



# COLORADO WOLF & WILDLIFE CENTER

APRIL 2026 · CONSERVATION · EDUCATION · PRESERVATION



**RINGO:**  
MAYOR OF DIVIDE, CO

ACCREDITED BY THE  
**ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS**

## The Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization certified by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). Look for this logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things.

The contents of the material we include in our newsletter does not necessarily reflect the views of CWWC. We collect information from other organizations, the web, news feeds, and/or other sources. We choose articles that are in the related field of education and conservation.









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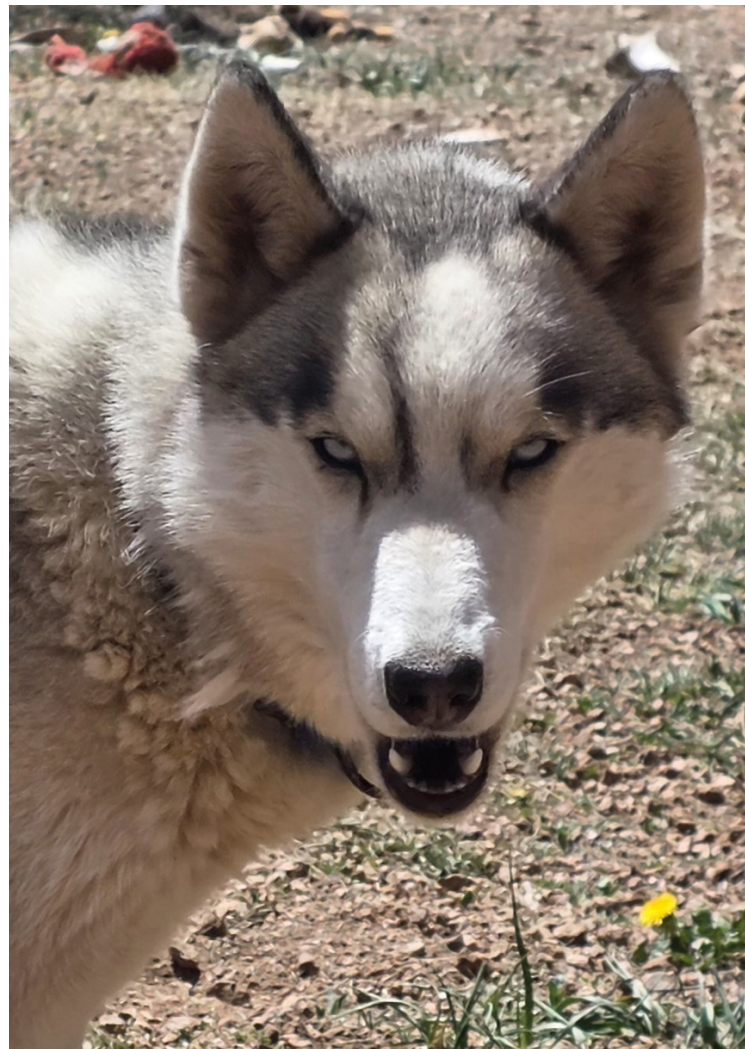
[tours@wolfeducation.org](mailto:tours@wolfeducation.org)  
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## | SOCIAL MEDIA HAPPENINGS |

Stay up to date with the animals at CWWC, wolves and wildlife in the news, and advocacy opportunities.

-  **Subscribe to our YouTube Channel: ColoradoWolf&WildlifeCenter** We post videos of the training and enrichment we are providing for our animals, and educational vlogs about wolves.
-  **Follow us on Facebook: Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center** to get updates on new YouTube video postings, read feel good stories from other wolf/wildlife organizations, and learn about new wildlife findings in the research field.
-  **Follow us on Instagram: @cowolfcenter** to see pictures of our beautiful animals, stories of what we are doing around the center, and ways you can help wild wolf populations. Keep your eye on our story for fun videos of the day to day lives of our wolves and keepers.
-  **CWWC is on Bluesky! Follow us: @cowolfcenter.bsky.social**
-  **Follow us on Twitter: @Wolves\_at\_CWWC** to see photos of our animals, read fun facts, and hear about events happening at CWWC.
-  **Follow us on TikTok: @cowolfcenter** for the videos you won't see on our other social media pages.

*We hope to give you something to look forward to every day!*



Ringo Starr's journey began at a Humane Society in New Mexico, where he was just two days away from being euthanized. When he arrived at our Center, he was unsure of people and slow to trust. But with patience, consistency, and compassion, Ringo blossomed into one of our most beloved coyote-mix ambassador animals, teaching visitors about coexistence, respect, and the resilience of wild-spirited canids.

