

PRONGHORN

4th Quarter 2019
Volume 25 Number 4



ARIZONA ANTELOPE FOUNDATION, INC.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Page 3	President's Message
Page 4-6	Allen Flat Fence Modification Project
Page 7	Southwestern Grassland Research and Management Workshop
Page 8-10	Alter Valley Hwy 284 Fence Modification with AGFD, Friends of Buenos Aires, US Fish & Wildlife, and AAF
Page 11-12	Pronghorn Capture and Radio Collaring
Page 13	Sonoran Pronghorn Update
Page 14-15	Maintaining Grassland Restoration Efforts
Page 16-17	AAF at the 3rd Annual Quail Festival
Page 18	Membership
Page 19	Editor Note

AAF Mission Statement:

The Arizona Antelope Foundation is an organization dedicated to the welfare of pronghorn antelope. The Foundation's Mission is to actively seek to increase pronghorn populations in Arizona through habitat improvements, habitat acquisition, the translocation of animals to historic range, and public comment on activities affecting pronghorn and their habitat.



ON OUR COVER

**BLUE TAG WAS TRANSPLANTED FROM
PRESCOTT AND HAD NOT BEEN SEEN FOR
OVER TWO YEARS...**

**BETTY DICKENS CAPTURED THIS IMAGE WHICH,
IN HER WORDS,**

**"REFLECTS THE EFFORTS OF BOTH THE TRANSPLANTS
THAT HAVE OCCURRED AND THE NEED FOR
ALL THE MILES OF BARBED WIRE THAT HAVE BEEN
AND NEED TO BE REPLACED."**

Pronghorn is a quarterly newsletter for the members of AAF. Letters, comments, news items, articles, pictures and stories are all welcome and will be considered for publication. Address all such items to:

Lenée Landis, Pronghorn Editor, PO Box 19420, Fountain Hills, AZ 85269 or by email at info@azantelope.org.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the 4th Quarter issue of 2019 though it is also our first Pronghorn in 2020. I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We are looking forward to the new project season, starting off with Vekol Valley which will be completed by the time this letter reaches you.

On Tuesday the 7th of January, Joe-Bill Pickrell, Brian George, Kara Jensen, Al Sue, Dave Cagle and I attended a briefing on a wildlife enhancement project for unit 18A.

This is going to be a multi year, multi prong plan for improving habitat for primarily Antelope and Mule Deer which will also help Elk. The project will be taking place on a combination of State, Federal and private lands working with Region 3 AZG&F and local ranchers.

This project will be reminiscent of our Southeastern Arizona grant; an all-encompassing habitat restoration (the entire unit). There will be fence removal along with wildlife compliant modification, invasive species removal along with analysis of waters available. The hopeful outcome of this five year endeavor will bring the habitat back to historical norms and the targeted species to historical levels. Of course, anything that helps big game will have a positive impact on everything from bees to birds, small game and nongame such as the black footed ferret. Keep an eye out for more information on the 18 A management plan.

Remember after Vekol Valley we will have our Spring and Fall projects coming up. In fact one will be the first action for 18A with removal of sheep fencing. As a reminder, our fundraiser is on its way in June. Be on the lookout for tickets going on sale. We are always looking for ideas for this event from donations, either items or cash, or just something new that will make the affair better. Just give us a call or send an email.

The special tags will be coming up for auction the next couple of months. The first one at Wild Sheep foundation and the second one at the ADBSS fundraiser. Glen, Brian, and I will be attending the Habitat Partnership Committee (HPC) meeting this coming weekend and it looks like we have a lot of good projects that have been submitted.



Here are a final couple of things: As in everything, conservation can't achieve its full potential without money. We have to buy supplies, food, and pay certain individuals. Fundraisers, donations, and matching funds are all important. As we sat around the table last night at the 18A meeting there was lots of gray and white hair. Remember, it's never too early to get a young person involved and interested in wildlife, conservation, hunting and fishing.

I hope the fall season went well for everyone. Enjoy the issue!

