

PREDATOR'S PRIDE



ARIZONA PREDATOR CALLERS

APRIL 2004

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Dan Solow, APC President

Howdy all APC members,
First I would like to thank our March guest speakers, Colin and Anthony, from *Wide World of Maps*, for their GPS session.

It's hard to believe, it is April already, and the temperatures are a few degrees short of 100. We usually do not see these temperatures until mid May. I guess this is going to be a very hot year.

As you know, the fox and bobcat season closed the end of March. The good news is that coyotes can be taken year round. We have a predator hunt planned for May 1&2, with the *AZ Mule Deer Association* and *AZ Antelope Association*, along with *Arizona Game and Fish*, the details are still being worked out.

APC would like to congratulate Cookie Vidana, daughter of member Eric Vidana, for her award presented by the *Arizona Game and Fish Department*, for "Support and Outstanding Contributions to the Conservation of Arizona's Wildlife and Natural Resources". **Way to go Cookie!!!!**

I have been contacted by a business that makes novelty license plates. These plates are very attractive, and can be purchased at a moderate price. I will have a sample at the April meeting, and will take orders at that time. You will need to pay at time of order, prices are \$10-\$12 dollars.

Our board of directors are working hard to improve APC. We are starting each meeting with a 10-15 minute demo, related to predator hunting. Plus, we are trying to find guest speakers that have interesting outdoor subjects. Also, we need feed back from the membership on there ideas and needs. In return, we encourage the members to attend the general meetings, and club events.

Please remember to support the merchants that support our club (see classified section), have fun and be safe in your outdoor activities

Dan

FROM THE VP

by Mike Burris, APC Vice-President

As a reminder, we are plannig a joint effort hut with the *AG&F* and the *Arizona Mule Deer Association*. The purpose of the hunt is to attempt to reduce the numbers of coyotes in some of the prime areas in the north sentral part of the state

The hunt will be on May 1st and 2nd of this year, and we will be targeting the following areas:

- Northern portion of unit 4A & 4B
- Most portions of 3A, 3C North & 3B
- Southern half of 2C
- Northern portion of unit 1
- Southern half of 2B

A tentative site has been chosen for the campsite in unit 4B and that will be announced as the time gets closer.

Please plan on attending this joint effort project, as all hunters will benefit from this effort and it will be a great opportunity for us to work with the *AG&F* and the *AMDA* to maybe make the fawning for this year a little safer for our already struggling deer and antelope herds.

Mike

COMING EVENTS

April General Meeting 8 Apr '04
TURKEY!! - AG&F - Brian Wakeling
 APC Board Meeting 26 Apr '04
 Joint Predator Hunt 1 & 2 May '04
 May General Meeting 13 May '04

Monthly APC meetings are held at the Mesa FOP Hall, 1450 E. Main Street, Mesa, from 7:00 p.m. until ????. Board meetings are held at the Arizona Wildlife Federation office at 7:00 p.m.

TREASURERS REPORT

by Jerry Thorson, APC Treasurer

This Treasurers report details all transactions from March 1, 2004 through March 31, 2004.

CHECKING ACCOUNT

Beginning Balance..... \$6,000.28
 Check #1291 Mike Clerc - Printer Cartridge(20.00)
 Check #1292 Dan Solow - Meeting Food(15.93)
 Check #1293 Mike Clerc - Newsletter.. (74.12)
 Check #1294 AWF - 8 Memberships (52.00)
 Deposit (memberships).....505.00
Ending Balance 03/31/04 \$6,343.23

PETTY CASH

Petty Cash Beginning Balance 223.08
 Raffles 115.00
 Dues 120.00
 Call Sales..... 9.75
 Deposit to Checking.....(380.00)
 Petty Cash Ending Balance..... 87.83
Total Cash 03/31/04..... \$6,431.06

