

ARIZONA ANTELOPE FOUNDATION, INC.

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> INFO@AZANTELOPE.ORG WWW.AZANTELOPE.ORG

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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

Big Lake volunteers working through the wet meadow.

See the article on page 4.

Photo credit Betty Dickens

Pronghorn is a quarterly magazine 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 1191, Mesa AZ 85211 or by email at info@azantelope.org.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to another issue of the Award-winning Pronghorn. As this issue reaches you, I'm sure that you lucky antelope draw participants will be planning your hunt and deciding where to scout. What is your goal for your harvest? While I am sure that most hunters want to score a buck 80 inches plus so they can get into the B&C book, the reality is there are not that many bucks that score in that range. So, while the score is what we all want to chase there are so many other characteristics to look for when looking for your trophy buck.

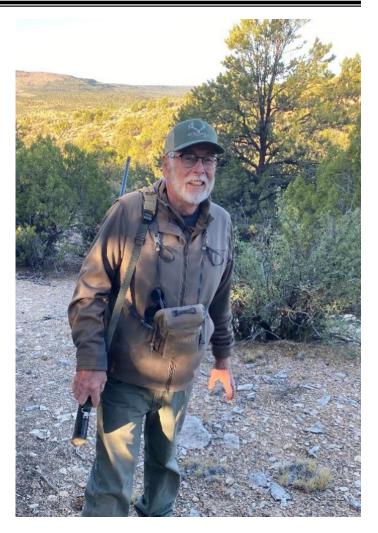
Many years ago, before trail cameras (that was a while ago huh?), I used an outfitter in another state for a hunt. This outfitter would scout for his hunter and would make a crude drawing of each of the bucks he would watch. While he would make his best guess on height, mass, etc. and what he thought it would score; more importantly he would then describe how the horns extended. Straight up, one pointing back the other pointing forward. Maybe the horns were spread far apart or the classic where the tips curved in and made a heart. He would describe blades or prongs, how long or wide. After 40 years of doing this, you could bet the mortgage he was going to be close in his scoring of the animal. He said it was the description of these characteristics that helped the hunters determine which buck to go after as many of the hunters would like the unusual trophy versus the sure thing book animal.

During our many sundowner conversations the outfitter said that through the years of hunting and being acquainted with hunters it was interesting what each individual considers a trophy. There is absolutely nothing wrong with hunting for the book buck. However, there sure are some unusual horn configurations that could catch your attention and make that buck your target. I sure wish I would have kept some of his drawings.

As a tag holder I hope you were able to attend the AAF's Antelope Hunt Seminar. A special thank you to Dave Cagle, AAF Board member, for putting together another excellent seminar. A lot of work goes into putting on this seminar and it becomes more popular every year. Where else can you listen to and talk to experts on how to score a trophy or use your optics to increase your odds? Another benefit is that you can talk to the Game and Fish Regional Game Managers.

When you harvest that buck that you worked so hard to find, please forward a photo to us. We would especially appreciate a picture if you are hunting with someone new to hunting or a youth hunter. We will make every effort to get these pictures published in the Pronghorn.

Your dollars at work in the last couple of months have been in joint projects with Arizona Bighorn Sheep Society and Arizona Sportsman for Wildlife



Conservation in refurbishing the transport trailers used by the Arizona Game and Fish for the relocation of wildlife. Also included in this transaction was the purchase of a new trailer. This was an excellent opportunity to put your dollars on the ground.

In closing, good luck to all of you tag holders. When you are out in the field and watching those antelopes, remember that your involvement as a member of the AAF helps keep these animals wild. AAF's success depends on our members. As a member share our mission and recruit a new member.

Two things not to lose sight of when you are out there: Have Fun and Be Safe.

Thank you, Terry

"LIBERTAS AD VAGOR"....
FREEDOM TO ROAM

BIG LAKE FENCE MODIFICATION PROJECT

By Dave Cagle, AAF Secretary

On Saturday May 20, 2023 we finally conducted another fence modification project in the high elevation grasslands located near Greer in Game Management Unit 1. Since 2020 we have had to cancel this project twice because of COVID concerns and wildfire restrictions. The planned June 2022 AAF project was cancelled because of extreme fire danger. Fire related restrictions on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest included no off-road travel. Since we utilize all-terrain vehicles to roll-up the old barbed wire and re-string the new smooth wire it was prudently decided to put off the 2022 project. To better avoid the prime fire season, the 2023 project was rescheduled from the traditional first Saturday in June to May 20th. The 2022-23 winter was the wettest in many years and as a result huge snow drifts were scattered across the higher elevations when the local road was finally opened in April. Now our new concern was too much snow and mud along the project fence! However, the warming temperatures and spring winds melted the lingering snow and dried out the saturated ground. The week prior to the project it rained and even snowed, yes snowed in mid-May. Luckily, we had no weather problems come project day. Also with no fire restrictions, we enjoyed a crackling campfire on both Friday and Saturday evenings.