Ken Meadors
President

“LIBERTAS AD VAGOR”....
FREEDOM TO ROAM

ALLEN FLAT FENCE MODIFICATION PROJECT

SEPTEMBER 27–28, 2019

BY GLEN DICKENS, VP/GRANTS/PROJECTS MGR.



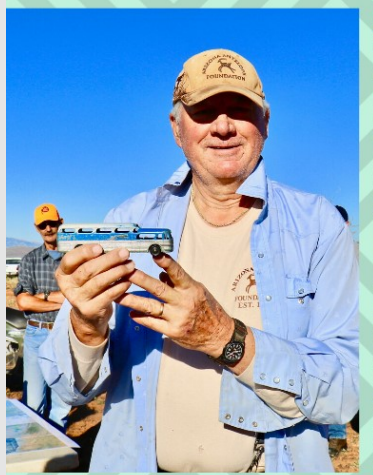
Photos page 4-6, courtesy of Betty Dickens

Another successful AAF fence modification/removal project was completed by 27 volunteers in Southeastern Arizona on September 27/28, 2019 on Allen Flat 20 miles northwest of Willcox in game management unit 32.

We modified 3 miles of existing boundary fence on the 3-Links Ranch. We removed the bottom barbed wire strand and replaced with smooth. In addition, on another 1.5 miles of fence on an adjoining ranch, we simply had to move the bottom strand up to 16 inches as it had been installed to a 10-inch height.

Separate from this work we utilized the remaining \$23K of our NFWF 8-year grant funds to purchase 7 full miles of fence materials, These were delivered to the Warbonnet/Dobson Cattle/Dos S Land & Cattle ranches for full fence replacement on ranch boundaries and interior fences. We thank all 4 ranches on the Allen Flat pronghorn herd zone for their cooperation! Family members from the Warbonnet ranch joined us for our Saturday night dinner to accept our appreciation personally.

Article continued on page 6



This effort is in direct proximity to where 14 pronghorn from Prescott were released in January/19 of which 5 were radio collared. That radio collar data was utilized to “tell us” where the top priority choke points were due to fencing that needed to be modified or replaced. As a result, an additional 13,500 acres of Allen Flat are now completely “permeable” to resident pronghorn!

In addition to the supplemental release this herd zone has received periodic coyote treatment. When our project began in 2011 the resident population numbered just 24 animals with the AGFD observing 70 in their August 2019 aerial survey.

This project effort benefits the now completed National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant in that all labor hours, materials and mileage from this project were used to match the AAF’s \$430K 8-year grant for our “Southeastern Arizona Grasslands Pronghorn Initiative.”

- **The grant had a goal of improving up to 100,000 acres of “Pronghorn habitat connectivity.”**
- **That goal was met in April of 2018 at Elgin.**
- **We continued to add to that total through the end of the grant period in December 2019.**

Dinners were served on Friday and Saturday nights with the sides provided by Mary and Bill Keebler and they hosted Saturday and Sunday morning breakfasts as well. Thanks Mary and Bill!

Thanks, go out to several folks that contributed to this successful project:

-Representing the AAF Board: Ken Meadors, Joe Bill Pickrell, Gary Boyer, Robert Velasco, Al Sue, Connie Taylor, Steve Tritz and yours truly.

-Representing the AZ Game and Fish: Troy Christensen, Mike Richens, and Rana Tucker

-Representing The Nature Conservancy: Ron Day

-Other AAF members and volunteers: Betty Dickens, John Millican, Bill & Mary Keebler, Ken & Kathy Cook, Frank Tennant, Darrell Tersey, Bill Werner, Darrel Wood, Jason Angell, Mike Ebright, Joelle Buffa, Clyde Morris, and Joyce Partain

Thanks to everyone for your efforts!



Southwestern Grassland Research & Management Workshop

November 7, 2019
University of Arizona

Article by Glen Dickens:

The first Southwestern Grassland Research and Management Workshop was held at an all-day session on Thursday November 7th, at the University of Arizona and included over 100 participants. The workshop was organized by the Arizona Cross-Watershed Network, with support from UA Cooperative Extension, US Fish and Wildlife Service, AZ Department of Forestry and Fire Management, AZ Game and Fish Department, and Pima County.

