

# Denali National Park and Preserve

## January to December 2021 Wolf Pack Narratives

NOTE: Pack narratives span from January 1 to December 31, 2021. Pack names are followed by the fall 2021 pack count.

Wolf identification numbers are created as follows: first two digits refer to the year they were first collared, second two digits are assigned sequentially to wolves collared for the first time that year, the first letter indicates the color of the wolf (G-gray, B-black) and the second letter indicates the sex (F-female, M-male). Thus 0811GM is a gray male wolf that was the 11<sup>th</sup> wolf collared in 2008.

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## **Eastern Packs**

### **Cantwell Creek (14 wolves)**

In early March 2021 2009GF began dispersing to the north and was trapped at the same time and place as Sunday Creek female 1921GF. During March captures we recollared 2008GF after collar failure, and also collared adult female 2108GF.

Cantwell Creek pack first denned at a new site on the east side of Cantwell Creek, but later moved to an area near a known den between the Bull River and Costello Creek. In November 2021 we collared another adult female in this pack, 2111GF. The pack whelped at least 3 pups and likely more given the increase in pack size from 9 in the spring to a fall count of 14 wolves.

### **Erratics (12 wolves)**

The GPS portion of 2014GM's collar failed in late February, and was last heard on VHF on March 3rd, leaving his fate uncertain. No additional wolves were collared in March 2021. The young 2013GF, though clearly not a breeder, allowed us to see that the pack denned in Carlo Pass, at a den site not recorded in use since 1994. The pack whelped 6 pups and had a fall count of 12 wolves. November 2021 captures added two collars to the pack: one on the presumed breeding female 2109GF and one on adult male 2110GM.

### **Grant Creek (22 wolves)**

An additional Grant Creek wolf was collared in March 2021, yearling female 2102GF, and 1906GF was re-collared. During the time of March captures, 1915GF had separated from the pack and was traveling to the south and west of the traditional territory with a companion. Her male companion, 2105GM, was collared, and the pair was designated as a new pack, named Surge pack. However, after their short bout away, in April both 1915GF and 2105GM reintegrated into the Grant Creek pack, with 2105GM and 2102GF taking a large foray to the northeast.

Grant Creek pack had multiple breeding females during summer 2021. There was activity at the Wigand Flats Den and adjacent homesites, as well as denning activity at a new den on Stony creek. 1906GF is the presumed mother of the Stony litter, while the maternity of the Wigand litter is uncertain; it may have been 1402GF, or an uncollared female. Long-time matriarch 1402GM died in late August, likely killed by other wolves.

2105GM made several extra-territorial forays throughout the spring, and in early July he dispersed to the southwest, traveling as far as Blanc territory before eventually joining Abbie pack.

The pack recruited at least 5 pups, and likely many more for a fall count of 22. No additional Grant Creek wolves were collared in November 2021.

### **Hana (6 wolves)**

This new pack of 6 was located and collared in November 2021, on the Sushana river. We collared two members, presumed breeding female 2114GF and adult male 2115BM. Preliminary locations suggest a territory centered on the western end of the Stampede corridor.

### **North Face (4 wolves)**

No additional wolves in the North Face pack were captured in March 2021. The pack denned at Pirate creek and produced 4 pups, but it appears that only 2 survived to fall. The breeding female 1920GF died in mid-September, after having clashed with either other wolves or a bear. In November a young adult male was collared, 2113GM and the fall count was 4. They continued to range in the Wonder Lake/Moose Creek to Turtle Hills area.

### **Riley Creek (11 wolves)**

No additional Riley Creek wolves were collared in March of 2021. The pack again denned at the Teklanika den complex, where 2 black and 2 grey pups were captured on trail cam. Like the previous year, they moved to a rendezvous site on the Sanctuary River in late July, and despite the relative proximity of both den and rendezvous site to the road, this pack was rarely seen. 2001GM made several unusual forays into Grant Creek territory, spending time with 1906GF and visiting the Stony den site multiple times. It is unusual for an adult male from another pack to be welcomed in this manner. Riley Creek recruited 4 pups, for a fall pack count of 11. In November, we recollared 2001GM as his GPS tracking had begun to fail.

### **Sunday Creek (3 wolves)**

In early March of 2021, presumed breeding female 1921GF was harvested by trapping as the Sunday Creek pack encountered dispersing Cantwell Creek wolf 2009GF, who was also harvested. During March captures, we collared adult male 2101GM.