The project area consists of a native bunch grass ecosystem that is adjacent to a mixed-conifer forest. The elevation is around 9,000 foot elevation, and is managed by the National Forest Service. The pronghorn habitat quality up there rates out very high with large open vistas, low to moderate elevation relief, abundant water sources, and plentiful and diverse vegetation. The area is managed for multiple use, and cattle annually graze these grasslands. There's many miles of traditional four and five strand livestock fencing across these open areas. The AAF has been coming up here for approximately 10 years to modify these fences where the pronghorn traditionally summer.

I met with local Wildlife Manager Jason Capps about 10 days prior to the project date to tour the project site. Jason had previously scouted some of the fencing in the core pronghorn habitat and identified 2 fences needing our help. This pre-project meeting was invaluable to estimate manpower and equipment needs, access and general fence condition.

On May 20th there were 33 eager and willing volunteers in camp. After doing the necessary paperwork, safety talk, project background and group photo we were split into 2 work parties and drove a short distance to start removing the bottom wire. Approximately four hours later, one group was complete with their 1.2 miles of fence modification. The second team requested additional help from those volunteers who had more reserve energy, and the second fence section was completed two hours later.

In summary, a total of 2.2 miles of livestock fencing was modified so pronghorn could more readily cross under these fences. Specific work included removing the bottom barbed strand that was approximately 8 to 10 inches above the ground, replacing it with a smooth wire strand at 16 to 18 inches above the ground, and repairing the existing livestock fencing where needed.

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

Steak dinner is served!



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

- -Representing the AAF Board: Glen Dickens, Darrell Tersey, Gary Boyer, Paul Pavlich, Joe-Bill Pickrell, and yours truly.
- -Game & Fish personnel: Troy Christensen, Jason Capps, Nancy Huser and Tylor McGaughey
- -Other AAF members and volunteers: Betty Dickens, Mary and Bill Keebler, Glenn Bevin, Mike Forzano, Eric Friend, Sandra Friend, Marsha Halcrow, Bill McClendon, Johnny Johnson, Al Kreutz, Dale Maas, John O'Brien, Jay Leadabrand, Connie Leadabrand, Courtney Pavlich, Richard Roller, Steve Schaefer, K. Michelle Schaefer, Gregory Tibbitt, Steven Tritz, John Vassel, Garth Young and Steve Rusiecki.

Article photos courtesy of Betty Dickens, additional photos on page 6











Arizona Game & Fish Department Update on the January 2023 Historical Capture & Translocation of 30 Pronghorn from the San Bernardino Valley to the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in Southeastern Arizona

Rana Murphy, Senior Terrestrial Wildlife Specialist, AZGFD-Region 5

Transplant Background:

The purpose of this project was to give a significant population and genetic boost to a remnant herd of 15-25 American pronghorn on the US Fish and Wildlife Services' Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (BANWR), southwest of Tucson. The interior of the 117,000 acre Refuge is now 100% traversable north-south by pronghorn due to the removal of over 185 miles of fence by the Friends of BANWR, led by Reta Rutledge, and the modification of 3 key miles of fence on both sides of Hwy 286 by Friends of BANWR, Sierra Club volunteers, 4-Wheel Campers, and the AAF. In addition, over the past 10-15 years some 10,000 acres of grasslands on and off Refuge have been restored or enhanced by removal of mesquite and prescribed burning, with several more acreages scheduled to be restored in 2023 and beyond. Multiple water sources have been installed or restored, and the Refuge has an active and ongoing annual grasslands burn program. The extensiveness and occupation of this modified habitat, as demonstrated by the two does transplanted from Glassford Hill and fitted with GPS collars in 2019, helped AZGFD make the management call to complete this supplemental transplant.