The workshop included:

- ⇒ expert presentations on the “state of the practice” of grassland restoration;
- ⇒ Lightning talks by restoration practitioners including non-profit organizations, private landowners, and state and federal wildlife and land managers;
- ⇒ Lightning talks by researchers on low cost emerging technologies in restoration;
- ⇒ Break-out discussions to identify opportunities to address pressing grassland restoration challenges
- ⇒ and large-group discussions on emerging opportunities for scaling up grassland restoration.

These were all excellent and the attendees participated vigorously in the breakout sessions.

Southeast Arizona AAF Field Manager John Millican, VP/Grants/Projects Manager Glen Dickens and Betty Dickens, AAF attended on behalf of the AAF.

Glen presented the first lightning round expert presentation power point with a focus on the grassland restoration efforts on the Bonita pronghorn herd zone, where from 2010-2018 a total of \$1.564M has been spent on mesquite removal at an average cost range of \$220-\$300 per acre. Cultural clearances averaged \$233 per acre.

He highlighted this major fact:

The “*Arizona Antelope Foundations Southeastern Arizona’s Grasslands Initiative*” grant 8-year target was 5,000 acres of grassland restored. At our grants end in 2019, we restored some 6,750 acres.

He also highlighted the value of our volunteer hours and mileage completing 16 fence projects in 8-years, with a value of over \$250K in grant match.

The audience applauded our efforts and as a wildlife conservation NGO the AAF has much to be proud of! We are now counted as valued contributing conservation partners in every circle in southeast Arizona where pronghorn occur.



**ARIZONA GAME & FISH- FRIENDS OF BUENOS AIRES-US FISH & WILDLIFE
AND THE ARIZONA ANTELOPE FOUNDATION
HIGHWAY 284 BOUNDARY FENCE MODIFICATION PROJECT
BY GLEN DICKENS, VP/GRANTS/PROJECTS MGR**



Article Photos by Betty Dickens—Altar Valley Group Photo. See more volunteers on page 9 and 10!

Another successful highway fence modification project was completed by 23 volunteers in Southeastern Arizona on November 16/17, 2019 in the south end of Altar Valley 50 miles southwest of Tucson in game management unit 32. Four miles of existing highway boundary fence were modified, 2 miles on each side of Highway 284, a few miles north of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge main entrance. Prior to the actual workdays, the Arizona Department of Transportation removed mesquite and brushed out all 4 miles of the fence boundaries. In addition both the top and bottom strands of barbed wire were removed. On the two project days, the top strand was replaced at a height of 42 inches (so mule deer could jump over more easily) and the bottom strand was replaced at 18 inches for resident pronghorn movement.

This fence modification is in direct proximity to completed and planned grassland restoration through mesquite removal. See your 3rd quarter issue of the *Pronghorn* pages 14-17 for a detailed article and description of the history of pronghorn in the Altar Valley and completed and planned grassland improvements. Since that article was authored 4 additional pregnant does were released in January of 19 from Prescott, two with radio collars. While the article describes fewer than 15 pronghorn present, since the summers fawn production the fledgling herd is now known to be at least 20+.

This project was designed and led not by the AAF but the Tucson office of AGFD with Karen Klima working closely with Rita Rutledge, the Chairperson of the Friends of the Buenos Aires. The AAF played a supporting role and paid \$190 for the camps food from our operating account. In addition our NFWF grant purchased all the necessary fence materials for \$3,700.

This project effort benefits the now completed National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant in that all labor hours, materials and mileage from this project were used to match the AAF's \$430K 8-year grant for our "Southeastern Arizona Grasslands Pronghorn Initiative." The grant had a goal of improving up to 100,000 acres of "Pronghorn habitat connectivity". This project added 6,500 acres of connectivity to that total.