In late March, 2101GM began traveling in the territory of sole remaining Tekla member 2010WF. He then began traveling with her, and then both animals rejoined 2012GM on traditional Sunday Creek territory. The three collared adults traveled together for the rest of the year. Sunday Creek did not show signs of denning, which is not surprising given the death of 1921GF and the fact that 2010WF was alone during the breeding season. The fall count was 3 wolves. No additional wolves were collared in November.

### **Tekla (0 wolves)**

2006BM, who had been traveling alone outside and within the territory, was trapped in State lands in the Stampede corridor in mid-January. In late January, presumed breeding male 2005BM was trapped in the same area, leaving 2010WF alone until her incorporation into Sunday Creek pack at the beginning of April (see Sunday Creek pack).

## **Western Packs**

### **Abbie (8 wolves)**

Once again this pack was difficult to monitor. In the last few days of 2020, 2011GF was killed by Roosevelt pack, when they made an incursion into Abbie territory. Then 1916GM's collar failed entirely in early March, leaving his fate unknown. During March captures we were able to recollar 1910GF. Unfortunately, 1910GF dispersed to the northeast and began ranging in the Wonder Lake and Brooker Mountain area beginning in early May. She occasionally returned to central Abbie territory, but with decreasing frequency, and by September 1910GF picked up a companion. The remainder of the pack was seen using Slippery Creek den. Disperser 2105GM, from Grant Creek, entered Abbie territory in mid-July and joined the pack sometime thereafter.

November captures added one collar to Abbie pack, on a very pretty white female 2112GF. At the time of captures 2112GF and 2105GM were the only adults with the pack, suggesting that they could become the breeding pair. Abbie recruited 4 pups in 2021, for a fall count of 8 wolves. In early November, the dispersing female 1910GF was killed by other wolves north of Kantishna.

### **Bearpaw (6 wolves)**

In late January, 1805GM was trapped north of the Park boundary. In March 2021, we collared yearling female 2103BF. This pack again denned near Sandless Lake. The Bearpaw pack recruited at least 2 pups, for a fall count of 6 wolves. No additional animals were collared or recollared in November.

### **Blanc (19 wolves)**

In March 2021 we recollared 1918GF, and collared adult male 2106GM. In 2021, the Blanc pack returned to their old den site on the upper Swift Fork. 1918GF went on multiple extended forays over the spring, as far northeast as the western edge of Wigand flats, but ultimately rejoined the pack in mid-summer. Blanc recruited at least 4 pups, growing to a fall size of 19 wolves. Blanc continues to range in the far southwestern corner of the park and beyond. No additional wolves were collared or recollared in November 2021.

### **John Hansen (0 wolves)**

In early April 2021, 2003GM was killed by wolves, leaving the pack without any collared members.

### **Roosevelt (12 wolves)**

In March 2021 we recollared both 1811GF and 1904GF. In late March 1904GF headed east and began moving separately from 1903BF and 1811GF. She localized on the western side of the Kantishna hills and did not appear to den. The remainder of the pack denned along the Kantisha River and recruited at least 3 pups, for a fall count of 12. The GPS portion of 1811's collar began to fail in the fall. No wolves were collared or recollared in Roosevelt pack in November.

### **Sesui (4 wolves)**

After a disastrous 2020, 1808GM made yet another go; in March, we collared his new companion, 2107GF. The pair denned again at the Herron-Castle den. It didn't seem as though the pair were successful at first, however, in October, the pair was seen with 2 gray pups in tow for a fall count of 4. The GPS portion 1808GM's collar failed in late May. No additional wolves were collared in November.

## **Packs No Longer Monitored**

### **Tripod (1 wolf, out of monitoring area)**

An unusual circumstance led to the monitoring of this group. While tracking, the fixed-wing pilot spotted some unusual tracks around a carcass. When the helicopter took a closer look, they found a wolf with a leghold trap and trailing chain stuck on its foot. We were able to dart the wolf, 2104BM, and remove the trap. 2104BM was otherwise healthy. He was part of a group of 3, but eventually dispersed north of the park outside the monitoring area, making aerial observations impractical. It's not known if he is still part of a group or is moving alone. There's no evidence that Tripod pack denned in 2021, and no additional wolves were collared in November.

### **Dispersers**

**Sometimes wolves collared in the Denali Wolf Project Study Area end up dispersing to areas far away. With the use of collars that collect GPS location data and transmit the data via the Iridium satellite network, we have been able to document the movements of these wolves. However, given the distance from the main study area, our aerial tracking flights do not cover these wolves' ranges so we know do not know if these wolves are traveling with other wolves or have started a new pack.**

**2004GM:** 2005GM was harvested in the first days of January 2021.