INVENTORY

Crit'r Call Magnum.....3 ..@..... \$10.00
 Crit'r Call Standard23 ..@..... \$9.00
 Crit'r Call PeeWee.....16 ..@..... \$9.00
 Crit'r Call Reeds16 ..@..... \$1.50
 Crit'r Call Song Dog5 ..@..... \$18.00
 Tally-Ho.....55 ..@..... \$8.00
 Tally-Ho Reeds122 ..@..... \$1.50
 Tally-Ho Inserts248 ..@..... \$0.25
 T-Shirts24 ..@..... \$12.00
 WCCC T-Shirts.....54 ..@..... \$12.00
 APC Caps0 ..@..... \$15.00
 WCCC Caps49 ..@..... \$20.00
 Decals900 ..@..... \$1.00
Total Inventory \$3,506.00
Total Assets \$9,937.06
Total Liabilities..... (\$0.00)
Net Worth \$9,937.06

APC VIDEO LIBRARY

The following individuals have videos checked out:

4/10/03.. Clyde.....Turkeys - Antley
 4/10/03.. Clyde.....Turkeys - Fears
 9/11/03.. Ed Volk.....Calling All Coyotes
 11/13/03 Stan Schepers.....The Predators
 11/13/03 Russ Runyan. Turkey Magnificent Merriams
 1/8/04.... Frank Howard ..Truth#1 Predator Hunter
 3/11/04.. Alex Schepers Black Bear
 3/11/04.. William Klientz.....Callers of the Wild
 3/11/04.. John Frabota.....Reloading II

Jerry

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

by Mike Clerc, APC Membership

I would like to welcome new member Thomas Slaughter and thank renewing members Mike Burris, Ned Burris, Hank Gonzales, Larry Eichman and Mike Zaccardi.

The following memberships have expired:

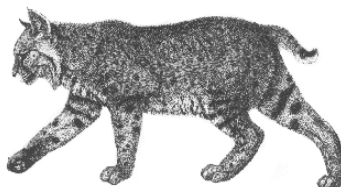
Name	Expires
Royce Bradsher	01-Apr-04
Jim Fuller	01-Apr-04
Ray Harris	01-Apr-04
David Kuhns	01-Apr-04
Russell Legg	01-Apr-04
Al Lind	01-Apr-04
Matt Nolan	01-Apr-04
Russ Runyan	01-Apr-04
Joshua Serdy	01-Apr-04
Dennis Slade	01-Apr-04
Herbert Stipe	01-Apr-04
Joe Talavera	01-Apr-04
James Waggoner	01-Apr-04
Mike Kannapel	01-May-04
Dusty Moasier	01-May-04
Stan Schepers	01-May-04
Jeff Serdy	01-May-04
Jerry Thorson	01-May-04

The following members will expire soon:

Name	Expires
David Bolette	01-Jul-04
Rick Cochran	01-Jul-04
Ralph Cortinas	01-Jul-04
Paul Hobel	01-Jul-04
Matt Miller	01-Jul-04

If you've let your membership with our club expire, please contact us, we would love to have you back! If you have any questions regarding your existing membership, please give me a call at (480) 890-7801 or you can e-mail me at membership@azpredatorcallers.com anytime.

Mike



PROGRAM REPORT

by Mike Kannapel, Program Director

This months meeting, on Thursday, April 8th will again feature Brian Wakeling from the *Arizona Game & Fish Department*, who will give a presentation on Arizona's turkey populations and how to effectively hunt them. If you were fortunate enough to have gotten a spring turkey tag this year or if you just want to know more about Arizona's turkey's, then this is a program you wont want to miss.

The meeting will be held in the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #9 at 1450 East Main Street. The FOP Lodge is on the North side of Main Street between Stapley and Gilbert road in Mesa. The meeting is free to APC members and students under 18, and \$5 for non-members. Refreshments and door prizes are included in the admission price. Hope to see you there, and bring a friend.