Thanks, go out to several folks/groups that contributed to this successful project:
(**Note** this list is limited to Saturday attendees only)

- Representing the Friends of the Buenos Aires: Rita Rutledge and Neil Pennsom
- Representing Quail Forever: Zack May
- Representing the AAF Board & Membership: Connie Taylor, Betty Dickens and yours truly.
- Representing The Arizona Wildlife Federation: Tom Lauderback and Steve Bishop
- Representing AZGFD: Karen Klima, Troy Christensen, Alan Sandoval, AJ Lander, and Rana Tucker
- Representing the USFWS: Dawn Brown and Andrew DeBord
- Other volunteers: Pat Clark, Anne-Laure Blanche, Elizabeth Balied, Heidi Doman, Craig Robson, Mike Doyle, Bob Mulligan and Susan Houd

Thanks to everyone for your efforts!

Volunteers stretching smooth wire





Highway 284 Fence Modification

Volunteers



GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS 19A/8 PRONGHORN CAPTURES AND RADIO COLLARING OCTOBER 19/20, 2019

BY GLEN DICKENS



Photo credit Arizona Game and Fish Department

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's Contracts Branch conducted net-gunning pronghorn captures in game management unit's 19A and 8 on October 19/20, 2019 led by Scott Sprague/Project Manager and Road Biologist.

Glen, Betty and Bill are ready to locate pronghorn



This was part of the ongoing connectivity work being conducted under the now "South of I-40 Pronghorn Project". The AAF has been supporting this effort for the past 8 years by providing fence modification project camps and volunteers every August, as well as allocating \$10K from the pronghorn Habitat Partnership account annually.

Assisting on the ground for both days was past president Bill Keebler, AAF Life Member Betty Dickens and myself. Volunteers were used to locate pronghorn and keep them in sight until the helicopter could arrive and conduct
(continued on page 12)

the net-gunning and radio collaring. Saturday was a hard day for us as we did not find a single pronghorn in the Putnam Flat zone of western unit 8. Sunday the 20th was a better day when we were assigned to Garland Prairie east of Williams; found a herd of 15 animals and the helicopter showed up in the afternoon and successfully caught and collared a buck and doe from the herd.

The collars permit daily monitoring and two full years of pronghorn movement data from summer range, where they fawn and breed to winter range and back again through 2022. The 2 key objectives of the collar data are to determine seasonal habitat use and to identify potential bottlenecks on their 20-30 mile trek from summer to winter range and back again. A total of 20 pronghorn were collared over the 2 days and no reported animal injuries or mortalities occurred.

This data directly affects where we will be modifying or removing fences at our upcoming August 8th fence project with the camp located again in beautiful Garland Prairie, we hope you can join us!

*AAF Past President Bill Keebler, AZGFD Biologist Chad Loberger, and AAF VP Glen Dickens discuss the operation.
Photo by Betty Dickens*





SONORAN PRONGHORN UPDATE



FIGURES AND PHOTOS BY JILL BRIGHT AZ GAME & FISH
NOVEMBER 2019

Captive Breeding:

Cabeza Pen

The pronghorn are being observed on a regular basis during scoping and appear to be doing well.

The pen crew has been getting ready for the upcoming captures and releases from the pen. The larger boma on the south side has been completed and the crew has been feeding in the bomas to get the pronghorn used to going in. Trapping started on November 29, and 23 pronghorn in north herd were caught that day. On December 1, 31 pronghorn were trapped in south herd. The trapping crew is continuing to attempt to trap more animals, particularly in south as only about ½ were caught there. It is unknown if additional animals will go in the two remaining bomas with the trapped animals already secured in one of the bomas.

The pen received over an inch of rain November 20 and high winds causing some wind damage to the bomas. Another inch fell November 28, which ran the washes, causing more damage to the pen, as well as to the bomas. The damage was quickly repaired. We were concerned the rain right before trapping began may disrupt the pronghorn patterns, but it does not seem to have had much effect. Corid treatment took place this month.

