

# SONORAN PRONGHORN MONTHLY UPDATE

December 2014

## *Captive Breeding:*

### Cabeza Pen

Our annual capture of pronghorn in the Cabeza pen for release into the wild took place December 11-13. The capture/release operation was a success again this year due to assistance from numerous personnel from many agencies including Arizona Game and Fish, US Fish and Wildlife Service – Cabeza Prieta and Kofa Refuges, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Luke Air Force Base, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, and US Border Patrol, and Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club. In addition to our Game and Fish veterinarian (Dr. Anne Justice-Allen), a volunteer veterinarian, and contracted veterinarian (Dr. Ole Alcumbrac), we also hosted Dr. Ivonne Cassaigne from the National University of Mexico. Many thanks to everyone who participated!

The Cabeza crew prepared for the boma capture throughout November by strategically feeding in the bomas, and monitoring activity with cameras. December 7 - 10, sixty-nine pronghorn were captured in the north (29) and south (40) bomas. Processing took place December 11 - 13. All pronghorn were vaccinated against Bluetongue/EHD and other diseases and had blood drawn for disease and genetic testing. Pronghorn that were needed in the pens for breeding and this year's fawns were marked and released back into the pen. There are now 25 pronghorn in the north herd and 30 in the south herd.



Twenty-one pronghorn were transported via two trailers to the holding pen near Clancy Tank on Kofa NWR. Nine pronghorn were transported by trailer to the holding pen in the Valley of the Ajo on Organ Pipe Cactus NM, and 2 pronghorn were flown by helicopter to the holding pen on BMGR-West. All the pronghorn made the trips successfully and without injury. After a period of monitoring and acclimation to their new surroundings, the animals were released from the holding pens to the wild. The BMGR animals were released December 27, Kofa Clancy Tank animals January 6, and ORPI January 8.



There were several accidents during the capture of the pronghorn in the bomas. A doe fawn in south herd sustained a serious head injury when she and a buck collided head-on in the center boma. The veterinarians monitored her condition for signs of possible recovery for several days, but she had to be euthanized. A yearling doe in north herd broke her neck while being captured in the bomas and was euthanized immediately. A yearling doe in north also suffered a broken foot during capture, and a yearling buck in south broke his right rear leg. Both these animals were cared for as well as possible by the veterinarians and then released back into the pen. Both animals appear to be doing okay in the pens. The buck is seen at the feeders and drinkers regularly and moves around with the herd; the doe spends more time bedded and out of sight, has lost a little weight and is slower, but seems to be faring well under the circumstances. Both have collars and will continue to be monitored closely by the pen crew.



An adult buck was captured from the wild on December 14 and brought into north pen. He has been monitored closely and he appears to be adjusting well to his new surroundings. He has been seen regularly with other pronghorn and at the feeders.

A yearling buck in south herd was observed walking stiffly in his back legs before the boma processing, and again recently. During processing, the veterinarian examined both back legs and his back and did not find anything wrong. He continues to graze normally and will be carefully monitored by the pen crew.

We had one morality in south pen on December 15. Brown doe, one of the original breeding females, was killed by coyotes that were able to get into the pen. Subsequent checking of the perimeter fence revealed two spots where sign indicated coyotes had been coming and going from the pen. The pen crew immediately closed those holes and is working to strengthen the entire perimeter.



Cabeza Pen December 2014

NORTH HALF		SOUTH HALF	
Adult Females	10	Adult Females	13
Yearling Females ( <i>b</i> 2014)	5	Yearling Females ( <i>b</i> 2014)	8
Breeding Buck (from wild, L Yellow 55)	1	Breeding Buck ( <i>b</i> 2013, L Black 8)	1
Back up Buck ( <i>b</i> 2013, L Blue 52)	1	Buck ( <i>b</i> 2013, Black collar)	1
Yearling Bucks ( <i>b</i> 2014)	8	Yearling Bucks ( <i>b</i> 2014)	7
Fawns (born 2015)		Fawns (born 2015)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total Pen</b>	<b>55</b>		

**Kofa Pen**

All the pronghorn in the Kofa pen are doing well. A few females are starting to show signs of pregnancy. There are 31 pronghorn in Kofa pen.

Kofa Pen December 2014

Adult Females	12
Yearling Females ( <i>b</i> 2014)	11
Adult Males	4
Yearling Males ( <i>b</i> 2014)	4
Fawns (born 2015)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>

***2014 Released Pronghorn - Cabeza:***

The 9 pronghorn just released on ORPI were observed together, with 2 other pronghorn, in the Valley of the Ajo, by University of Arizona researchers. Two additional pronghorn released in 2013 with working collars were triangulated within a few miles of the group of 11.

The two pronghorn released on BMGR-West had moved east into BMGR-East. We could not get clearance into that restricted airspace, and consequently we were unable to observe them, but their signals sounded like they were together.

***2014 Released Pronghorn - Kofa:*** The 21 pronghorn released on Kofa moved east together and were last seen east of Kofa NWR in the Palomas Plain area of Yuma Proving Ground, approximately 17 miles east of the captive breeding pen.

***Water Projects:*** We are planning three pronghorn water projects for the upcoming spring. A new water will be built in the Agua Dulce area on Cabeza NWR February 12 – 15. A new water will be built on Kofa NWR March 5 – 8. We also plan to enlarge an existing water in the Fawn Hills on Cabeza; dates have not been set for that project yet.

**Forage Enhancements:** All the forage plots are still green with the recent rains; consequently we are not irrigating any.

**Other Projects/Personnel:** We completed the range-wide survey in the Pinacate area in Sonora, Mexico December 16 – 18. We observed 18 groups totaling 76 pronghorn on transects. Our estimate based on our group-size adjusted sighting rates is 122 pronghorn. This is a large increase over the last survey in this area in 2011 when we observed only 30 pronghorn in 7 groups and our estimate was 52.

**Wild Pronghorn Cabeza/ORPI/BMGR herd:** Nothing new to report.



Pronghorn awaiting release at Clancy Tank holding pen on Kofa NWR. Photo by John Hervert. All other photos by John Kulberg.

*Written January 13, 2015*