

SONORAN PRONGHORN MONTHLY UPDATE

November – December 2015

Captive Breeding:

Cabeza Pen

Our annual capture of pronghorn in the Cabeza pen for release into the wild took place December 9 - 11. The capture/release operation was a success again this year due to assistance from numerous personnel from many agencies and volunteers 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, Yuma Proving Ground, US Border Patrol, and our veterinarian crew. 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. On December 6 and 7, sixty-eight pronghorn were captured in the north (24) and south (44) bomas. Processing took place



December 11 – 12. 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. Several bucks were moved between pens to increase genetic diversity in breeding. There are now 19 pronghorn in the north herd and 29 in the south herd.

There were no significant injuries or mortalities during the capture and handling of the pronghorn. Twenty-six pronghorn were transported via trailers to the new holding pen on the BMGR-East, east of Highway 85. This is a new release area, and these are the first pronghorn to be released into this part of their historic range.

Four pronghorn were transported by trailer to the holding pen in the Valley of the Ajo on Organ Pipe Cactus NM. However, upon arrival the holding pen, the 2 females were unresponsive in the trailer and could not be released; one appeared to have been badly trampled in the trailer. The 2 males were successfully released into the holding pen.



The veterinarians and vet techs attended to the 2 females at the holding pen, giving them IV fluids, steroids, other treatments, and attempting to warm them as their body



temperatures were very low.

None of these on-site treatments were working and both females were brought back to the captive breeding pen and were placed in the small recovery pen in the north half of the pen to continue treatment. After more rounds of treatment at the pen, they were left overnight to see if they made any progress. The next morning, one doe had recovered and ran off into

the north pen. She will be kept in the pen as a breeder this year. Unfortunately, the other one that was trampled more seriously was still unresponsive and was euthanized.

All the animals in the holding pens, and those handled and returned to the pens appear to be doing well. The pronghorn in the holding pens will be released into the wild after ensuring there are no remaining effects of the drugs and they have had time to acclimate to their new surroundings.



Pronghorn coming out of the trailer into the BMGR-East holding pen. Photo (and those above) by George Andrejko, AGFD.



Pronghorn a few days after release in the BMGR-East holding pen. Photo by Jim Atkinson, USFWS.

Cabeza Pen

NORTH HALF		SOUTH HALF	
Adult Females	11	Adult Females	10
Yearling Females (<i>b 2015</i>)	5	Yearling Females (<i>b 2015</i>)	8
Adult Males	2	Adult Males	3
Yearling Males (<i>b 2015</i>)	1	Yearling Males (<i>b 2015</i>)	8
Fawns (<i>b 2016</i>)		Fawns (<i>b 2016</i>)	
TOTAL	19	TOTAL	29
Total Pen	48		

Kofa Pen

There are 53 pronghorn in the Kofa pen; 34 adults and yearlings and 19 fawns.

The capture bomas are ready and the pen crew has been baiting the pronghorn into the bomas with alfalfa and pellets. Most pronghorn are readily going into the bomas to feed now.

The capture and release from this pen is scheduled for January 7-8, 2016. There are 21 animals to be released if caught. They will be moved to the holding section of the Kofa pen and held to

be sure there are no injuries or ill effects from the capture and handling, and then released into the wild from the Kofa release pen.

Kofa Pen	
Adult Females	12
Yearling Females (<i>b</i> 2014)	11
Adult Males	7
Yearling Males (<i>b</i> 2014)	4
Fawns (born 2015)	19
TOTAL	53

2014 Released Pronghorn - Kofa: The released pronghorn continue to use the same general areas. The buck on the west side of Highway 95 has remained in the same area, using a green area north of Stone Cabin. The two females near the Gila Bend Mountains have remained in the same area as well.

Water Projects: Nothing new to report.

Forage Enhancements: Nothing new to report.

Wild Pronghorn Cabeza/ORPI/BMGR Herd: The radio-collared pronghorn are mostly using the same areas as last month. The pronghorn are beginning to group up in larger groups for the winter season. On the last telemetry flight, we observed 119 pronghorn. Range conditions where the pronghorn are continue to be good, although some areas on the east side of the range are drying out quickly.

Wild Pronghorn Kofa Herd: The pronghorn on Kofa have generally been using the same areas around King Valley on the Kofa NWR and Yuma Proving Ground and most are usually seen in large groups now. The 4 animals that are out of the King Valley area are all by themselves and in the same general areas as previously; a buck on the west side of Highway 95, two females near the Gila Bend Mountains, and a doe near New Water Well. Kofa/YPG remains in fair condition in the areas the pronghorn are using, but is drying out rapidly.

Other Projects: We completed the fawn survey in Sonora Mexico in October. In the Quitovac area on the east side of Highway 8 we observed 290 pronghorn, although not all were able to be classified. Of those classified, 98 were males, 100 were females and 75 were fawns. This is an excellent fawn:doe ratio and is likely due to good habitat conditions in this area. In the Pinacate area, we observed 14 pronghorn and no fawns.

We completed the range-wide Sonoran pronghorn survey in Sonora November 18 – 21. In the Quitovac area, we observed 749 pronghorn, nearly double the number observed the last survey in 2013 (379). The population estimate in this area was 862. In the Pinacate area, we observed 96 pronghorn. This was also an increase from the 76 we observed in 2014. The estimate for

Pinacate was 117. These increases in pronghorn are likely due to good rainfall and corresponding good habitat condition the last 2 years in Sonora.

We also assisted our Mexican biologist partners in capturing and radio collaring 10 pronghorn in the Quitovac area (6 females, 4 males). These pronghorn have GPS collars and will be used to monitor and document pronghorn movements, particularly in relation to the large gold mines in the area.



Large group of pronghorn seen on the Mexico range-wide survey. Photo by John Hervert, AGFD.

Written December 20, 2015