NORTH HALF		SOUTH HALF	
Adult Females	10	Adult Females	17
Yearling Females (<i>b</i> 2018)	6	Yearling Females (<i>b</i> 2018)	5
Adult Males	4	Adult Males	6
Yearling Males (<i>b</i> 2018)	6	Yearling Males (<i>b</i> 2018)	5
Fawns (<i>b</i> 2019, 10F, 6M)	16	Fawns (<i>b</i> 2019, 15M, 12F)	27
Total	42	Total	60
Total Pen	102		

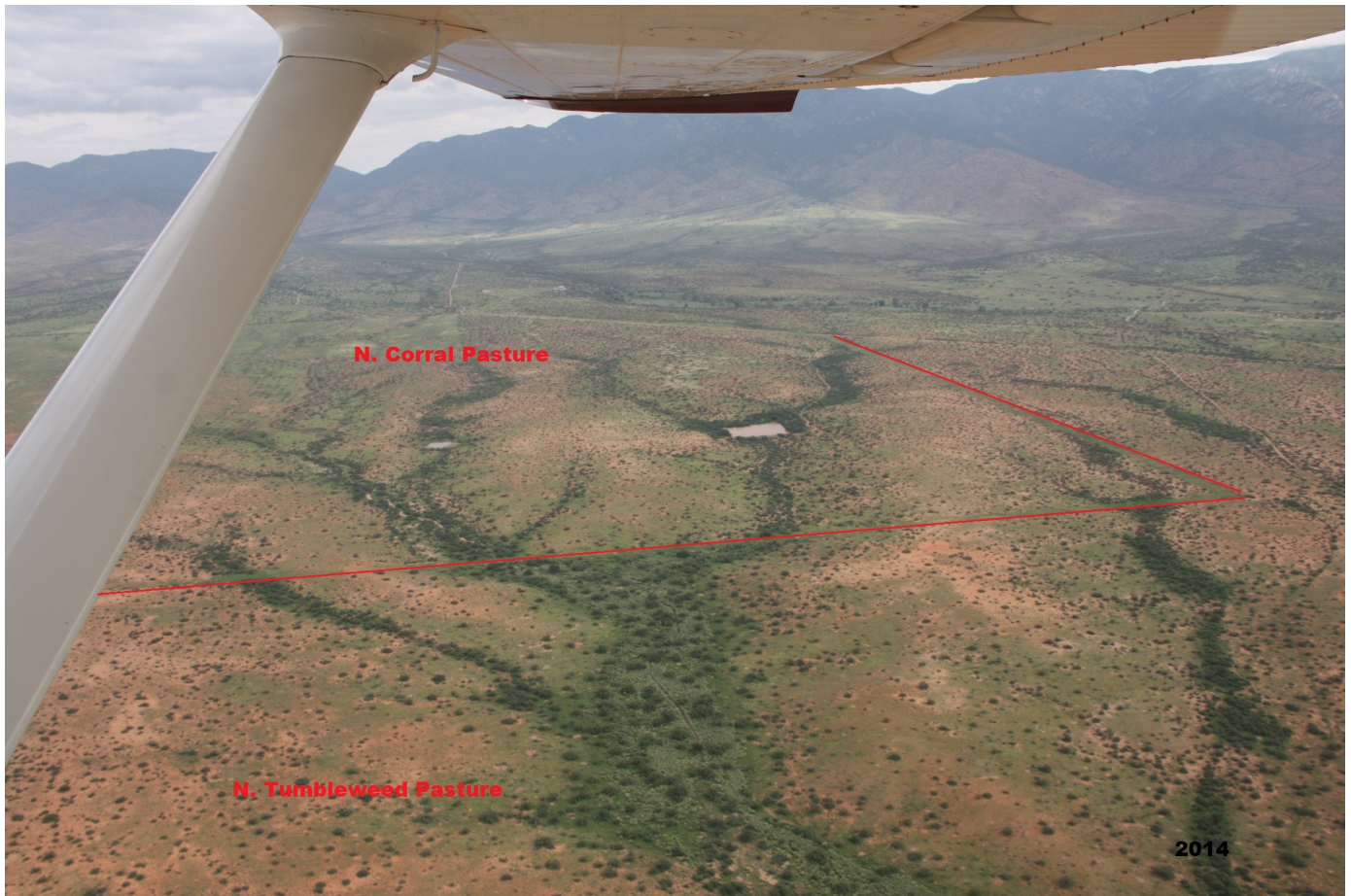
Kofa Pen

The Kofa pronghorn are doing well. The Kofa pen also received heavy rain in the end of November causing some damage, which was quickly repaired. The bomas for the January Kofa capture have been prepared, and the pen crew has started feeding near the bomas to entice them into the bomas in time. Corid treatment took place this month.