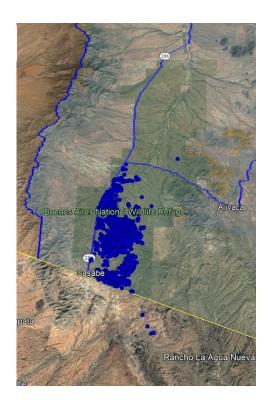
Update:

Following the successful transplant, some of the relocated pronghorn joined up immediately with members of the resident wildlife refuge herd. Some struck out on their own; others went off together (as evidenced by the data transmitted by their collars) in search of a route back to where they came from. Unfortunately, three of those met up with predators and were killed. Two other collared does died of unknown causes. AZGFD was able to collect samples from one to test for evidence of capture myopathy, a stress-induced illness sometimes associated with captures, and is awaiting results. The other mortality was completely consumed, leaving no evidence of struggle, just a collar lying under a tree and a lot of hair nearby. Three months later, one of the two collared bucks was found dead in a heavily-treed drainage not far from Highway 286. There was no evidence of struggle or vehicle strike; the official cause of death is unknown. This leaves 4 of the collared pronghorn still alive. Eight of the 20 marked only with an ear tag have been spotted since their release, including two does that were held overnight in the trailer for observation and one of the 4 bucks not collared.

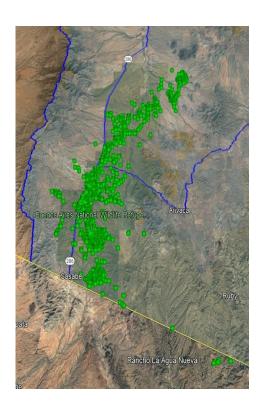
These losses are unfortunate, but not unexpected, as translocating wildlife into new territory comes with some risk. However the benefits of augmenting a stagnant population outweigh the negatives. On June 2nd, the first observation of a fawn born to a transplanted doe occurred! This was followed by an additional two does observed with fawns. The herd is growing!

Collar data from these pronghorn illustrate the long movements typical of a translocated group of pronghorn. They have not only ventured west of Hwy 286, but a few individuals have set up shop north of Arivaca road, one as far north as Papago Wash, on private and State land east of the Refuge boundary. On May 4th, someone said "May the 4th be with you!" to one of the collared does. She scooted across the Mexico border, traveled 13 miles east, spent the night, then turned around and came home. This collared doe was also spotted making use of the new permanent water source funded by AAF and installed in March of this year.

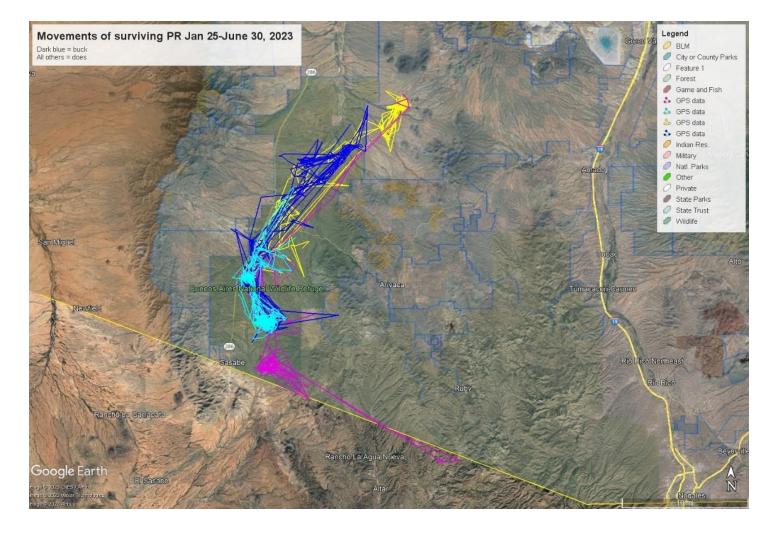
We are learning a lot from these pronghorn. Having ear-tagged and collared animals on the landscape enables us to track individuals that are spread out across the Refuge in places we did not suspect were regularly utilized. An aerial survey is scheduled for August and the results are awaited with great anticipation!



