

In brief, 11/26/2006

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Wolf killed after preying on cattle

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service apparently did not grant a Thanksgiving pardon to Mexican gray wolf number 859. The male wolf was shot from the air Wednesday in the Gila Wilderness, according to **Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity** in Pinos Altos, N.M.

The wolf, born in the wild in 2002, had scavenged on an untended cow carcass, then began to kill cattle in the same area, according to government records. Prior to that, the animal was preying on elk.

The Mexican gray wolf, once called "the most critically endangered mammal in North America," roamed the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico through the border region of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico, but was exterminated in the U.S. by the Bureau of Biological Survey's poisons and traps by the early 1930s, according to Robinson. The reintroduction program began in 1998.

The Mexican wild wolf population in the Apache National Forest in Arizona and the Gila in New Mexico has declined 20 percent per year during 2004 and 2005, government documents say. The population was supposed to reach 102 by Dec. 2, but will likely be less than half that number.