Continued page 19

MAINTAINING GRASSLAND RESTORATION EFFORTS

BY JOHN MILLICAN, AAF FIELD PROJECT MANAGER



Pre-mesquite treatment, Bonita. Aerial Photo by John Bacorn, AZGFD Wildlife Manager

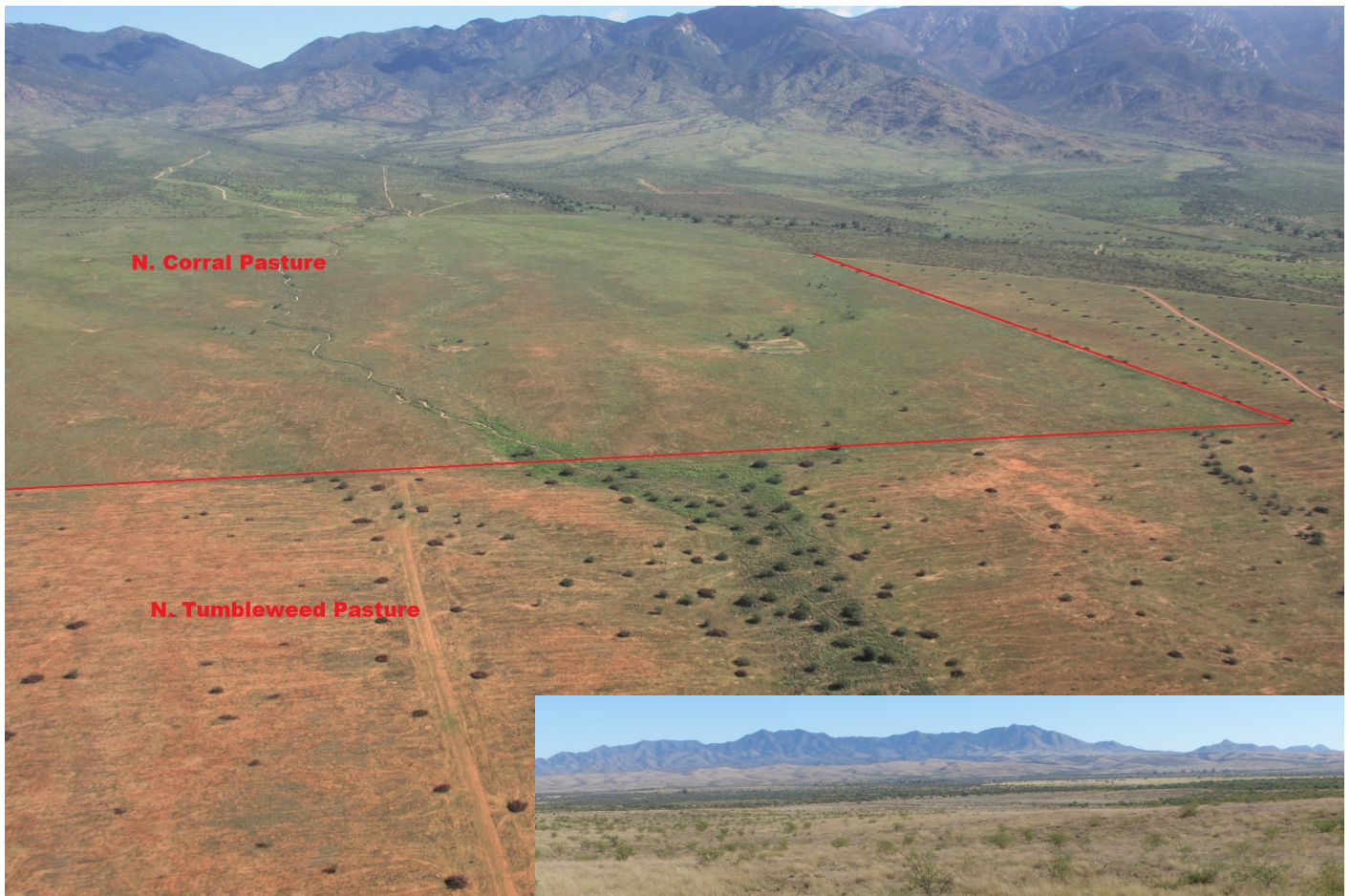
Grassland Restoration has been a top priority of land managers beginning in earnest around 2009. The South-eastern Arizona Grassland Restoration Initiative began with a group of state, federal, local and private stakeholders working on management strategies to develop awareness and identify funding sources to reverse the loss of native grasslands throughout SE Arizona. This initial effort has morphed into Regional groups developing management strategies focused on watershed specific plans that are directed at moving habitats to ecological site standards.