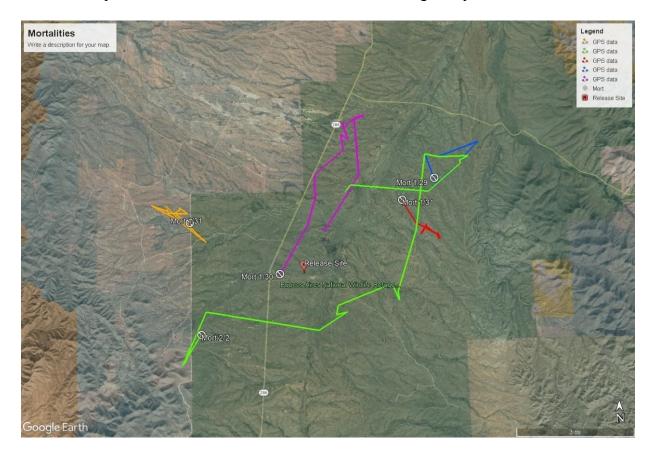
Collar data from 2019 transplants (blue) vs collar data from 2023 (green).



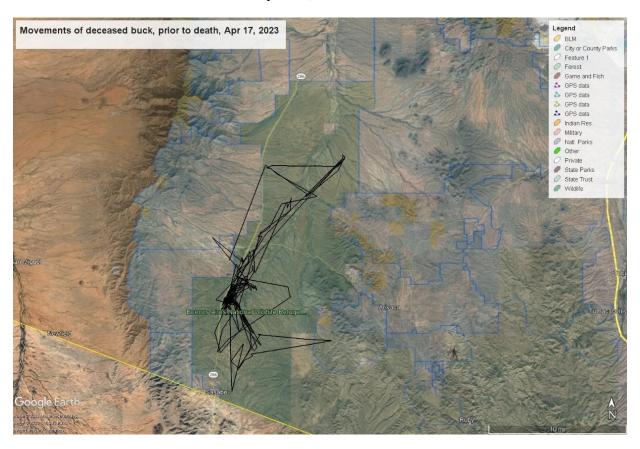
Movements of 4 surviving collared pronghorn Jan 25-June 30, 2023 (Dark blue=buck).



Movements prior to death of 5 mortalities in Week 1 following transplant

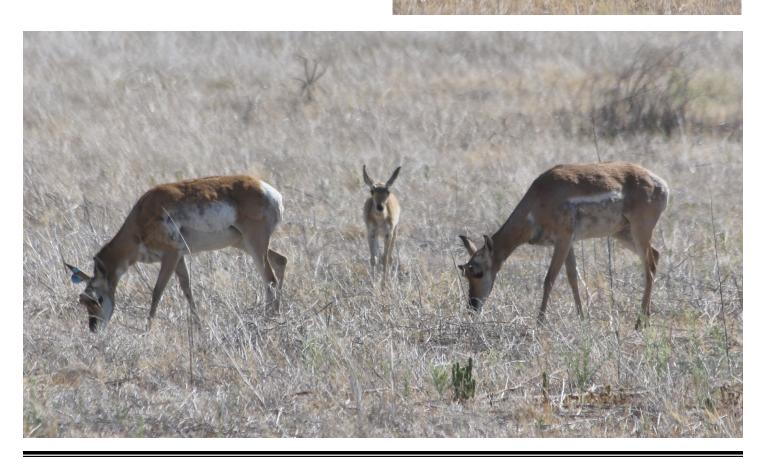


Movements of collared buck Jan 25- April 17, 2023.





Photos courtesy of AZGFD



HUNTER CLINIC

By GLEN DICKENS & DAVE CAGLE, AAF BOARD

We held our second face to face Pronghorn Hunter Clinic since 2019. In the Covid years of 2020 and 2021 we relied on two Zoom clinics and a professionally recorded version made available for a \$10 fee and both were well received. This online clinic is still available at our website for \$10 or free for members.

We had 60+ enthusiastic attendees who received tips from experts on photography, trophy judging, taxidermy, optics, archery and rifle hunting techniques.

Our appreciation goes to Corky Richardson (Archery Techniques), Roy Ruiz (Taxidermy), Betty Dickens (Photography) Dave Cagle (Rifle Techniques) and Glen Dickens (Ontic

Cagle (Rifle Techniques) and Glen Dickens (Optics/Trophy Judging).







Bev Corky





Three components of scoring

We look forward to hosting next year's lucky tag holders at our 2024 antelope hunter clinic to be held on June 8, 2024 at the AGFD Clay Target Center.