Mike

THE HUNT REPORT

by Stan Schepers, Hunts Co-Chair

Hello Everyone,

Antelope Eaters was a good time, they had a good turn out, with 139 teams. They raised the entry fee this year, but they also gave out more money & prizes. On Saturday, they raffled \$40-\$50 dollar bills, on Sunday they raffled \$40-\$50 dollar bills, a .22-250 rifle, a Fox-Pro caller, knives and many more smaller items.

In January, a friend of mine was archery hunting, when he found Coatimundi on the side of a mountain. He gave me some vague directions and I decided to go call the area and glass the mountain sides. It was a strange morning, it began when I turned off the hiway on to a dirt road, and there were four trucks behind me turning onto the same road. The road was already dusty from traffic, but not getting discouraged, I drove down the dirt road as everyone was passing me. I came up over a ridge and there was *Chandler Rod & Gun* with camp setup. I stopped and talked to them for a few minutes, they where having their *Jr. Javalina Hunt* check in. I was beginning to think that I'd picked

the wrong day and time, but not getting upset, I drove off looking for the location my friend had given me. I stopped and called a few locations where there were no pig hunters, but had no success. I was enjoying the morning, in this new area. I had never been here before and it looked real promising. Finally I think I'm in the area my friend had described to me, so I parked and started glassing the mountain side. I didn't see any wildlife, but off in the distance was a green belt going up this ridge into a canyon. I'm thinking, there must be a spring, I keep glassing for a while longer. . . no luck. So I decide to call the really green, thick area since I'd had no luck calling all morning. It was about 11:30 am and it was getting warm, so I shed some clothes, gathered up my gear and hiked about 250 yards to the mouth of the canyon. I found a nice mound with a tree and some bushes on it. I remember thinking how perfect it was with tree behind me, it completely hid me. The bushes in front of me were at waist height. Anyway I started hand calling real low, when I heard a rock roll behind me. I turned slowly and looked, but nothing was there. I started calling again and I hear something again, so I decided to turn the electronic caller on real low. I keep hearing things behind me, not bird sounds, but rock sounds. I'd been calling for about 25-30 minutes when I hear this sound behind me again, so I turned real slow and smooth, looking and studying each rock and bush, but nothing. I'm turning back real slow and smooth (I have a swivel seat so it is easy to turn slow and smooth), as I'm turning I spot a mountain lion peeking out from behind some bushes just 30 yards in front of me. Things



Hey baby, wanna ride in my truck?

change fast!! All this time I'm thinking fox, but this is a big beautiful cat and I really want to give this one a ride in my truck. I had already called a lion in during an archery elk hunt and watched

it leave. I wanted this one! The plan was not to move, my caller was about 6' in front of me, still on low and I felt if the lion would just step out a little closer, I would have the best chance and the best shot. I sat there not moving, staring at a spot on the ground where I wanted the lion to go for what seemed like an eternity, but was probably only about 30 seconds. Finally, the lion took four steps out into the clear to the spot I'd picked and BOOM!!! The lion dropped and flopped through the air and landed right in front of me. I'm thinking this is what it's all about, IT JUST DON'T GET NO BETTER THAN THIS!!! The lion was a 110 pound female, and yes, she got to ride in the back of my truck!!

Be Safe, Have Fun, Shoot to Kill!

Stan

HAVE A SAFE TRIP

by Larry Scribner, APC Member

The following story took place last September in Alaska, which has been my home for the last 37 years. I now spend my winters in Arizona and enjoy my membership in the *Arizona Predator Callers*.

It was the last day of our moose hunt. We had not seen any bulls, but did have a great time. With only a couple of miles to go to reach the highway, Bill Bowler and I were each rowing inflatable rafts down the Chistochina River. The river was unusually low, and there was ice along the shore. We were able to successfully negotiate the exposed boulders and occasional sweepers. Some of the channels were quite narrow with steep banks that interfered with rowing so we sometimes needed to use a long pole to push off the bank or brush piles.