Still, something was missing.  
Ringo needed a companion.

Finding the right match for a coydog is no simple task. Coyotes are far more selective than domestic dogs, and many potential surrenders came with a heartbreaking catch: if the pairing didn't work, the owners would not take the animal back. We couldn't risk leaving Ringo—or another dog—without a suitable companion or space.

So we tried a different path. I visited our local animal shelter TCRAS to foster a dog who might be the one.

That's when I saw her, a petite young Husky with striking ice-blue eyes. She was gentle, curious, and carried herself with a quiet confidence. I named her Crystal.

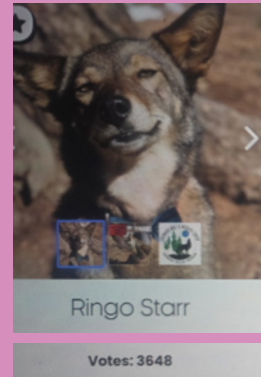
We began slowly. Crystal stayed in the adjoining enclosure, and the two went on daily walks together. After each outing, she returned to the shelter so neither animal felt overwhelmed. There were moments of progress and moments of hesitation, but we kept going.

With the help of Phoebe, our animal trainer, we introduced supervised play sessions inside Ringo's enclosure. Both wore leashes at first, just in case. Then one day, the shift happened, they began to play. Real play. Chasing, bowing, darting, circling, wearing each other out in the best way.

We removed the leashes. They kept playing.  
It was a match.

Crystal officially joined our family, and a few days ago, she spent her first full night with Ringo. Now they are inseparable. She adores him, and she has every reason to be proud. After all, Ringo was just voted the 2026 Mayor of Divide, making Crystal our very own First Lady.

Two rescues.  
Two survivors.  
One unexpected love story.

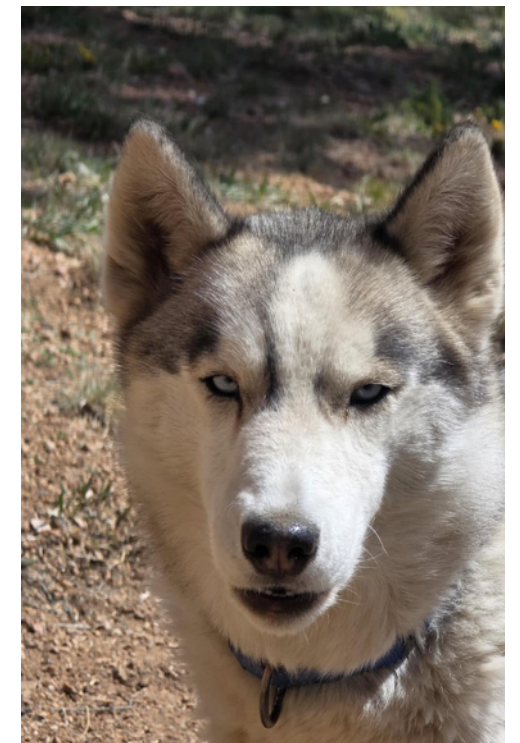


**COVER PAGE: WE DID IT!** Ringo has officially taken the win for Mayor of Divide! And more importantly, our incredible community came together to raise nearly \$20,000 for Teller County Regional Animal Shelter.

*This was never just about a title. It was about compassion, second chances, and showing what's possible when people rally behind a cause bigger than themselves. Because of you, more animals will receive the care, safety, and love they deserve.*

*From every vote, every share, every moment of support—thank you for believing in Ringo and in the mission. This victory belongs to all of us.*

# CRYSTAL: FIRST LADY TO MAYOR RINGO STARR - A RESCUE LOVE STORY





We're excited to introduce our newest wolf pup, **Orion**—a name inspired by one of the brightest and most enduring constellations in the night sky. For generations, Orion has symbolized strength, resilience, and guidance, making it a natural fit for a young wolf finding his place in the world.

Like the constellation, wolves rise to their fullest in winter, moving together with purpose and instinct. Orion also travels the sky alongside Canis Major and Canis Minor—the celestial “dogs”—a reminder of the deep bonds within every wolf pack.

Our little Orion already shows that same spark of curiosity and confidence. His name reflects both his wild heritage and the bright path ahead of him.

Our new female wolf pup carries a name rooted in strength and destiny: **Valkyrie**. In Norse tradition, Valkyries were fierce protectors and guides—figures who watched over warriors and chose the brave. The name reflects a spirit that is bold, intuitive, and unafraid to meet the world head-on.