AZGFD Callie introducing tooth collection



AZGFD reps reviewing game management unit maps

The 3-hour workshop also included a 1-hour breakout for hunters to interact with personnel from the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) to gain specific information on their respective assigned hunt units. Our thanks to the following AGFD personnel: Justin Winter, Jason Capps, Edward Cini, Virginia Gouldsbury, Kirby Bristow, Natalie Scheigert and Callie Calavant. We appreciate the support as well from AAF Board members; Jamie Watkins, Paul Pavlich, Joe-Bill Pickrell and our smiling registration coordinator Bev Showalter.

Article photos courtesy of Betty Dickens



AZGFD region reps sharing info



Lucky 50-50 winner!

DOUBLE O RANCH FENCE MODIFICATION PROJECT

By Gary Boyer, AAF Board of Directors

The weekend of April 14-16, 2023, the Arizona Antelope Foundation (AAF) set up camp at the corrals on the historic Double O ranch. This was the second project at the same site as the April 2022 fence project. The Double O is one of Arizona's largest and historic cattle ranches. The ranch covers 30,625 deeded acres and with leased land it totals 169,884 acres with a carrying capacity of 2,650 head of adult cows plus 1,000 feeder cattle. A portion of the ranch is located south of I-40 south of Seligman, AZ with another ranch near Wickenburg, AZ. The 2022 project saw 1.63 miles of fence modified and this year's project of a little over 1 ½ miles completes the work on this section. Both projects modified a north to south fence line, bisecting an approximately 3 mile long, wide, grassland valley, nestled between two rolling ridges. This work will allow the pronghorn to cross under the fence at any point. Some of the benefits of this modification will provide escape routes from predators, easier access to water, forage sources, and fawning locations.

This area is prime pronghorn habitat, and the long-term plans are to remove 20 miles of mesh sheep fence and replace portions of it with wildlife friendly 4 strand barbed and smooth wire on the bottom strand. These improvements benefit not only pronghorn but mule deer and elk. The Arizona Game and Fish Dept. (AZGFD) will be doing the sheep fence removal. This is the second year of AAF's 5-year plan to complete fence modifications with another project in late September. Along with water distribution improvements and fawn enhancement these projects will greatly enhance the local wildlife's ability to reproduce and survive for future generations. Your support through membership and raffle dollars goes directly into these habitat improvements.

This work is an integral part of AZGFD's Game Management Unit 18A fence, habitat and water enhancement mission headed up by their Region 3 office in Kingman, AZ. AZGFD has partnered with local ranchers/lessees, Arizona Antelope Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Arizona Deer and Elk Associations to complete these projects.

After breakfast and many pots of coffee, the group of more than 30 volunteers gathered around to hear the orders from headquarters. Glen Dickens, AAF VP and Projects Manager gave a short talk on AAF's current and future projects along with data on collaring and satellite tracking of pronghorn to determine where and when AAF's work projects will take place. This was followed up with the plans for the days work by the Arizona Game and Fish Department personnel.

The volunteers were split into two groups, one working north from the alfalfa fields and the other working south from last year's project. Each group consisted of an ATV mounted wire roller to roll up the old, barbed wire and a spooler to string the new smooth bottom wire. Most importantly are our experienced, plus a few newbies, volunteer crew members that provide the physically demanding groundwork. Detaching the old wire and laying it out for the wire roller, then coming back and attaching the new smooth wire and tying the wire to T-posts and wood stays requires a lot of up and down work. Also, we had the two "Marking Marsha's" to mark the location at 18" above grade for the new wire. The crews did numerous repairs to the old fence, tightening wire, replacing broken stays and reattaching broken strands. One of the nicer things about working on the Double O is the ranch manager, Tom Liversedge, who is right there the whole day working alongside our crews providing muscle and advice.



At the end of the day a tired and hungry group returned to camp for the traditional quesadillas with dipping sauces and a cold beverage while awaiting Bill and Mary's always delicious and welcome steak dinner.

Sunday morning brings out more coffee and a continental breakfast as the remaining volunteers and board members break camp and prepare to head home. This year Marsha and I stayed an extra night just to enjoy the peace and beauty of this still raw and rugged land, one of the benefits of being retired.

As always, AAF could not accomplish any of our projects without our regular dedicated volunteers and the new folks that come out to help us and hopefully return for more fun under the Arizona sun. Thank you one and all from the board and all our members. Please consider joining us for another project and a shameless plug for our membership, it's only 40 bucks a year folks, and you get 4 copies of our award-winning Pronghorn magazine and the good feeling that comes from supporting a worthwhile conservation cause.

