

This is OR-3, not the wolf that made it to California. Photo courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Three recent items of good news for California wildlife:

1. For the first time in almost 90 years, a wild gray wolf has been roaming in California. The California Department of Fish and Game reported on December 29 that OR-7, a young male wolf from a pack in northeastern Oregon, had crossed into California. According to DFG, the last confirmed wild wolf in California was killed in 1924. Officials have been tracking OR-7's movements since February 2011, when he was fitted with a GPS radio collar.
2. The harbor porpoise is making a comeback in San Francisco Bay. Researchers say porpoises were common in the Bay until the 1930s. They don't know what caused their decline, but speculate that both World War II activities and the post-war water quality decline may have played a role.
3. 2011 was a great year (by recent standards) for the endangered Delta smelt. Although still low by historic standards, the index of smelt abundance calculated from the fall 2011 survey is at its highest level since 2001. Last year's wet winter certainly contributed to the rebound, but environmentalists also credit new regulations that mandate higher flows to the Bay in wet years.