Even at her young age, Valkyrie shows that same fire. She is alert, confident, and already moving with the quiet determination of a future matriarch. Her name honors the powerful lineage of wild females who shape their packs, raise the next generation, and hold the wisdom of the forest in their bones.

Valkyrie is more than a name. It's a promise of the strong, resilient wolf she is becoming.



*Pictures of the Quartz Pack, including Arcadia (1966) and puppies at their release onto Ladder Ranch last summer. Courtesy of and credit to USFWS, via FOIA.*

## Mexican Gray, Arcadia, AM1966 of Quartz Pack

An update. Asha's mate, Arcadia, is deceased. He went off the map and we've since learned that his was a confirmed mortality.

The good news is that Asha and the other pups are still alive and back over at Ladder Ranch, and she'll have plenty of support for raising this year's young. There are still three collared members of that family, and it will be easy to supplementally feed and support them if the need arises.

Long live Arcadia through the genes of his wild offspring!

Courtesy:

**Greta Anderson, Deputy Director (she/her)  
Western Watersheds Project**





## Republicans Had an Earth Day Plan to Limit Species Protections. It Flopped.

House leaders abruptly canceled a vote on the measure when support started to look shaky.

Maxine Joselow and Catrin Einhorn | The New York Times | April 22, 2026

*A grizzly bear in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming last summer. Grizzlies are one of several species whose populations have rebounded in some areas in the past several decades. Photo Credit...Jim Urquhart/Reuters*

House Republicans had big plans for Earth Day this year: They would pass a bill to narrow protections for endangered species that they had long seen as federal overreach.

It didn't work out that way.

On Wednesday afternoon, Republican leaders suddenly canceled a vote on the measure after an initial procedural vote showed shaky support from party members. One Florida Republican, Representative Anna Paulina Luna, publicly aired concerns about the bill before the scheduled vote, writing on social media: "Don't tread on my turtles. Protected means protected." Her post contained an image of a yellow flag emblazoned with a sea turtle and the slogan "Don't tread on me," a phrase dating to the American Revolution that some

conservatives have embraced in recent years.

The flip-flop on Wednesday was an embarrassing setback for Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana. And it left uncertain the fate of the ESA Amendments Act, a sweeping bill that would limit protections for species whose populations are beginning to recover, among a slew of other changes.

The bill's lead sponsor, Representative Bruce Westerman, Republican of Arkansas and chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, said he was trying to shore up support in the hopes of rescheduling a vote on the measure. "We just have a few provisions we've got to work through on it, and hopefully in the next couple of weeks, we'll be able to vote on it," he said.

and North Atlantic right whales. And they called the planned timing of the vote, on Earth Day, a cruel stunt.

"It's a slap in the face to the American people and all the wildlife they love, and the ecosystems that support our lives," Mary Beth Beetham, director of legislative affairs at Defenders of Wildlife, an advocacy group, said on Wednesday morning.

A few hours later, she was rejoicing.

"Now we can really celebrate Earth Day!" she said in a statement after the measure was pulled from the House floor. "The public defeat of the Westerman bill is a direct result of sustained constituent pressure. Congress is finally listening to the majority of Americans

Representative Kat Cammack, a Florida Republican, said she had raised concerns about a provision in the bill that would allow state and federal officials to exempt certain activities from Endangered Species Act restrictions. She said she worried that officials would codify an exemption that the Trump administration recently granted for oil and gas drilling in the Gulf of Mexico.

"I have coastline in my district," Ms. Cammack said, citing the possibility of an oil spill sullyng her state's beaches. "I want to make sure that we're doing everything that we can to be the best stewards as possible."

Before the vote was postponed, conservationists had warned that the bill could speed extinctions and risk the recovery of numerous species, including piping plovers, black-footed ferrets

who support the Endangered Species Act, rather than centering politics and money in its policy decisions."

Republican supporters countered that the Endangered Species Act needs a serious overhaul. They said the bill would make it easier to remove unnecessary protections from gray wolves, grizzly bears and other predators whose populations have rebounded in certain areas over the past several decades.

"Folks in my district have an incredible frustration regarding the gray wolf population because they have recovered," said Representative Michelle Fischbach, Republican of Minnesota, during a hearing on the bill on Monday. She said that gray wolves had killed cattle as well as "family dogs tied up in the front yard."

The planned vote was the latest recent effort by congressional Republicans to erode environmental protections.