As I surveyed the water downstream I saw the river make a "T" with the main current hitting a patch of willow trees straight on, then splitting left and right. I tried to row left, but an unrecognized current put me sideways against the brush pile. This kind of thing had happened many times before and all I should have to do is push off with the pole. Then in slow motion, the downstream side of the raft began to lift, the upstream side began to sink and water began pouring into the raft. Still in slow motion the raft began to turn upside down. I hung onto the rowing frame as I went head first into the water. The next

30 seconds were unclear. I bounced offrocks and logs, half expecting my life to flash before my eyes. I came up under the raft and decided I had to go back down and get out. (Bill told me later I had gone about 30 yards under the water). I was banging my back against the bottom so I tried to stand. I quickly found out that you can't walk if your hip boots are full of water.

Bill was rowing toward me, he also appeared to be in slow motion. He finally reached me, I couldn't climb in and he couldn't stop so I hung on until we reached shallow water and I crawled ashore. Safe at last - "Thank you Lord"! The current was still too swift, so Bill was forced to go another 40 yards downstream. It was then I discovered Bill was on the main bank and I was on an island. The current was too swift for him to drag the raft back upstream to get me. So, Bill quickly unloaded his raft and by a feat of supernatural strength drug his raft through a thick alder patch until he was upstream of me, then jumped in and with about four powerful strokes made it to the island. I got in and we both crossed to the mainland.

We spotted my raft in the middle of the river hung up on a stump. Bill rowed out with a long rope, but we couldn't pull it loose. He finally spotted where a tie down rope was tangled and cut it free.

By now I was pretty tired and I was shivering. Bill is a very experienced EMT and had been watching me for signs of hypothermia. He had already stuffed me with a couple of high energy bars. The wind was blowing and it was raining and snowing so we used a tarp to make a crude shelter and fired up the Coleman stove. Bill helped me change into dry pants, sox and slippers. Although wet above the waist my long raincoat held in the heat.

We agreed to continue in one raft since we didn't know what condition I was in. While Bill readied his raft I warmed up.

Soon after we started back down the river it was dark. Bill's headlamp didn't put out much light, so we sometimes entered the wrong channels, Bill would jump out, and again with unbelievable strength he dragged the raft, with me in it, upstream to the deeper channel. Bill was doing a lot of talking - I had to listen carefully to know if he was talking to me or to God.

We finally reached the bridge and amazingly we were in the correct channel. Next we jogged about a mile down the road to get my truck. It would not start. We then jogged over to Doyle and Norma Traw's place and at 10 pm knocked on their door. Norma answered, staring a bit in disbelief, and invited us in. Doyle and Bill went back to the truck and started it, then drove to the river and hauled back the raft. I stayed in the kitchen drinking hot water and catching up on what Norma's kids had been doing. As we headed to the truck, Bill said "I'm driving". I didn't argue or ask why. A few days later Doyle used Bill's GPS coordinates and was able to get his ATV to the scene and retrieve the equipment that was not lost in the river.

What lessons can be learned from this incident? In over 40 years of outdoor experience in hunting, fishing, trapping, dog mushing, boating and snowmobiling I have had truly wonderful experiences. But the wilderness can be harsh. I have also experienced plane crashes, tipping over canoes, breaking through the ice, and being charged by a grizzly. My worst experience was being knocked off a dog sled and spending the night on the snow with a broken rib and a ruptured spleen.

I'm not trying to scare anyone, but you need to know that accidents happen. Therefore I would like to provide you with six suggestions to keep you safer in the out of doors.

GUIDES TO SURVIVAL

1. Plan for "What if's" - Did you plan ahead for the worst case scenario? Boy Scouts feel so strongly about this that they made their motto "Be Prepared" .
2. Have a reliable companion. Know their strengths and weaknesses before venturing out. (If you choose to go solo you must know your limits and exercise superior judgment).
3. Leave a plan, so that if you have trouble, rescuers will know where to search. Make sure the person you leave this plan with knows when to start a search if you are overdue. Include destination, and possible alternatives, estimated time of return, equipment list, and number of days of food. You have the responsibility of sticking to the plan.

