

# Press Release



**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
**Mountain-Prairie Region**  
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## Investigation Complete for Wolf Killed in Utah

**DENVER**— A coyote hunter who shot a protected gray wolf in Utah last year will not face criminal charges.

An investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the U.S. Department of Justice determined the Utah resident was legally hunting coyotes near Beaver, Utah on Dec. 28, 2014, when he mistook the collared female gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) for a member of the smaller canid species. After the shooting, the hunter recognized the animal he killed could have been a wolf and immediately reported the incident to authorities.

The Endangered Species Act has criminal penalties for “any person who knowingly violates any provision...” of the Act. Authorities determined the incident resulted from misidentification rather than the intentional take of a protected species. In accordance with current policies, the government may exercise prosecutorial discretion in circumstances where a bona-fide misidentification of a protected species occurred during the course of an otherwise lawful activity.

“The hunter reported his mistake immediately,” said Steve Oberholtzer, the Mountain-Prairie Region’s Special Agent in Charge of Law Enforcement. “This is a good reminder to all hunters to make sure they identify their target before pulling the trigger.”

The female, known to researchers as 914F, had previously been seen by members of the public near the Grand Canyon earlier in 2014.

Geneticists from the University of Idaho Laboratory for Ecological, Evolutionary, and Conservation Genetics compared the DNA from the collared female with DNA left behind by the wolf spotted near

the Grand Canyon. They concluded the female was 914F, which was collared January 8, 2014, near Cody, Wyoming.

Most wolves typically leave the pack they were born in by age three and seek out a mate to start a new pack or join another existing pack. Long-distance dispersing wolves have been sighted over 500 miles away into neighboring states in the Northern Rockies, the West Coast and the western Great Lakes regions. One GPS-collared wolf traveled a total of almost 3,000 miles in the seven months prior to being killed by a banned poison in Rio Blanco County, Colorado in 2009, a dispersal distance of roughly 400 miles from her original pack.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/> Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/USFWSMountainPrairie> Follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSMtnPrairie> Watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/>*