

Wolf / Human Interaction History Aspen Pack – Blue River

Note: This is the information as I received it from Blue residents. Please allow for possible discriminations in dates or times and note that some incidents were not reported to me.
Jean Hutchison

The Aspen Pack consists of five Mexican Gray Wolves; the alpha pair and three pups approximately 6 months old at the time of release. The alpha pair (AM #512 and AF #667) are radio collared, as are 2 of the 3 pups. The 2 female pups (#872 and #873) wear radio collars, but the male pup (#871) slipped his collar in September '04. All collars are brown in color.

Not all wolf/human interactions are noted here because not all interactions could be verified. Only three families on the Blue have telemetry monitors and could know when wolves were close to their homes, and/or could identify which wolves were within telemetry range. Two families had "rag boxes", but one malfunctioned and has been removed. The existing "rag box" is at the Hutchison's residence and is activated by the wolf's radio collar. It is set to respond with loud noises and a strobe light when a collared wolf is within approximately 100 yards of the box.

April '04 – Meeting held at Blue School with Paul Overy of AZ G&F, regarding proposed Aspen Pack release site approximately 5 miles from Blue Post Office. All community is **strongly** opposed to having a release so close to the Blue community.

July 28, '04 – Despite community objections, the Aspen Pack was released from Long Cienega.

September 8, 9, and 10, '04 – Gould's and Hutchison's discuss the fact that their dogs have been VERY agitated and excitedly barking all three nights.

September 10, '04 - Very large, unidentified scat discovered on Blue Road within a few feet of Hutchison's front gate. Scat was later identified as wolf.
Over the following days several more piles of wolf scat are found within 200 yards of the Blue Post Office and 3 neighboring private residences. Samples of all scat piles were recovered. They were examined by U.S. Fish & Wildlife employee, John Oakleaf, who stated he believed them to be wolf scat.

September 11, '04 – At about midnight, at least two wolves frighten a cow and her small calf in their pipe corral at the Gould's barn. The calf somehow gets out of the corral and is chased by two wolves across an open field toward the Gould's home. Sharon Gould saves the calf by shouting at the wolves and throwing rocks.

September 12, '04 – During the night, wolves return to Gould's same corrals. Charlie Gould sees wolves **inside** the corral with his penned horses and hazes them away.

September 16, '04 – Wolves are at Gould's corrals again. Wolf personnel haze them to Steeple Canyon.

September 30, '04 – Gould's report wolves are close to their residence again. Wolf personnel's telemetry indicates they are at the mouth of Grant Creek which is less than ¼ mile from the Gould's home.

October 9, '04 – Bunnell's report radio readings on all 4 collared wolves near their home on KP Creek.

October 11, '04 – Coming home after dark, Charlie and Sharon Gould see a wolf on the Blue Road very close to the Pinaire's home and notify them.

October 11, '04 - Barbie Pinaire sees a collared wolf within 50 feet of her back door at about 8:30 PM. The wolf does not respond to shouting, loud megaphone sounds, nor banging on pots and pans to frighten it away. It hangs around for about a half hour --- not wary of noise nor human contact.

October 24, '04 – Both alpha wolves and 1 collared pup are hazed from the Hutchison's residence. They go to Steeple Creek.

October 27, '04 – The alpha pair and one female pup attack two of the Joy family's hound dogs at their fish hatchery. Both dogs are injured, but not seriously. Wolves were being monitored by wolf personnel at the time.

First week of November wolves are found to be eating on a Big Horn Sheep killed above the Wolkin's Ranch. After visiting the site, Mike Pastirick of AZ G&F says he believes the dead sheep to have been a wolf kill.

November 4, '04 – Two wolves attack dogs through the fenced front yard of Wolkin's home at about 7:30 PM. Otis Wolkins fired shots to frighten them away, but the wolves did not seem to be afraid of the humans nor the shots. Otis had to fire several more times to make them leave. They seemed to want to return to fight the dogs. Wolf personnel get telemetry readings on 3 wolves, the alpha pair and one other collared wolf.

November 5, '04 – At 8:00 PM the alpha female and a collared pup set off the "rag box" at the Hutchison's residence. Mike Pastirick of AZ G&F hazes wolves away then retires to the Blue Camp for the evening. He claims that wolves don't return in the same night to an area from which they have been hazed.

November 5, '04 – Much to Mr. Pastirick's displeasure, Sharon Gould reports wolves again at her corrals at 11:00 PM. The Gould's and Hutchison's live a few hundred yards apart.

November 13, '04 – At 12:30 AM a wolf howls outside the bedroom window at the Pinaire home. They haze it away.

November 17, '04 – Wolves are in the Hutchison's back yard again. They are hazed away by Shawna Nelson.

November 21, '04 – Alpha pair are behind Awtrey's residence in Nolen Creek. They are hazed away by Shawn Farry and Valerie (?) of AZ G&F.

November 22, '04 – During the night, the Alpha pair are monitored in Johnson Canyon behind the Blue School. They are again hazed by wolf program personnel.

November 28, '04 – Two wolves are seen at the Gould's corrals at 7:00 AM. They are hazed away by wolf personnel. The alpha male returns at 10:30 PM the same night.

November 30, '04 – About 9:00 AM, fresh wolf tracks are found in the Hutchison's back yard, just outside of the range of the "rag box", which at set at less than 100 yards.

November 30, '04 – In daylight hours, a single uncollared wolf attacks the Joy family's dogs within a few feet of the door of their home. Cassie Joy shoots to chase it away, but it will only retreat beyond

the horse corrals. Cassie, and neighbor, Dale Beddow, fire more shots to haze it further away from their homes. It hangs around, clearly within sight, at the perimeter of the property.