4. Do you have the outdoor skills and emotional stability to handle an emergency? Skills like fire building, compass use, first-aid and marksmanship can be learned. And in the process of obtaining skills you will develop confidence, which leads to emotional stability.
5. Study books and magazines as well as talking to experienced outdoor people on what survival equipment you need, and develop your own list.
6. Be physically fit. Why not get in shape and stay fit? Accidents can occur at any time.

Preparing yourself for survival situations can make you a skilled outdoor person, it could save your life, and it will allow you to more fully enjoy your experience in the field or forest, desert or water, hills or mountains.

Larry

FRIENDS OF THE NRA DINNER

by Gene Ries

East Valley Friends of NRA are hosting a dinner & auction on Saturday, April 24, 2004, from 6:00pm to 10:00pm at "The Other Place" Restaurant & Banquet room, located at 1644 S. Dobson Rd, just south of the 60 freeway.

Tickets are \$40.00 each, and include a new york steak & chicken marsala dinner.

Gene Ries will have tickets available at the April meeting, or call (480) 899-9793 or (480) 357-4057 for more information & tickets.

All proceeds benefit the NRA.

FUR TRADE ADVISORY

by Cindy Seff, Member

*** Fur Trade Advisory ***

A furbearer Management/Trapping survey has recently been circulated widely throughout the fur trade, by Jonathan Wright, a free-lance writer from Alberta, Canada, who claims to be a former trapper, and is researching to prepare an article/book on furbearer management, or mis-management. Please be advised that Mr. Wright's

research and subsequent publication could be very damaging to the trade. We have received information that proves he does not believe in trapping as an aspect of wildlife management, and is trying to find justification from the trade to perpetuate misunderstandings of management principles and practices, as they relate to trapping. Some of his previous publications have condemned trappers and those in the fur trade as living in the "dark ages".

I have been in contact with Mr. Wright, indicating the Institute's disapproval of his survey, and our concerns for any "simple" responses that he may receive from well intentioned individuals, to very complex questions. He has subsequently indicated to some people and organizations that the Fur Institute of Canada is in support of his work. While we support responsible, professional research and communication of the modern fur trade, we do not condone or support Mr. Wright's research.

Please do not complete this survey. Also, please send this advisory throughout your organizations to ensure that no one is fooled into providing justification to this persons work.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me directly. Thank you for your cooperation.

Regards,
 Robert B. Cahill
 Executive Director Fur Institute of Canada
 130 Slater St., Suite 605
 Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6E2
 (613) 231-7099
www.fur.ca

PETA, WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

by Mitch Tobin , ARIZONA DAILY STAR

CABEZA PRIETA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The Sonoran pronghorn, the world's second-fastest land animal, is running on empty.

Only about 25 of the endangered, antelope-like animals are left in the United States, all of them in southwest Arizona. In Mexico, fewer than 400 pronghorn remain around the growing tourist town of Rocky Point.

With pronghorn at the brink, land managers are being forced to limit grazing, public access and military training

across a vast swath of Sonoran Desert, where the drought has even killed the creosote.

Healthy pronghorn run effortlessly at 45 mph, thanks to an evolution in North America beside cheetahs and other now-extinct predators. But scientists say pronghorn's reliance on speed has also made them skittish and lousy jumpers. That's turned fences and roads into formidable obstacles in their increasingly busy habitat.

"The Sonoran pronghorn is one subspecies that's almost certainly doomed to extinction," said Rick Brusca, the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's executive program director.

The only hope, biologists and federal officials say, is to proceed with a risky, unproven strategy of transplanting pronghorn from Mexico, breeding them in an open-air enclosure, then setting them loose in a wilderness enhanced with added water and forage.