Last week, the Senate voted to allow mining upstream from Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, one of the country's largest and most visited expanses of federally protected lakes and forests, sending that measure to President Trump to be signed into law. And the House approved three bills that would narrow the reach of the Clean Air Act, although their fate in the Senate remains uncertain.

At the center of the debate over the Endangered Species Act are two polarized views of the law. Democrats and conservation groups tend to celebrate it for preventing extinctions, noting that less than 1 percent of species protected under the act have been lost. But many Republicans criticize the law for recovering only a small number of species to the point of removing them from the list.

The bill that the House had aimed to pass Wednesday would make a number of changes to the law. It would require regulators to conduct economic and national security analyses when determining whether to list a species as endangered, while limiting their

ability to consider future impacts, such as climate change. It would also weaken requirements that the federal government limit harm to endangered species, reduce certain habitat protections and cap fees awarded to lawyers in endangered species litigation.

The first Earth Day, in 1970, came in response to a series of environmental disasters. The pesticide DDT was devastating bird populations. A record-breaking oil spill had polluted the waters off Santa Barbara, Calif. In Cleveland, the Cuyahoga River had caught on fire.

For the initial commemoration, Congress

effectively closed down so that lawmakers could attend events. More than 20 million Americans participated in rallies, lectures and protests across the country, including at more than 1,500 college campuses and 10,000 schools.

The public outcry galvanized the modern environmental movement. It also spurred Congress to create the Environmental Protection Agency and to enact three landmark environmental laws within three years: the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and, finally, the Endangered Species Act.



## — WILDLIFE IN COLORADO —



This beautiful planet we inhabit deserves our **love, our respect.**

—♥—

We are a **part of nature**, we are not here to **dominate it.**

—♥—

We can live in **harmony** with our spectacular **Earth.**

*Happy*  
**EARTH DAY**

SALLY ROSSITER



Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. The agency has backed off a proposal to raise the entrance fee at popular national parks. File photo by Kevin Lamarque/Reuters

## Trump wildlife protection board has many trophy hunters

Michael Biesecker, Jake Pearson and Jeff Horwitz | Associated Press | March 16, 2018

WASHINGTON — A new U.S. advisory board created to help rewrite federal rules for importing the heads and hides of African elephants, lions and rhinos is stacked with trophy hunters, including some members with direct ties to President Donald Trump and his family.

A review by The Associated Press of the backgrounds and social media posts of the 16 board members appointed by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke indicates they will agree with his position that the best way to protect critically threatened or endangered species is by encouraging wealthy Americans to shoot some of them.

One appointee co-owns a private New York hunting preserve with Trump's adult sons. The oldest son, Donald Trump Jr., drew the ire of animal rights activists

after a 2011 photo emerged of him holding a bloody knife and the severed tail of an elephant he killed in Zimbabwe.

The first meeting of the International Wildlife Conservation Council was scheduled for Friday.

Trump has decried big-game hunting as a "horror show" in tweets. But under Zinke, a former Montana congressman who is an avid hunter, the Fish and Wildlife Service has quietly moved to reverse Obama-era restrictions on bringing trophies from African lions and elephants into the United States.

A licensed two-week African hunting safari can cost more than \$50,000 per person, not including airfare, according to advertised rates. Advocates say money helps support habitat conservation and anti-poaching

efforts in some of the world's poorest nations, and provides employment for local guides and porters. In a statement last year, Zinke said, "This council will provide important insight into the ways that American sportsmen and women benefit international conservation from boosting economies and creating hundreds of jobs to enhancing wildlife conservation."

But environmentalists and animal welfare advocates say tourists taking photos generate more economic benefit, and hunters typically target the biggest and strongest animals, weakening already vulnerable populations.

There's little indication dissenting perspectives will be represented on the Trump administration's conservation council. Appointees include celebrity hunting guides, representatives from rifle and bow manufacturers, and wealthy sportspeople who boast of bagging the coveted "Big Five" — elephant, rhino, lion, leopard and Cape buffalo.

Most are high-profile members of Safari Club International and the National Rifle Association, groups that have sued the Fish and Wildlife Service to expand the list of countries from which trophy kills can be legally imported.

They include the Safari Club's president, Paul Babaz, a Morgan Stanley investment adviser from Atlanta, and Erica Rhoad, a lobbyist and former GOP congressional staffer who is the NRA's director of hunting policy. Bill Brewster is a retired Oklahoma congressman and lobbyist who served on the boards of the Safari Club and the NRA.