Thanks to all the following for their attendance and hard work. Tyler Barker, Bo Boulier, David Breeden, David Brown, Marsha Halcrow, Jeff Hemphill, Louis Horvath, Nathan Howell, Johnny Johnson, Dale Maas, David Mattausch, Jim McCasland, Bill McClendon, Earl Povent, Jeffrey Potter, Richard Roller, Al and Marsha Sue (AZGFD Commissioner), Franklin Tennant, Alexander Watkins, Darrel Wood, Wendy Woodell, Jim Woodell, my apologies for misspellings or omissions.

AZGFD, Troy Christensen, Cody Johnston, Troy Moody, wildlife manager.

AAF board members, Glen Dickens, Betty Dickens (photographer), Ken Meadors, Paul Pavlich, Joe Bill Pickerell, Darrell Tersey, Jamie Watkins and yours in citizen conservation, Gary Boyer.

And a special thanks to our loyal, long-time camp chefs, Bill and Mary Keebler for their tireless efforts at keeping all of us fed and happy.

Article photos courtesy of Betty Dickens















Double O Ranch Volunteers

April 14-16, 2023





Sonoran Pronghorn

UPDATE

JILL BRIGHT, AZ GAME & FISH

MAY-JUNE 2023



Captive Breeding Cabeza Pen

The pronghorn in Cabeza pen are doing well. The pen has been hot and dry with no rains; however, the pronghorn are still consuming less hay than normal at this time of year due to the unusually wet winter and spring. The pen crew has also been irrigating to keep the forage green. There have been no predator incursions recently in the pen and efforts are continuing to move electric fence lines to better cover the lower squares in the woven fence as well as installing shade cloth to block the view. These modification seem to be helping reduce predators being able to get into the pen. As the rut nears, sparring between bucks has become more aggressive. The yearling bucks mostly spar amongst themselves but on occasion will take on a larger buck. Chasing of does or yearling bucks by the adult bucks is also becoming frequent. There was a mortality of an 8-year old doe in south pen in May. She had a leg injury from the boma captures several years ago which she struggled with more recently and was on the thin side for some time. When she was necropsied there was a yellow substance covering her lungs as well as several nodules. Samples were taken and sent to the diagnostic lab. The report indicated that she had died from bacterial pneumonia, possibly related to her old injury.

NORTH HALF		SOUTH HALF	
Adult Females	10	Adult Females	11
Yearling Females (b 2022)	3	Yearling Females (b 2022)	7
Adult Males	7	Adult Males	6
Yearling Males (b 2022)	4	Yearling Males (b 2022)	6
Fawns (b 2023, 9 male, 3 female)	12	Fawns (b 2023, 8 m, 10 f)	18
TOTAL	36	TOTAL	48
Total Pen	84		

Kofa Pen The Kofa herd is doing well. We had a yearling doe give birth to a fawn in late June surprising us all. Although small and born right before the extremely hot weather hit, he seems to be doing okay. The bobcat that had been getting in the pen in March and April was removed; we don't believe it killed anything in the pen. The pen crew continue to work on adding chicken wire where there are areas predators could get in through the woven wire. There was an unfortunate incident in early May. An adult doe (7 years) was one of the first does to show signs of pregnancy, with milk development by mid-March. She slowly lost weight throughout April, and also lost her milk supply by the end of April with no sign of any fawns. She still had a distended abdomen and appeared pregnant. Our veterinarian, Anne Justice-Allen, suspected that her fawn(s) had died inside the womb, which was contributing to her rapidly declining health. On May 3, she was unable to stand, and was in distress; after consulting with Anne, GF biologists and USFWS personnel including the Recovery Team Leader, the decision was made to humanely euthanize the doe to alleviate her suffering.

Adult Females	
Yearling Females (b 2022)	
Adult Males	
Yearling Males (b 2022)	
Fawns (b 2023)	
TOTAL	39

Kofa pen stats

Wild Pronghorn Cabeza/ORPI/BMGR Herd: We have been having difficulty scheduling telemetry flights and have not done any recent telem etry flights in this area. A mountain lion killed a buck about a half mile south of the pen in June. This was a wild buck we had brought into the pen in 2014 for breeding and released in 2019 (nicknamed Icepick for injuring Dr. Ole during this original capture). The pen crew observed vultures south of the pen and found him; his collar had stopped transmitting last year. Photo-

graphs from our waters on the Marine and Air Force ranges indicate there is an exceptional number of fawns this year likely due to the wet winter and spring. We are hopeful that we get some early and good monsoon rains to allow this high number of fawns to survive through the summer.

