



Wood River Wolf Project – Season 14

Another Season of Peaceful Coexistence with Wolves
You can Donate at www.woodriverwolfproject.org



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Field Season 2021 Highlights

The 2021 Field Season of the Wood River Wolf Project (WRWP) represented the 14th year of reducing wolf-sheep conflict in the Wood River Valley. It has been a busy year as we've rolled out successful initiatives to help the community coexist with Idaho's most targeted species — wolves.

We are very grateful for the support of the public and our donors who have enabled us to implement strategies and research to better protect the wolves in Blaine County while demonstrating that nonlethal methods are effective in minimizing wolf and livestock conflicts. It is a win-win strategy that protects wolves, reflects our community values of coexistence, and preserves the heritage of sheep ranching in the region.

Each summer there are an estimated 16,000 – 24,000 sheep which graze on public lands in Blaine County. The strategy of using nonlethal deterrents to prevent wildlife livestock conflicts has been proven to be far more effective than the hunting and trapping approach of the old West.

Here are some of the key success stories during our 14th season:

- Working with students from three local schools in the field with camera technology to track and research native wildlife and wolf activity in Blaine County.
- Providing five sheep producers and their herders with training and nonlethal equipment to prevent sheep and wolf conflicts.
- Educating the local community on coexistence strategies: nonlethal tools and technology, the importance of livestock guardian dogs, and more.
- Working with the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation as a grant recipient for new nonlethal equipment to provide to shepherds in the field.
- Receiving Blaine County Land, Water and Wildlife grant funding to add a second seasonal field person to expand coverage, camera tracking, and assistance to herders with 9 bands of sheep.
- Adding new technology—lighted dog collars with GPS capability and flashing ear tags for sheep.

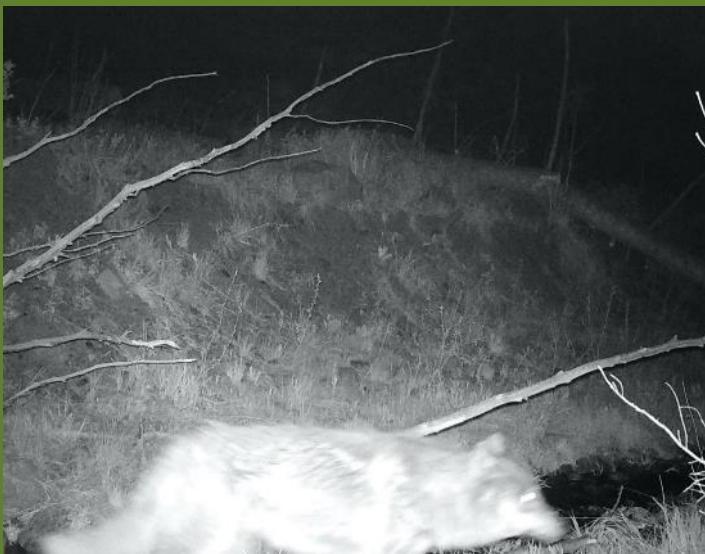


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Student Wildlife Camera Project

Students from Blaine County's Sage, Hemingway and Community schools helped place wildlife cameras to locate wolves, which helps prevent wolf and sheep conflicts. Knowing the behavior of local wolf packs helps us better anticipate where conflicts are most likely to occur and work to proactively address them. In the process, the students learned about wildlife native to the Wood River valley while honing their tracking and observation skills.

Some students kept volunteering throughout the summer, and their parents got involved as well. This started as a pilot project in May 2021 but was so successful that we plan to organize it every spring. With your support, we hope to make this a reoccurring part of the project in future seasons!



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Camera Trapping

We focused more effort in 2021 on camera trapping than had been done in recent years, which yielded impressive results. This effort was spearheaded by our field technician, Nate Redon, who's high level of expertise in wildlife tracking and camera trapping aided the project. Nate's seasonal position was funded with a grant from Blaine County's Land, Water, and Wildlife Levy while a grant from the Spur Foundation helped us buy new wildlife cameras.



A few of the wolf photos we were able to capture from this season. We are hoping to continue to get more next year and further develop our understanding of wolves where we live.





Nonlethal Tools and Techniques

Since 2008, the Wood River Wolf Project and its partners have tested and used nonlethal measures as an alternative to killing wolves. Today the Wood River Wolf Project continues to support proven methods of coexistence by deploying new technologies and strategies to improve the effectiveness of nonlethal action to protect livestock.

Human Presence

Increasing human presence is the most effective way to keep wolves away. The scent and sounds of humans make the wolves wary. Each band of sheep has 1-2 herders that are required to stay with the sheep 24/7. The herders are the first line of defense and use nonlethal tools in times of heightened wolf activity. Project staff and volunteers may also camp with the sheep and help the herders deploy the nonlethal tools.



Livestock Guardian Dogs

Guard Dogs such as Great Pyrenes and Akbash breeds are raised with the sheep to learn to be protective of them. These dogs can grow to be 120 lbs.- larger than the average wolf. Each band has a minimum of 3 dogs protecting the sheep. It's their job to bark at strangers, which is normal behavior if you encounter them on the trail.