In a letter this week, a coalition of more than 20 environmental and animal welfare groups objected that the one-sided makeup of the council could violate the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which requires government boards to be balanced in terms of points of view and not improperly influenced by special interests.

Interior Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said the council has members "that represent all areas of conservation and varying opinions."

Among Zinke's appointees is Steven Chancellor, a longtime Republican fundraiser and chairman of American Patriot Group, an Indiana-based conglomerate that supplies Meals Ready to Eat to the U.S. military.

According to Safari Club member hunting records obtained in 2015 by the Humane Society, Chancellor has logged nearly 500 kills — including at least 18

lions, 13 leopards, six elephants and two rhinos. In early 2016, records show Chancellor filed for a federal permit to bring home the skin, skull teeth and claws from another male lion he intended to kill that year in Zimbabwe, which at the time was subject to an import ban imposed by the Obama administration.

Later that same year, Chancellor hosted a private fundraiser for then-candidate Trump and Mike Pence at his Evansville, Indiana, mansion, where the large security gates feature a pair of gilded lions.

Appointees also include professional hunters. Peter Horn is an ex-vice president of the Safari Club International Conservation Fund and a vice president for high-end gun-maker Beretta. Horn wrote in his 2014 memoir that he co-owns a hunting property in upstate New York with Trump Jr. that has a 500-yard range "put together" by Eric Trump.

The AP reported last month that the Trump sons were behind a limited-liability company that purchased a 171-acre private hunting range in the bucolic Hudson Valley in 2013, complete with a wooden tower from which owners and their guests shoot at exploding targets.

Horn did not respond to a message seeking comment.

Trump Jr. also is friendly with another member of the advisory council — hunting guide and TV show personality Keith Mark. He helped organize Sportsmen for Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign and recently posted photos on his Twitter page of himself with Trump Jr. and Zinke, standing before an array of mounted big-horn sheep and a bear.

"I see the world from a hunting lifestyle," Mark told the AP, adding that he has no preconceived agenda for his service on the conservation council. "It's the most pure form of hands-on conservation that there is. I will approach all decision-making with my background."

# Colorado has paid more than \$1.3 million to ranchers for wolf damages. Is its funding program sustainable?

*Wolf advocates are seeking changes to rein in the compensation program*

Elise Schmelzer | The Denver Post | April 14, 2026



*Cody Roberts exits his change of plea hearing at the Sublette County Courthouse on March 5, 2026 in Pinedale. Roberts pleaded guilty to felony animal cruelty. Photo: Amber Baesler/WyoFile*

Colorado's wolf reintroduction program suffers from a math problem.

The amount of money set aside each year to pay ranchers for impacts to their livestock from the controversial program isn't keeping up with the size of damage claims.

Eight claims from 2025 already total more than \$724,000 — and more claims are expected to be approved next month. With only about \$400,000 remaining in the Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund, Colorado Parks and Wildlife will use other funding sources to compensate ranchers.

Last year's claims, combined with those from 2024, bring the total payments made to ranchers to more than \$1.3 million — outstripping the \$875,000 allocated to the program so far.

Although CPW spokesman Travis Duncan says the agency has the money to pay for future claims, the continued high cost of claims has prompted fears outside the agency about the long-term solvency of the program.

"This is a voter-mandated program and it is written in

(the law) that losses must be compensated," said Erin Karney Spaur, executive vice president of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association. "You're pretty much robbing Peter to pay Paul. What other programs are you robbing from to pay for the depredation program?"

At the same time, wildlife advocates have submitted a plan to the CPW Commission to tighten the rules about who can be paid from the fund. The proposed changes would require the use of nonlethal mitigation measures and require a higher burden of proof that a wolf caused damage.

"It's not a slush fund," said Ryan Sedgely, the southern Rockies representative for the Endangered Species Coalition, one of the organizations pursuing changes to the program.

But livestock groups fear that the proposed changes, if adopted, will make it even more difficult for ranchers to be made whole from the wide range of impacts wolves can have on their operations.

"These producers are (already) not getting 100% whole or

compensated for all of those losses," Spaur said.

CPW officials dipped into other pots of money outside of the depredation fund to pay for the claims approved so far and plan to continue to do so.

"Funding for the approved, but not yet paid, claims will be determined upon payment and are currently anticipated to be split between the Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund and non-license revenue in the Wildlife Cash Fund," Duncan wrote in an email to The Denver Post.

The imbalance in the compensation program has also caught the attention of federal officials, who in recent months have questioned the state's wolf reintroduction effort. New leadership at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Trump administration took an adversarial stance on the program and stopped the release of more wolves planned for this past winter.