November 30, '04 - Fresh wolf tracks are again found behind the Hutchison's residence, just beyond the range of the "rag box".

December 1, '04 – 12:15 AM, the Hutchison's are awakened by one of their dogs fighting with something through the back yard fence. The fight breaks up when the Hutchison's step outside. There are no telemetry readings, so it is assumed to be an uncollared wolf. The dog is very frightened, but only slightly bloodied on the nose. Knowing how the dog reacts to wolves and other wildlife, we believe this was a wolf interaction.

December 1, '04 – At 9:30 PM a wolf is seen on the Blue Road near the Pinaire's home by wolf personnel. Wolf personnel contact the Pinaire's to notify them of the wolf's proximity.

December 1, '04 - At 12:10 AM, at least 2 collared wolves are hazed away from the James Gragert residence by wolf personnel firing cracker shells. Despite hazing, the wolves stayed in the area through the night, then moved up Fishhook Creek in the morning. They were hazed and monitored by Shawna Nelson of AZ G&F.

December 2, '04 – At about 10:00 AM, wolf monitoring personnel phone the Pinaire home to notify them that the wolves are back at their home again. The wolf personnel continue to haze them and the wolves go north toward Fishhook Creek.

December 3, '04 – The fresh tracks of at least two wolves are discovered behind the Hutchison's residence, again just out of range of the "rag box". Fresh wolf tracks are being found here more and more often. It has become a trail.

December 3, '04 – At about 4:00 PM, the Bunnell's 13-year-old daughter, Marci, sees a wolf walking down their driveway at the Down's Ranch. Two wolves are hazed away with cracker shells by Bill Bunnell. Wolf personnel are contacted and arrive to continue to haze. The wolves move downstream to the Wolkin's Ranch. Wolf personnel follow wolves and continue hazing. Wolves return to the Down's Ranch area and stay within monitoring range up KP Creek through the night.

December 4, '04 – It snowed most of the evening. Jean Hutchison monitors the female pup #872 to be close and near the mouth of Steeple Canyon all night. That is approximately ½ mile from several residences.

December 6, '04 – Rose Awtrey calls John Oakleaf in the early evening hours to report that wolves are on her property. IFT is called to haze the wolf away. Wolves are monitored in or near Johnson Canyon throughout the night. Blue School is at mouth of Johnson Canyon. No one notifies schoolboard, teacher or parents regarding location of wolves within the immediate vicinity of the school.

December 7, '04 - Sally Hulse, teacher, spots wolf scat on road within ¼ mile of school yard. Scat is recovered later that day by IFT member Valerie and confirm that it is wolf.

December 7, '04 – Flight by IFT monitors wolves within 1-3 miles of school at 12:30 pm. Also, no one contacts anyone regarding location.

December 7, '04 – Barbie Pinaire sees a wolf in the Blue School yard when she goes to pick up her two young daughters at 3:00 PM. One wolf is positively identified, and there is possibly a second wolf with it.

December 7, '04 – 4:30pm IFT picks up signal near same location as the 12:30 pm flight and tell Barbie Pinaire that wolves don't go back and forth from locations like that and that they consider the distance of 1-3 miles "far away" from the school.

December 8, '04 – A decision is made to trap and relocate the Aspen Pack as being "problem wolves". Despite all efforts of the wolf program personnel and the residents of Blue, the wolves WILL NOT stay away from human habitation.

December 9, '04 – Traps are set at various locations on the Blue to capture the Aspen Pack.

December 10, '04 – Both the Marks' and Jimmy Joy report wolves at their homes in the evening. Wolves are hazed away.

~ December 23, '04 - I don't remember the date.... The collared, female, Aspen Pack pup #872 is trapped near the mouth of Grant Creek. She is uninjured and appears to be in very good health. She is noted by AZ G&F wolf personnel, to be unusually large for her age.

January 5, '05 – At 12:15 A.M. Jean Hutchison is awakened by a wolf and dog fight at the front gate of the Hutchison's residence. It is about 100 feet from the front door of the home. Jean runs out, breaks up the fight, and chases the wolves away. No dog is visibly injured. It is snowing, and the fresh tracks indicate 2 wolves ran from the fight, down the Blue Road heading south. Approximately 10-15 minutes later, the "rag box" behind the Hutchison's house is activated by the collared wolves. Jean heads out back with a shotgun and hazes the wolves who leave toward Grant Creek. The telemetry monitor shows them to be the Aspen Pack Alpha pair.

January – March '05 – Barbara Marks monitors wolves near their ranch numerous dates.

April 3, '05 – Hoyt and Barbie Pinaire have a wolf howling outside their bedroom window at 1:00am. Hoyt shoots cracker shells and Barbie sees wolf moving around dog kennel 40-50 feet off of their back porch. IFT members don't get any signals of the Aspen pack some 15 hours later.

April 5, '05 – Marks' dog and calf are attacked by Aspen pack in the evening and IFT monitors wolves near Marks' ranch through the night.

April 6, '05 - Signals from the Aspen pack are picked up by Blue residents throughout the day, near the Marks' ranch.

April 6, '05 – IFT members start to set traps.

Submitted by: [REDACTED]

Note: "Hazing" consists of various methods used to frighten the wolves away from private residences. The wolf program personnel usually fire shotgun "cracker" (noise) shells toward and above the wolf's location to hopefully make them leave an area. It seems to be only minimally and temporarily effective, and they are obviously not discouraged from returning to areas where they have been hazed.

Comment from Jean Hutchison – Wolf Program personnel associated with the Arizona Game and Fish Service (with only 1 exception) have been exemplary in their response to the concerns of the residents of Blue. They have been very visible to the community and very active in their efforts to "keep the wolf from our door".