Nonlethal Equipment

Thanks to a grant through the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, we were able to secure new equipment for the season. Following advice from herders last year, the project was able to obtain equipment that is more practical for the shepherds while in the field. While equipment updates were made, the same core deterrents from previous field seasons remained i.e., relying on sound and light to mimic human presence. However, this year's equipment was much brighter and more reliable than in the past. Switching to stronger blank guns and brighter lights increased herder enthusiasm toward using the more effective equipment. Additionally, having solar panels and battery units to keep this equipment charged substantially enhanced the field performance.



Nonlethal Equipment

- 1) Small Backpack**
- 2) PAK 9 mm Blank Pistol
with blank bullets**
- 3) Yellow Solar Foxlights**
- 4) Spiked dog collars for
Livestock Guardian Dogs**
- 5) Goal Zero Nomad 10
Solar Charger**
- 6) Fenix 40R V 2.0 3000
lumen flashlight with
strobe**
- 7) Airhorns for noise**



New Technology Tried in 2021



Lighted Dog Collars with GPS

Keeping track of Livestock Guardian Dogs who stay with the sheep is essential. Kurt Holtzen, Coexistence Specialist with Lava Lake Land and Livestock, designed a new Livestock Guardian Dog Collar that emits a flashing blue light and has GPS tracking on it. This allows sheep herders to know where the dogs are at night when wolves may be present enhancing their ability to scare away wolves and other predators. The collar uses a blue light that is more obvious to wolves than most other colored lights, thus adding a degree of passive deterrence.

Flashing Ear Tags for Sheep

Dr. Julie Young, USDA researcher and professor, developed ear tags that flash on individual animals. This battery powered light flashes at night, creating the illusion of human presence. The idea is to both deter wolves and to give the herders a better idea of where their sheep are at night. The ear tag project is very promising, and our ranching partner Cory Peavey indicated he would like to run this with his sheep bands. Additionally, Dr. Young is looking for more participants in the project.



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Field Transportation

To gather information on wolves, check in with shepherds, and stake out with the sheep, our field team had to travel across the rugged Wood River Valley constantly. We logged close to 3000 miles driving and hundreds of miles hiking and biking.



New electric bikes for our field staff greatly help in reaching remote sheep camps and herders in the backcountry. Thanks to our favorite local bike shop, Sturtevant's of Sun Valley, the Wood River Wolf Project was able to purchase two of these bikes at cost.

Successes and Challenges

This year, we documented wolves throughout our project area, including wolves coexisting side by side with sheep without incident. Unfortunately, one wolf was lethally removed by Wildlife Services and 3 sheep were predated by wolves within the Project Area. Ideally, zero wolves or sheep would be killed; however, the fact our project area has dramatically lower rates of sheep predations and wolves killed than any other similar area in the state underlines the effectiveness of our overall nonlethal strategies.



While this year was challenging due to increased wolf activity, we had many successes that are worth highlighting. By increasing the number of our field staff, we were able to dramatically improve wolf detections and further develop our understanding of packs in the area. More importantly, there was greater use of nonlethal tools by shepherds than last year. Taken



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together, this culminated in a much more well documented season that saw even fewer predations by wolves than Field Season 2020.

2021 Financials

Funds raised for the Wood River Wolf Project are dedicated to paying 2 seasonal field personnel and their transportation, purchasing nonlethal equipment for herders to use, trail cameras, communication, and outreach and education. One hundred percent of donations goes towards the seasonal field effort. The Project is overseen and administered by dedicated volunteers in the Wood River Valley and staff from the International Wildlife Coexistence Network, a 501.C.3 organization.

2021 Expenses

2 Seasonal Field Staff and Transportation Costs	\$46,000.00
Non-lethal Tools and Equipment	\$7,255.00
Student Camera Project / New Cameras	\$3,500.00
E-bike Purchase x2	\$8,396.76
Garmin Inreach Satellite Systems	\$1,845.00
Outreach / Education	\$12,000.00
Administrative Expenses	\$7,254.00
Total 2021 Expenses	\$82,239.76

2021 Income

Major Donor	\$20,000.00
Blaine County	\$5,000.00
Office of Species Conservation	\$7,255.00
Spur Foundation	\$13,700.00
Individuals – Ebike	\$3,500.00
Blaine Co LWW Levy	\$23,805.00
Online Donations to 12/1/21	\$7,000.00
Foundations	\$13,000.00
GoFundMe – Ebike	\$1,842.00
Subtotal	\$95,102.00



Partners and Supporters

We offer our deepest thanks to our many partners and supporters of the 2021 Wood River Wolf Project. First, we acknowledge the sheep producers and their sheep herders who use Livestock Guardian Dogs and other nonlethal tools to prevent wolf and livestock conflicts. Their commitment is invaluable to the success of the Project as they are the first line of defense to prevent conflicts. The sheep producers include Lava Lake Land and Livestock, Flat Top Sheep, Plateau Farms LLC, Faulkner Land and Livestock Co., and Denis and Lauri Kowitz.

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

				
				
<p>Rebecca Patton and Tom Goodrich Charitable Fund</p>		<p>The Larsen Family Fund</p>		<p>The Nalen Family Foundation</p>

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