The federal agency on April 6 issued a request for comments on how CPW is handling the reintroduction program. The state wildlife agency is able to manage the federally protected species through an agreement with the federal agency.

In the request for comment — which remains open until June 5 — federal officials asked for information about the compensation program.



*A gray wolf stands outside its crate for a brief moment at a release site on Jan. 14, 2025, before reentering the wild in an undisclosed location in the Colorado mountains. (Provided by Colorado Parks and Wildlife)*

"Over the past few years, many wolf-livestock depredation events have been verified in Colorado and the total number of verified depredations and associated claims has vastly exceeded the funds currently available under Colorado's existing livestock compensation scheme," the notice states.

## State law requires 'fair compensation'

Since CPW began the reintroduction of wolves in Colorado in 2023, the canines have killed or injured 76 head of livestock

and two working dogs, according to the agency's data.

Wildlife officials released 25 wolves in the state over two winters after voters in 2020 mandated the reintroduction of the native species. After a number of deaths, the state now has 18 collared wolves, plus others without collars and an unknown number of pups across four established packs.

State statute requires that the wildlife agency "pay fair compensation to owners of livestock for any losses of livestock caused by gray wolves." State lawmakers in 2023 set aside \$350,000 per year to pay for the claims and tasked the CPW Commission with creating a claims process.

While crafting the law, lawmakers worried there would be too much money left over in the Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund after all claims had been made. They created rules mandating the use of any leftover money.

But the problem has been the opposite, and CPW has instead scrounged to find other sources of money to pay the claims.

So far, CPW has paid \$490,422 to producers from the compensation fund, \$25,581 from the general fund, \$6,315 from federal grant money, and \$141,656 from wildlife cash funds not derived from hunting and fishing license sales, Duncan said.

The CPW Commission makes the final decision on all wolf depredation claims totaling more than \$20,000. The volunteer commission, whose members are appointed by the governor, has drawn criticism from ranchers and wildlife advocates alike for perceived unfairness in the process.

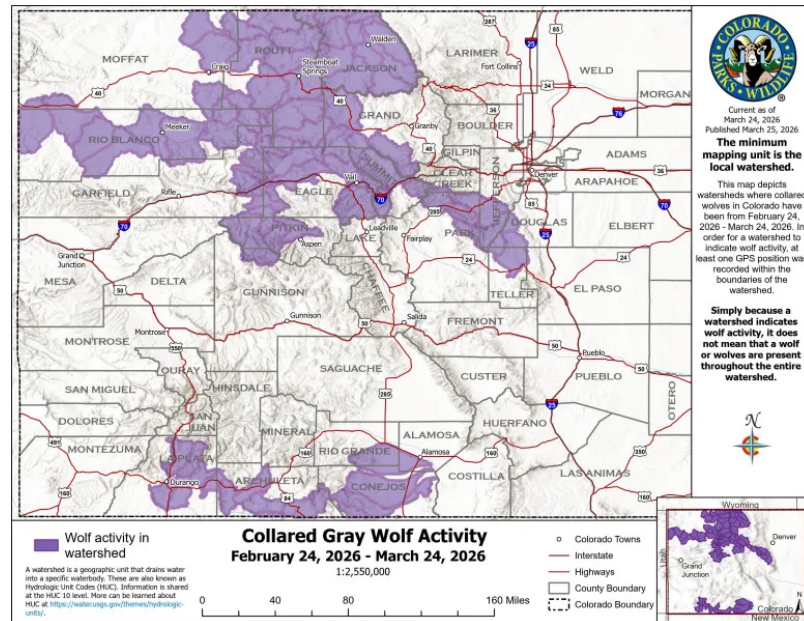
"Part of the issue now is CPW is the judge, the jury and the executor," said Tim Ritschard, the president of the Middle Park Stockgrowers Association.

## Petition for change

When photos and videos of Robert's stunt became public in April 2024, an intense, widespread uproar resulted, with state-run social media pages even going dark because of the global criticism. Outrage was exacerbated by what the public perceived to be a light punishment: Wyoming Game and Fish Department wardens fined Roberts \$250 for possession of warm-blooded wildlife, even though steeper penalties were available.

The state wildlife agency maintained that the wolf — because it was classified as a "predator" where Roberts acquired it — was not covered by Wyoming's animal cruelty laws. But Sublette County law enforcement had a different legal interpretation. The local sheriff launched an investigation, and in August the local prosecutor convened a grand jury that indicted Roberts for felony animal cruelty.