The situation is so dire that pronghorn sightings have forced the military to cancel or move one-third of its live-fire missions at the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range, home to 40 percent of the pronghorn's U.S. range and prime training grounds for the Davis-Monthan and Luke Air Force bases.

An Ajo rancher whose family settled in the area 124 years ago has seen his cattle booted.

And starting next Monday, dirt roads that access nearly 1 million acres of public land will be closed until July 15 to give newborn pronghorn and their mothers a better shot at survival. But the closures won't affect the backcountry's biggest source of traffic - drug smugglers, illegal border crossers and the Border Patrol agents who pursue them.

Many of the Sonoran pronghorn are expected to make it through the summer. But beyond that, scientists say, the creature's prospects are grim. Without an influx of new DNA, any population smaller than 50 will suffer inbreeding, be susceptible to disease and die out.

"It's now or never," said Professor Paul Krausman, an expert on large desert mammals at the University of Arizona. "If we weren't actively managing that population, they'd probably go by the wayside"

Other Subspecies Rebounded

The Sonoran subspecies - smallest of

the five types of pronghorn - were never as numerous as their relatives to the north, which probably numbered in the tens of millions and rivaled the buffalo herds before Anglo settlement of the West. Still, Sonoran pronghorn were spotted in every valley from Nogales to Yuma during a 1892-1894 survey of the border.

By the 20th century, unregulated hunting and habitat loss had reduced U.S. pronghorn to the tens of thousands. But in one of the great success stories of American conservation, the pronghorn rebounded, were transplanted across the West and are now populous enough that they're legally hunted from Montana to Arizona.

Sonoran pronghorn - first classified as a separate subspecies in 1945 - haven't had it so easy in a forbidding land with sparse food and water.

In the early 1990s, when scientific surveys began, about 250 Sonoran pronghorn were counted in Arizona. Then drought decimated a herd confined to a tenth of its historic range, with 80 percent of the U.S. population dying in a brutal dry spell in 2001 and 2002.

The Mexican herd is much larger, but experts say it is also vulnerable since Rocky Point is growing and land use is less regulated south of the border. That has raised fears the entire subspecies - not just the U.S. population - could disappear forever.

In Mexico, researchers have bred and transplanted peninsular pronghorn, an imperiled subspecies in Baja California that's also a desert dweller. But with the Sonoran pronghorn, only two of seven survived the first-ever transplant of the subspecies in January, the rest dying from capture-related stress.

Wildlife officials fired nets from helicopters to snag the animals 30 miles east of Rocky Point. The blindfolded pronghorn were given chilled intravenous fluids and a mild anti-anxiety drug, then placed in dark crates to calm them.

But ironically, the pronghorns' survival instinct - telling them to flee - was deadly. The hyperactive animals apparently overheated and produced too much lactic acid.

"There's an element of risk any time you handle an animal," said Jim deVos, chief of research for the Arizona Game and Fish Department

In a shift in tactics after the five ani-

mals died, officials used anesthesia, avoided the crates and immediately flew two pronghorn to Cabeza Prieta in the back of a helicopter.

Today, those two females are doing well in a 1-square-mile enclosure close to where author Edward Abbey is reputedly buried. They're protected from predators by a 7,000-volt electric fence, assisted by an irrigation system and monitored daily by humans on a nearby hill.

Built at a cost of nearly \$200,000 and watered by a \$90,000 well, the enclosure provides a haven where pronghorn can breed and produce offspring to replenish both the Mexican and U.S. herds.

Many of the measures being taken now were proposed years ago. But people involved in the recovery say opposition from some federal officials and environmentalists prevented them from being more proactive.

The *Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club* has only recently been able to build water holes for pronghorn in Cabeza Prieta's backcountry because opposition from environmentalists was so strong, said Jon Fugate, past president of the group.

One month ago, Fugate said, the group had to use shovels, be flown in by helicopter and couldn't even light a campfire because more than 90 percent of the refuge is federal wilderness.

