

Officials say prowling animal was not a wolf

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By Eric Barker of the Tribune

Animal seen in the Lewiston Orchards created a stir



This wolf-like animal appeared at the edge of the Lewiston Orchards Tuesday evening. Idaho Fish and ... Contributed photo

Idaho Fish and Game officials said they do not believe a wolf-like animal hanging out on the edge of the Lewiston Orchards Tuesday evening was a wolf.

The animal was seen lying in a wheat stubble field in the vicinity of 10th Street and Ripon Avenue, and moved from time to time as people approached it to get a closer look.

Fish and game conservation officers Mark Hill and Dave Beaver and regional wildlife manager Jay Crenshaw watched the animal for about an hour before dusk.

"We could walk to within 30 yards of it. It certainly has wolf characteristics, but we do not believe it is a wolf," said Hill, who lives in the neighborhood.

Hill went on to say he gets all kinds of reports of wildlife in town, and many of them turn out to be true. But he said this time he is sure.

"It's not a wild wolf, but when people call me in general and they report things, 'I've got moose in town, I've got sheep in town,' well it's possible because we have had every species in town other than the wolf."

He said he talked to people watching the animal and somebody indicated there is a wolf-like pet dog that lives in the area and gets out from time to time. Hill said he talked to someone in the neighborhood who does keep domestic wolves or wolf hybrids and the animal wasn't there. He does not know if someone else living in the area might also have a wolf hybrid or domesticated wolf.

Dawn Ristau of Lewiston was able to take a few pictures of the animal. She said it looked like a wolf but also noted she is not an expert.

"It's all a bunch of hearsay," she said. "All I know is I took the pictures and it looked like a wolf to me. We see lots of coyotes hunting mice in the field and there is obviously no question it was not a coyote."

Hill also said the animal was not a coyote. The animal was not captured and it did not reappear on Wednesday.

Hill said at least two dogs in the Clearwater Region have been shot by people in recent years who believed they were shooting a wolf.

"There is a fine line between dogs with wolf-like characteristics and a wolf," he said.

Hill and Ristau said the animal did not appear to be malnourished or injured, but others thought the animal was limping.