*continues on next page...*



A Colorado Parks and Wildlife map shows the watersheds (shaded purple) where collared gray wolves wandered between Feb. 24, 2026, and March 24, 2026. (Courtesy of Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

If a jury had convicted him, the Daniel man faced a maximum of two years in prison. Initially, Roberts pleaded not guilty, and his attorney Robert Piper sought to have the case dismissed, making the same contention as the Wyoming Game and Fish Department: that wolves were exempted from animal cruelty statutes. Lavery, however, wasn't persuaded and moved the case toward an early March trial.

A coalition of 19 wildlife organizations is pursuing a citizens' petition to tighten the program's rules.

The group — which includes the Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center, Roaring Fork Audubon and WildEarth Guardians — filed the petition on Feb. 6. The CPW Commission will decide whether to approve the changes, but a hearing on the petition has not yet been scheduled.

“The current wolf compensation program is so broad that it now covers claims beyond its intended purpose of reimbursing livestock owners for actual, verified wolf-caused losses,” the petition states. “This lack of clarity places stress on both ranchers and wildlife managers and could jeopardize the compensation fund's long-term economic viability.”

The coalition is pushing for two major changes.

First, if the petition is approved, ranchers would be required to use nonlethal methods to ward off wolves from their herds after a depredation occurs. If CPW officials can prove that a rancher did not use such methods after the first depredation, his or her compensation claim should be denied, the petition states.

Under current regulations, ranchers remain eligible for compensation — though less of it — even if they do not prove

they made efforts to mitigate conflict.

The second proposed change would heighten the burden of proof needed for ranchers to claim indirect losses from wolves, such as decreased calf weights and lower conception rates. The change would require ranchers to prove by a preponderance of evidence that wolves caused the negative changes and to rule out other potential causes, like weather, disease or drought.

Colorado's wolf depredation compensation program is the broadest in the country, Sedgeley said. It is one of only four states that compensate for indirect losses.

Payments for indirect losses have made up the bulk of payments from the depredation fund. For example, one rancher's claim paid in 2025 totaled about \$387,000: \$15,000 for livestock killed or injured by wolves, \$178,000 for reduced calf weights, \$90,000 for decreased conception rates, \$100,000 for missing calves and \$3,500 for missing sheep.

Those first claims set a precedent for payments that could render the program unsustainable in the long term, Sedgeley said.

“Those first claims set the standard,” he said. “And that's that there are no standards.”

Ranchers disagree.

Ranchers are having to hire lawyers — at their own expense — to navigate the claims process, Ritschard said.

Already, they have to compile data to show their herds change to seek indirect loss compensation, said Spaur, from the cattlemen's association.

The claims process has become smoother as ranchers have learned how the system works and CPW has provided better guidance, she said.

“It'd be a real shame, as we're going through this period, to raise the bar on compensation and raise it so high that it's almost unachievable to get compensation,” she said.

Sedgeley said the petition seeks to bring parts of the wolf compensation program in line with the state's long-standing program that pays for damage caused by other wildlife, like bears, elk and mountain lions. In that process, the claimant must prove the damage was caused by the species and also has a duty to mitigate the harm experienced.

Claims approved under that program — which covers nine species — totaled \$602,787 in the 2024 fiscal year, according to the most recent CPW report. That year, mountain lions and bears killed or injured more than 1,000 head of livestock, the report shows. Landowners are not compensated for indirect losses from those species.

“Why don't we talk about the elk and the black bears in the same way?” Sedgeley said. “They kill so much more livestock and cause so much more damage than the wolves. It boggles my mind.”

# Mexican gray wolves need room to roam

Michael J. Robinson | Santa Fe New Mexican | April 18, 2026

We're now lucky to have 319 wild Mexican gray wolves in the United States. Dozens more live in northern Mexico, and eight others will soon be released in the Sierra Madre. While that's an encouraging increase since their 1998 U.S. reintroduction, these ecologically vital animals are afflicted by a genetic drought. Without reformed management by U.S., New Mexico and Arizona wildlife officials this unique subspecies may disappear.

In March, the journal *Molecular Ecology* published an ominous study. The paper's authors include biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mexican wolf recovery program and the University of New Mexico. They examined the genes of 179 deceased Mexican wolves who had spent their entire lives in captivity and found a troubling correlation: Wolves with less genetic diversity had fewer pups.