The Arizona Antelope Foundation has been one of the groups leading the charge for grassland restoration through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant and AZGFD Habitat Partnership funding. Over the course of the past 8 years, working with a vast array of partners, nearly 30,000 acres of historic grasslands have been restored primarily through mechanical treatment of mesquite throughout the Bonita and Las Cienga management areas. The result has been an increase in perennial grass cover, decrease in erosion and sedimentation, increase in forb production, and an increase in grassland connectivity and diversity which has benefited Pronghorn and grassland species.

With a goal of 127,000 acres identified as restorable, there is much to be done. We can look ahead, but we must be vigilant in being aware of our past accomplishments and developing management strategies to maintain our restoration achievements.

Over the course of the past two years, AAF has committed funds to maintain grasslands using herbicide control, which has proved to be effective and cost efficient. Our most recent project was conducted within the Sonoita Plains on private property, with funding through Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation License Plate funding (\$25,000), AAF-National Fish and Wildlife Grant funding (\$10,000) and private ranch owner (\$24,000). A total of 1,571 acres were spot treated to set back the regeneration of mesquite on pastures that were grubbed in 2012 and 2014. This effort is in direct alignment with the BLM Las Cienega Management Plan where nearly 17,000 acres of mesquite shrubland have been treated. Of these, it is estimated that 4,000 acres are currently in need of maintenance. Without periodic treatment, these restored grasslands will once again become invaded by shrubs and woody trees, resulting in expensive costs involving cultural clearances and mechanical removal.

Our successes have resulted in habitat diversity that has aided in the restoration of the Sonoita Plains Pronghorn populations, enhanced grassland habitat indicator species numbers, and improved watershed health. If we are to continue down this road to restoration, we must continue to monitor past efforts and provide funding to maintain habitat health and connectivity.



Above: Post mesquite treatment, Bonita.

Aerial photo by John Bacorn AZGFD Wildlife Manager

Right: 2019 Mesquite regeneration since 2010 mesquite treatment, Las Cienegas Natural Resource Management Area.

Photo by John Millican



**3RD ANNUAL QUAIL FESTIVAL,
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
SONOITA ARIZONA
DECEMBER 8, 2019**

Article by Glen Dickens



The 3RD Annual “Quail Festival” was held on Sunday, December 8th from 11-2PM at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds in Sonoita, Arizona. This was formed by a partnership with the Southeastern Arizona Quail Forever chapter led by President Zack May, the Tucson office of the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and local Wildlife Manager Brittney Oleson. It was again a rousing success and well attended with over 300 participants and 20 vendor and organizational booths.

The official start of Mearns Quail Season opened on Friday, December 6th. Mearns quail hunters from across the country converge annually on the area filling every available trailer rental space in the local community of Patagonia as well as all the local campgrounds and many motel rooms to pursue their quarry. Every conceivable bird dog breed is represented with some hunters having as many as four dogs. A quick walk through the parking lot revealed truck license plates from Idaho, Montana, Indiana, Minnesota, South and North Dakota, Wyoming, Alaska, and of course, Arizona.



