Habitat.....Inevitable Conflicts

The Northern Rockies gray wolf recovery program encompassed portions of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana with a total estimated population of 3.5 million people. Colorado's current population is ~5.7 million people, and is projected to be an estimated 8.1 million by 2050. [Colorado State Demography Office]

"Wolf packs usually hunt within a specific territory. It is not uncommon for territories to be as large as 50 square miles but they may even extend up to 1,000 square miles in areas where prey is scarce. Wolves often cover large areas to hunt, traveling as far as 30 miles a day. Although they trot along at 5 m.p.h., wolves can attain speeds as high as 40 m.p.h. Most wolves disperse from the pack they were born into by age three. Dispersing wolves have traveled as far as 600 miles." [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Wolf – Western Great Lakes website]



**GPS tracking data of a radio-collared wolf that dispersed from Wyoming to Colorado
[USDA APHIS Wildlife Services]**

What's notable about this tracking data is where the wolf wasn't and the distance traveled. The wolf wasn't in Rocky Mountain National Park or the Zirkel Wilderness, but instead roamed lower elevation, more densely populated areas. The wolf traveled from northern Wyoming to Colorado covering several hundred miles.

“Approximately 186,000 private landowners control 30 percent or 7.1 million acres of the state’s forested landscapes. Although the majority of these lands are in lower elevations, private landowners are represented in all of Colorado’s forest types, including a notable portion of aspen and mixed-conifer forests.” [Colorado State University—Colorado State Forest Service—Colorado Land Ownership website]



Mature bull elk surrounded by a pack of wolves

“Wolves historically occupied diverse habitats in North America, including forests, grasslands, deserts and tundra. Their primary habitat requirements are the presence of adequate water and prey, mainly elk and deer. Wolves will also consume other mammals, birds and reptiles and scavenge carrion.” [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Wolf - Great Lakes website]

When days shorten and deep snows return to the high country covering food sources, the high altitude migration begins for deer, elk and moose to their lower elevation winter ranges. Consequently, the wolf follows the migrating herds down to the settled landscapes of farms and ranches.

State game management agencies in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming all acknowledge conflicts between wolves and/or people, pets, and livestock.



“Open space is being lost at an alarming rate – almost 6,000 acres of open space are converted to developed uses every day. Forests are affected by three interrelated patterns that lead to the loss of open space: conversion, fragmentation, and parcelization. When we lose open space, we lose the valuable services landscapes provide including clean air and water, flood control, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat, to name a few.” [USDA Forest Service – Open Space Conservation website]

Colorado Wool Growers Association

PO Box 292

Delta, CO 81416

cwgawool@aol.com