



AZGFD Game Species Conservation

GAME TRAILS

Band-tailed Pigeon Project

A long-term demographic and movement study of band-tailed pigeons began in New Mexico in 2013 because of a declining trend in the “Four Corners” population models and the lack of current data. Colorado joined the project by capturing and marking birds in 2014.



In June 2015, the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Game and Wildlife Contracts branches teamed up on the multi-state band-tailed pigeon project. Johnathan O’Dell (Game Branch) and Mike Cross (Wildlife Contracts Branch) spent four weeks from June 8 through July 2 trapping pigeons in Pinetop at three locations. Each bird was fitted with a leg band and a PIT tag was inserted into the nape of the neck. Radio frequency readers deployed at each trap site will



collect data from the PIT tags of returning pigeons. Some of the most important information we hope to learn is adult survival rates and movement patterns.

Also of interest is the most effective trapping method used. Capture attempts were made at each location using the typical walk-in, one-way door traps and the bungee-driven “Whoosh” net, but both

had drawbacks. Instead, the simple yet proven A.C.M.E. trap (a box suspended by a stick with a string attached) captured the most birds. Relying on their combined years of observations of this trap in use by expert “Wile E. Coyote,” Mike and Johnathan captured 65 pigeons with this method as compared to the 15 pigeons captured with the other two methods.

By Johnathan O’Dell
Small Game Biologist

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George Andrejko

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Bighorn Sheep Return to South Fork



Over the past year, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has been aggressively attempting to restore bighorn sheep along the main stem of the Little Colorado River, just downstream from Greer, Arizona. Historically, bighorn sheep occupied this drainage, but they disappeared around the turn of the last century. Recent changes that created this opportunity include the conversion of a nearby domestic sheep grazing allotment to a cattle allotment, and the Wallow Fire, which cleared much of the overstory and opened up the canyons and rocky cliffs.

So far, 48 bighorn have been released into the area: 26 ewes, 14 lambs, and 8 rams. The bighorn were captured using drop nets, a capture pen, and dart guns and many were fitted with GPS tracking collars so their movements can be monitored on a daily basis. The Department is taking advantage of the abundance of bighorn sheep that occupy the Morenci Mine run by Freeport McMoRan, Inc. and using them as the source for this reintroduction. The bighorn that occupy the mine have become almost a nuisance and are frequent

victims to vehicle collisions along U.S. Highway 191; more than 200 bighorn have been killed in vehicle collisions in the past 12 years.

We are already seeing productivity in this new herd. During the spring 2015, 6 new lambs were observed with ewes that were released in 2014. Visitors to the White Mountains are already taking advantage of this new wildlife viewing opportunity.

By Rick Langley
Region 1 Game Specialist



Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Initiative

Game animals are presumed by many to always be abundant. Even though they may have a high reproductive potential, they can be limited by the amount and quality of the habitat they require. Long-term drought and unchecked plant succession has reduced that potential for mule deer and quail in Arizona. If we want to see large populations again, we need to improve their habitat. This is where the Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Initiative (WHEI) comes in. Starting July 2014, \$1 million of Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds were made available to the Game Program for enhancing habitat. We chose to focus on mule deer and quail due to their historic high numbers and importance to Arizona hunters. We limited our mule deer habitat improvement efforts to Units 16A and 21. These units historically had large mule deer populations that have declined in recent years. We focused our quail habitat improvement efforts on scaled quail in Units 28, 31 and 32 because the habitat they require has been degraded the most.

The effort it took to implement this initiative was herculean. The regional teams that took this on worked fast to develop and implement projects. Thanks to their hard work, we were able to complete many good habitat projects and conduct clearances that would lay the groundwork for future treatments. The treatments were diverse and included private, municipal and federal partners. They included burning and mechanical removal of encroaching tree and shrub species and installing water developments. We used some of the funds to gain clearances required for current and future habitat work; see the table (right) for projects.

I want to thank all the cooperators for their hard work on this initiative and look forward to its continued success. Next year we hope to spend \$1.4 million, a mix of PR and Game and Fish funds.

By Anis Aoude
Small Game Management Supervisor



Project Cooperator	Region/Unit	Agreement	Treatment
Yellow Pine Cattle Company (Phase 1)	R3/16A	Stewardship	Water project
Cane Springs Ranch (Phase 1)	R3/16A	Stewardship	Water project
Francis Creek Ranch BLM Allotments (Phase 1)	R3/16A	Stewardship	Water project
Mohave County Development Services (Phase 1)	R3/16A	Cooperative	Water project
Bureau of Land Management (Phase 1)	R3/16A	Collection	Prescribed burn
Willow Springs Windmill	R6/21	Stewardship	Water project
Logan Simpson Design	R6/21	Contract	Cultural Clearance
Summit Forests, Inc.	R6/21	Contract	Mechanical shrub and tree removal
M D Merrett	R6/21	Contract	Cultural Clearance
Robert Winders Contracting, Inc.	R6/21	Contract	Mechanical shrub and tree removal
Paleowest	R5/31-32	Contract	Cultural Clearance
Logan Simpson Design	R5/31-32	Contract	Cultural Clearance