After initial skepticism, environmentalists now support the water projects, forage enhancement and captive breeding because the situation is so bleak. "Forage enhancement in the middle of the desert for a desert-adapted animal is extremely heavy-handed and should be unnecessary," said Jenny Neeley of Defenders of Wildlife, which filed a spate of lawsuits against a dozen agencies over the pronghorn. "If these animals could get to the places where the water is, we wouldn't need that."

Tucson naturalist Bill Broyles, who has visited Cabeza Prieta more than 150 times, opposes a plan to improve artificial waters for bighorn sheep in nearby Sonoran Desert National Monument. But he said they're appropriate for pronghorn at Cabeza Prieta, as were the questions activists and government officials posed as the recovery effort was planned.

"There would be nothing worse," he

said, "than an agency that simply goes flying off to do something without considering all the options."

Animals Hemmed In

Scientists think pronghorn populations have always fluctuated with rainfall. Were the animals unable to cope with drought they would have died out long ago. But today's pronghorn navigate a tougher world. The nomadic creatures simply can't roam as far to find water or patches of desert turned green by spotty storms.

Sonoran pronghorn almost never cross highways. And while deer can jump a 6-foot fence while standing flat-footed, to a pronghorn "it's like the Great Wall of China," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist John Morgart, leader of the recovery team.

"Where they evolved over the millennia, they didn't have to jump. Running as fast as they can was their survival adaptation."

To the north, the Gila River used to be a refuge in dry times, but it has been sucked dry by farms and Phoenix. Pronghorn can't get there anyway since Interstate 8, the Union Pacific Railroad and the Wellton-Mohawk canal lie in between.

To the south, in Sonora, forage is often more abundant due to moisture rolling in from the Gulf of California. While the border's barbed-wire fence poses little challenge to smugglers and migrants coming north, pronghorn almost never cross into Mexico, where busy Highway 2 poses another obstacle.

To the west, the Yuma Desert is a natural barrier.

To the east, Arizona 85 is nearly impassable. For more than 30 years there were no confirmed records of pronghorn crossing the highway, which Tucsonans take to reach Rocky Point. But in the depths of the 2002 drought, two pronghorn gave it a shot; one died on the east side of the highway, the other eventually crossed back.

Grazing's Legacy

Many of the region's fences were put up to control cattle. Although ranching here is a shadow of its former self, Fish and Wildlife says it's the single greatest man-made threat to pronghorn, and it has therefore limited grazing around

Ajo.

Grazing "has resulted in a significant level of habitat degradation that will require many years to fully recover," the agency said in a 2001 biological opinion on the five allotments in pronghorn habitat, which cover 334 square miles.

One of the permit holders, Ajo rancher Jeff Cameron, 68, said the Sonoran pronghorn "ran me out of the cattle business." Cameron's grandfather passed through the area on his way to the California gold fields, then decided to move back in 1880.

In 1977, he said, pronghorn protections forced his cows off Cabeza Prieta. In recent years, he's been excluded from 67,234 acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management (news - web sites) and subject of a Defenders of Wildlife lawsuit. Cameron said he invested \$75,000 in new wells and other improvements in the late 1990s, only to be kicked off a few years later because of the pronghorn.

"It's a son of a gun when something's been in the family so long and to have this happen," he said. "I'm stuck right here, I'm broke and I can't move after investing all that money."

The BLM cut the number of cattle Cameron could graze because of drought, but the pronghorn are what has kept his cows off since 2003, said Don Charpio, assistant field manager for the BLM's Phoenix office.

"There are no rights here. It's a privilege to graze," he said. "It's a discretionary action to graze cattle. It's not discretionary to respond to an endangered species in jeopardy."

Cameron could still ranch, Charpio said, but the BLM would have to dismantle one fence and Cameron would need to build another - at a cost in six figures - to exclude cows from pronghorn habitat. A proposal now in Washington, D.C., would compensate the rancher for his improvements, but Charpio declined to discuss specifics.