Above: Kara Jensen ready to spread the news of AAF opportunities to the public

A local bird dog club was on hand to keep the crowds well fed with grilled hot dogs and hamburgers for a \$3 donation and there was a bird cleaning station and wing aging identification by the AGFD. One display by the AGFD included examples of Arizona's quail "Big 4" with mounts of Mearns, Scalies, Gambles, and California quail available to examine.

Board members Kara Jensen and Robert Velasco manned a table representing the AAF next to a booth by the Arizona Wildlife Federation manned by Outreach Director Nikki Julian and AAF/AWF VP Glen Dickens. Many questions were answered about the AAF and multiple folks took the available handouts and quarterly magazines. Both the AAF and the Southeastern Arizona Chapter of Quail Forever are affiliates of the AWF.

Right: A customer to adopt Andy the Antelope



Quail display



Andy the Antelope was on hand to be "adopted" and sales were made for family stocking stuffers for the upcoming Christmas Holiday.

It was a great time and the AAF and AWF will be represented again next year. Thanks much to Kara and Robert for making the drive from Phoenix with our organizations materials and booth displays!

Photos by Robert Velasco

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HM Seelye, Phoenix
- Bill Werner, Phoenix
Chris Wilson, Norco CA
Robert Bueche
- Steve Bridges
Charles W. Wirken

Adult Females	16
Yearling Females (b 2018)	5
Adult Males	2
Yearling Males (b 2018)	1
Fawns (b 2019, 11M, 6F)	17
Total	41

Wild Pronghorn Cabeza/ORPI/BMGR Herd: Due to preparations for the Mexico survey and the annual releases of pronghorn, no flights were conducted this month.

Wild Pronghorn Kofa Herd: Conditions are good in most areas on Kofa. The small herd that used the vicinity of Highway 85, then moved back to the pen area, has returned to the Highway area. Most of the other pronghorn have been using their usual areas.

Wild Pronghorn BMGR East of Highway 85 Herd: There were no flights for this herd this month either. There was a mortality of a GPS collared buck that was investigated on November 21. He was a 3-year old buck that was released in December 2017. Nothing was left of him, and rain the day before obscured any potential signs of what may have happened.

Water Projects: Nothing new to report.

Forage Enhancements: Nothing new to report.

Other Projects: The annual capture and release from the Cabeza pen is scheduled for December 3 – 6. Animals will be released on ORPI, the Saucedo herd, and into the Cabeza herd. Despite widespread rain in Arizona in November, the Pinacate release area did not get much rain from the first November rain and is still in poor condition. The release of animals there this year was canceled.

The range-wide survey in Sonora Mexico was scheduled for November 18 – 22. However, due to windy, cloudy, and rainy conditions that week, which make observing pronghorn extremely difficult from the air, it was postponed. We hope to complete it in February 2020.

The capture and release from the Kofa pen is scheduled to take place January 13 – 15, 2020. Up to 11 animals are anticipated to be moved to the YPG East Arm holding pen for eventual release into the wild.

Written December 2, 2019

GREETINGS!



Welcome to all the new members, and thank you new Life Members! We appreciate the commitment you have made to work on behalf of the pronghorn so they can roam free!

There are many opportunities for you to volunteer and become involved, so keep your eyes on the website, your email, and your mailbox for we will always invite you and welcome you to participate. Thank you for your support of the Arizona Antelope Foundation.

Best to you, Lenée



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NOT A MEMBER? JOIN TODAY!

Join (or renew) now and help the Arizona Antelope Foundation in its efforts to fund and provide the manpower necessary to finance pronghorn research, enhance and improve pronghorn habitat, encourage and assist in pronghorn transplants to historic habitat, and replenish existing herds. Your commitment will not only ensure that you will continue to be able to enjoy one of Arizona's most magnificent animals, it will also ensure that your children and your children's children will have the opportunity to be able to enjoy pronghorn.

Contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible, as the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Complete the form below and send with your payment to our mailing address. You can also join/renew online with your credit card. It's easy to do. Just visit the Membership page on our website, www.azantelope.org

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