Wild Pronghorn Kofa Subunit: We have not done any telemetry flights in this area recently. Numerous pronghorn including several fawns have returned to the vicinity of the pen where there is a water source and alfalfa feed. Several wild pronghorn have been photographed at waters in King Valley. The herd on the Palomas Plains have been using the new Xamool water, as well as two temporary waters installed for them. From the camera at these waters, this herd also appears to have excellent recruitment of fawns so far, with many unmarked wild pronghorn as well as numerous fawns photographed.

Wild Pronghorn Sauceda Subunit: This area has remained green and in fairly good condition. On recent telemetry flight, two groups were found both north and south of the Sauceda mountains with 1 fawn observed. We seem to have only have 2 working collars left in this herd. Photographs from waters indicate at least 9 pronghorn including 1 fawn are using the sites south of the Saucedas. Unfortunately, we continue to have high levels of mountain lion kills in this small herd. A wild buck and a collared doe were found killed by mountain lions south of the Sauceda mountains in June.

Wild Pronghorn Vekol Valley Herd: This area also remains in fairly good condition. Several pronghorn have returned to the vicinity of the holding pen where there is a water available; they have also been using the temporary water to the east. Two fawns have been observed on recent telemetry flights and cameras. One buck has moved east out of the Vekol Valley and onto the Tohono O'odham Nation. There was a mortality of a 3-year old buck, released in January 2022, from mountain lion predation.

Water Projects: nothing new to report.

Forage Enhancements: Irrigation has commenced at Charlie Bell forage enhancement as conditions are drying out. Numerous pronghorn have returned to our waters as temperatures rise and conditions deteriorate. We have started providing alfalfa hay at some sites where conditions are dry. Up to 40 pronghorn including 14 -15 fawns are using Point of the Pintas, and about 15, including several fawns have been using Devils Hill. Uken tank on the Air Force Range has also had up to 40 pronghorn including about 15 fawns.

Other Projects: Pinacate Pronghorn.

We have been monitoring the 6 pronghorn transported and released in the Pinacate Reserve in Sonora with GPS collars. Three of these pronghorn have died. One doe died soon after release in early February, possibly related to lingering issues from the handling and transport. Another doe was likely poached near the Pinacate holding pen in April. Nothing was found of her body, nor any hair or other remains, and the collar had been cut and buried underground. Luckily it was still able to transmit. A buck was also likely poached; his collar had also been cut and appear to have been thrown out along a road. Nothing was found of him either. In mid-May, all three bucks left Pinacate, crossed Highways 2 and 8 and moved 15-20 miles to the east where they remained for about a month. The buck was killed somewhere in this area on June 12. The day after he appears to have been killed, the remaining two bucks returned to the Pinacate area. The remaining doe has stayed in the area of the holding pen and vicinity. *Written July 7, 2023*

(Maps on Page 19)

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- 7 Pete Cimellaro, Phoenix
- Jerry Weiers, Phoenix 8.
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- 15 Mary Keebler, Happy Jack
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- Billie Bechtel, Show Low 78.
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- 91. Anna Welch, Sonoita
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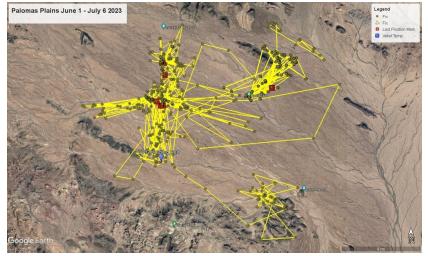
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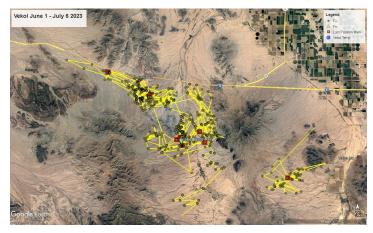
(Sonoran Pronghorn Update, continued from page 17)

Radio collar data:

Left: Palomas Plains from June 1—July 6, 2023

Lower left: Vekol from June 1-July 6, 2023

Below—Pinacate Pronghorn







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