Pronghorn vs. F-16s

One area where fences aren't a big problem is the 1.7-million-acre Goldwater range, considered the linchpin of Arizona's military-based economy. Goldwater's bomb craters and disturbed earth may actually attract pronghorn by creating puddles and helping forage grow, some biologists say.

After 53 years of bombing, one might expect Goldwater to be a wasteland, but impacts to the desert have been highly concentrated. The military estimates 84 percent of the range is "virtually pristine," with no grazing, farming, mining or home building there for decades.

From 2000 through 2002, pronghorn sightings forced the military to cancel 7 percent of its live-fire missions and move another 26 percent. Top Pentagon (news - web sites) officials and conservative commentators have seized on that as an example of how environmental rules compromise military readiness.

In response to a Defenders of Wildlife lawsuit the military has spent \$350,000 a year on pronghorn management, sending biologists to hilltops at dawn to scout for pronghorn. If spotters see an animal, no target practice is allowed within two miles and live-fire missions are banned within three miles.

"That's less-than-optimal training, but you get it done," said Col. Jim Uken, the range's top Air Force official.

There has never been a documented case of a pronghorn being injured or killed by Goldwater's operations. UA scientists have studied how pronghorn react to the noise and found they prefer quieter areas. But in three years, researchers recorded only six cases in which military activity caused pronghorn to move more than 30 feet. One of those was when an F-16 fighter spiraled into the desert.

Flood of Border Crossers

Pronghorn may also acclimate to cross-border traffic, which has skyrocketed in the past decade just as pronghorn habitat has suffered from severe drought.

Cabeza Prieta officials say pronghorn and border crossers prefer the same shady areas in summer and drink from the same artificial water sources. In the refuge's wilderness, where motorized travel is illegal, 150 vehicles come in from Mexico per year and "you can't walk a tenth of a mile without running into tire tracks," refuge biologist Curt McCasland said.

Since October, the Border Patrol has seized about 6,000 crossers in its Ajo station, which covers much of the pronghorn's range. In 1995, a mere 281 migrants were caught in the same time period, before enforcement in border cit-

ies shifted the human and narcotics traffic to remote areas.

Border Patrol spokesman Rob Daniels said the agency has devoted a "significant increase in staffing" to areas where pronghorn live, but he would not be more specific, citing national security concerns.

"We're using every instance of technology available to us," he said. "Everything from a larger volume of agents to larger numbers of . . . flights and overall patrols."

The changes have stunned U.S. Geological Survey (news - web sites) researcher Jim Malusa, who has spent the past four years backpacking across the area to complete a detailed map of vegetation available to pronghorn.

"Back in the 1980s, I walked across the entire refuge," he said. "I spent six days and saw not a person, not a light, nothing. Now there's tracks everywhere, the Border Patrol pursuing people, choppers. It's turned into a very busy place."

No one has scientifically studied how border traffic affects pronghorn, but Malusa and others suspect it's taking a toll.

"To kill a pronghorn, you don't have to run over it or a coyote doesn't have to eat it. All they have to do is frighten it - they live that close to the edge of survival," Malusa said.

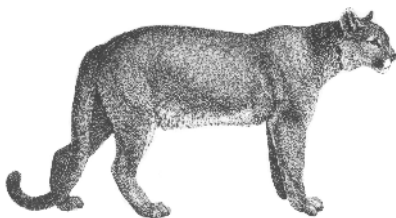
Sonoran Pronghorn Population in the U.S.

While several hundred Sonoran pronghorn live in Mexico, herds in this country have dwindled due to human settlement and a brutal drought.

Date Estimate

- Dec. 1992 179
- March 1994 282
- Dec. 1996 130
- Dec. 1998 142
- Dec. 2000 99
- Dec. 2002 21
- Now 25

SOURCE: US Fish and Wildlife Service



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