# A Look Beyond

## A Look Beyond for the Red Wolf

*by Bud Fazio*

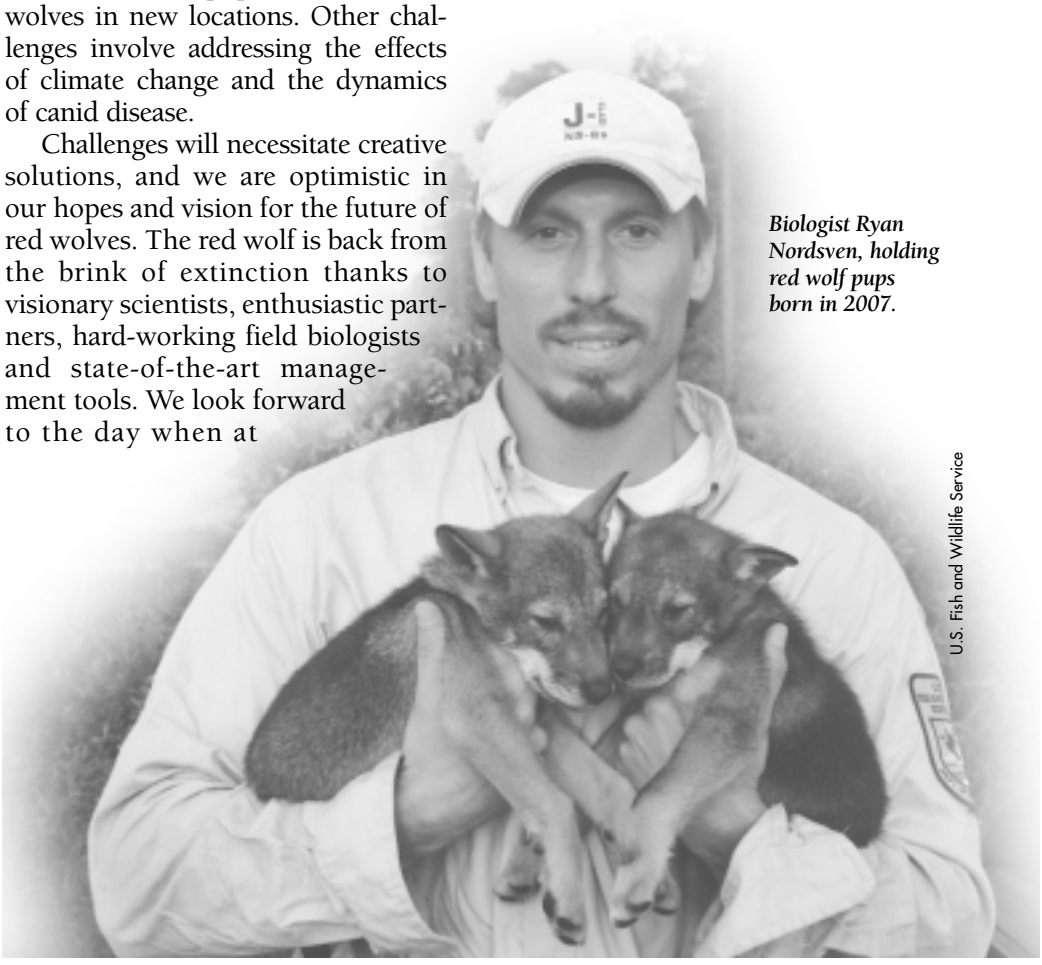
The journey of the red wolf is extraordinary. Going from top predator for 10,000 years in eastern and southeastern North America to "extinct in the wild" by 1980, the resilient red wolf has made an astonishing comeback since 1987. Red wolves again roam and howl in the wild, and we celebrate the 20th anniversary year of restoration. Hard work by veteran field biologists and captive breeding program specialists have established one wild red wolf population in North Carolina and a captive breeding population comprised of many facilities across the United States. New techniques such as pup fostering have been developed and implemented. We all have reason to be proud.

We expect creative innovations and solid accomplishments in years to come. Pioneering advances will continue in genetics, adaptive management, satellite telemetry, habitat studies and field monitoring. New insights will be developed in canid taxonomy. Interaction studies between red wolves and eastern coyotes will move from planning stages to field implementation. Fresh perspectives in the human dimensions of wolf restoration will be explored. The central roles of outreach education and ecotourism in red wolf conservation will grow. Additional partnership opportunities will develop, while existing partnerships strengthen.

We anticipate challenges as well. For example, we know how to effectively build a red wolf population, how to successfully manage eastern coyotes, and how to reduce or eliminate threats of interbreeding. Yet, we must seek additional scientific data on wolf-coyote interactions and develop strategies to ensure long-term red wolf survival in the face of continuing pressures from people and from eastern coyotes. Another challenge is to reduce red wolf mortality from gunshot and vehicles by educating and working with targeted audiences through programs and widely distributed informational materials. A third challenge is to rally support from state governments, select communities and natural resource partners to establish additional populations of red wolves in new locations. Other challenges involve addressing the effects of climate change and the dynamics of canid disease.

Challenges will necessitate creative solutions, and we are optimistic in our hopes and vision for the future of red wolves. The red wolf is back from the brink of extinction thanks to visionary scientists, enthusiastic partners, hard-working field biologists and state-of-the-art management tools. We look forward to the day when at least two or three wild and viable red wolf populations are thriving on portions of their former historic range. We will continue in our determination to help red wolves survive and to reach to new levels of renewal, and it is our hope they will be appreciated and enjoyed by people from many lands across many generations. ■

*Bud Fazio, a wildlife biologist, has served as Team Leader of the Red Wolf Recovery Program since 2001 for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in North Carolina. Previously, Fazio worked for the USFWS as an endangered species biologist overseeing efforts for more than 30 federally endangered or threatened species in Ohio and surrounding states.*



***Biologist Ryan Nordsven, holding red wolf pups born in 2007.***

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service