That would be a big enough problem given that all living Mexican wolves stem from just seven animals bred in captivity. But the Mexican wolf's plight is more dire than its small number of founders. By 2025, the captive wolves retained the genetic equivalent to having a founding population of 2.84 wolves. And the wild, reintroduced population in New Mexico and Arizona has even less genetic diversity, equivalent to just 2.08 founders.

As of last year, genes are still being lost. That's because the Fish and Wildlife Service — urged on by state wildlife agencies and the livestock industry — has politicized wolf management. One way it has done so is by constraining Mexican wolves geographically to south of Interstate 40.

Publication of last month's study was bookended by the deaths of two wolves who breached that regulatory boundary and who under different management might have helped fight inbreeding.

Taylor, the determined wolf who twice after relocations southward in 2025 had loped

150 miles back to Mount Taylor west of Albuquerque, died in January on Interstate 40. He had been headed south, perhaps after finally realizing that there was no female wolf to be wooed in his chosen home.

And in late March, Stella, an intrepid lobo who in 2022 had spent months in a sweeping odyssey across northwestern New Mexico, also was found dead. After returning to south of I-40, she had met her soulmate on the Plains of San Agustin, and they and their pups were given the poignant pack name “Lonesome.”

Taylor and Stella were two of the 11 Mexican wolves known to have traveled north of I-40 since reintroduction began. In between the two was also Asha, who like Taylor, was twice removed from the wild for repeatedly venturing north of I-40.

Mexican gray wolves have always traveled widely and mated with northern gray wolves, and the genes from those pairings helped sustain our southernmost subspecies.

For over two decades, scientists have warned that Mexican wolves need additional habitat to roam for recovery. And in 2025, seven biologists wrote in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* that “Mexican wolves are so low in genetic variation” that they need “genetic rescue” through expanding northward to breed with gray wolves.

Taylor, Stella and Asha might each have found mates north of I-40 if previous roving Mexican wolves hadn't been physically removed southward by the government. And genetic exchange is blocked from both directions. In December, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish removed a northern gray wolf who had padded into Northern New Mexico from Colorado.

Federal and state agencies should allow all wolves to move about at will. That would increase the chances of intergradation and rescuing the Mexican gray wolf from depleted genes, fewer pups and ultimately extinction.

# MOTHER'S DAY

## *With the Wolves*

Sunday,  
May 10th  
9-11am

Wolf Tour,  
A Flower for Moms  
and Snacks



Adults \$40 (12+)

Kids \$20 (6-11)

PREPAY EVENT

RESERVATIONS

719.687.9742

Colorado Wolf  
and Wildlife Center

[wolfeducation.org](http://wolfeducation.org)



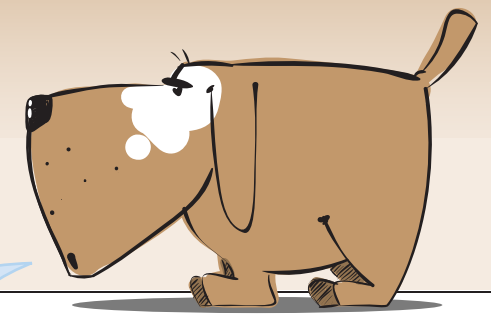
# Adoption corner

## TCRAS

Teller County Regional Animal Shelter  
tcrascolorado.org · 719.686.7707

## SLVAWS

San Luis Valley Animal Welfare Society  
slvaws.org · 719.587.woof (9663)



**[ NOTE - Our shelter is still open for adoptions, but we are asking that you call ahead and make an appointment before coming in to the shelter - 719-686-7707. ]**

### LOOK »

I'm a sweet, easy-going fella looking for a new family! I love being with people, and I enjoy a good brushing which is good because I have a lot of fur! I tend to howl when left alone, but it's just because I want you to know you are missed. If you have other dogs I'd like to meet them first before I enter my new home to make sure we get along. I'm a little older, so I can be a bit grumpy with some dogs.



### « PEEP

Hello fellow friends! I love getting pets while sitting on a human lap! It's the best, I roll and roll until I have the right spot lined up for scratches! I long for the freedom larger than my current kennel - but not too much freedom...that's scary! I will talk to you often if I feel like you're in need of some companionship - hint: I always think you need MY companionship!



**SLVAWS**  
Please check our website, [www.slvaws.org](http://www.slvaws.org) for our next adoption fair in Colorado Springs, every Saturday 10am-3pm.



### MURPHY

This is 11 month old Murphy, probably aussie/heeler. He loves to play with other dogs. Medium energy, 35 pounds, neutered, chipped, all vacc's.