The Landowner Compact

The Landowner Compact is the newest tool we have for working with landowners to ensure public access to hunt and view wildlife on private lands in Arizona. The Compact is a program that landowners voluntarily agree to enter. The landowner and the Department agree to a set of "Ranch Rules" that are intended to improve the behavior of people recreating on private land, while also recognizing the important contributions that ranchers make toward the management of wildlife habitat and populations. The benefit to our hunters is ensured access to critical areas of the state that are private land or landlocked public lands. This is significant because roads that cross private lands create a situation where access to about 60% of the state could be denied if

every private landowner closed their property to hunters. Landowners benefit by designating our Department staff as one of their agents to help enforce the "Ranch Rules", which helps keep the small percentage of people causing problems off their ranch. An example of the

success of this program is that a 10-year-old girl on her first pronghorn hunt was able to hunt on a ranch that had been closed for decades. The picture below tells the rest of the story.

By Al Eiden
Acting Game Branch Chief



AGFD LRP
Private Property, Access is Granted But Can Be Revoked
AGFD LANDOWNER RELATIONS PROGRAM RANCH

OUR PARTNERS
We build partnerships in order to benefit wildlife. These are just some of our partners.

ABOUT
The Arizona Game and Fish Department's Landowner Relations Program (LRP)

What is AGFD's Landowner Relations Program?

North Ranch (in blue)

South Ranch (in blue)

Log in to <http://azaccessmap.com/beta>, then click on the map image above to be taken to an online map of the ranch (you must be logged in first in order to zoom into the correct ranch).

Ranch Rules

- All recreational users must sign in at a designation access point and display an access pass available at the sign-in point, or complete the form below, and save or print the generated access pass.
- If an individual loses access privileges on a ranch within the Department's Landowner Compact, that individual is not allowed access to O'Haco Cattle Company property.

Respected access is open access.

To help facilitate the Landowner Compact and recognize the significant efforts of our landowner partners, a new website has been developed. To learn more about the Compact visit <http://agfdlandownerrelations.com/ranch-compact-overview/>



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Events and Activities – this quarter:

Region 1

- Oct. 2-4: Unit 1 Squirrel Camp. Learn about hunting squirrels for beginners. Registration: www.youthoutdoorsunlimited.com
- Oct. 8-11: Unit 1/2C Youth Elk & Squirrel Camp. Learn about hunting elk and squirrel for beginners. Register: www.youthoutdoorsunlimited.com

Region 2

- September 23-25: Kanab Creek bighorn sheep disease testing
- September: Elk Sightability Research project that examines new methods for conducting population surveys
- November 3-6: Potential translocation of bighorn sheep to Kanab Creek
- December: Conducting a study to determine the effects of fall harvest of turkeys

Region 3

- September 28-30: Bighorn sheep captured for disease testing to determine the health of populations
- October: Bighorn sheep surveys will be conducted to determine the status of populations
- November 3-6: Bighorn sheep capture in Unit 15D will be conducted for management of sheep populations
- December: Deer and javelina surveys will be conducted to determine the status of populations

Region 4

- September 5: Youth Dove Hunt
- October 16-18: Quail Camp
- October 15-November 4: Bighorn sheep surveys

- November 17-19: Potential bighorn sheep capture
- November 20-22: Unit 42 Deer Camp
- December 11-13: Cibola Waterfowl Camp
- December 10-13: Sonoran pronghorn capture and release on the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge

Region 5

- October 3-4: Quail check stations
- November: Potential bighorn sheep capture and release to supplement the Catalina bighorn sheep population
- November 5-8: Women's coues whitetailed deer mentored hunt in Unit 33
- November 20-22: Youth Deer Hunt Camp and mentored hunt in Unit 36A

Region 6

- September 5-6: Mentored youth dove hunt at Robbins Butte Wildlife Area south of Buckeye. Registration required: www.youthoutdoorsunlimited.com
- September 9: CJ Biller's First Time Dove Hunt. Registration required: www.youthoutdoorsunlimited.com
- September 26: Bighorn sheep hunt clinic, hosted by Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society
- October 2-4: Outdoor Skills Camp at the Sharp Creek Campground in Payson Area. Contact Henry Apfel at (480) 639-9994 or hapfel@azgfd.gov
- October: Unit 21 Bloody Basin Youth Deer Camp (Unit 20B/21) hosted by Mule Deer Foundation. Contact Terry Herndon at (623) 696-5579 or therndon@muledeer.org

For more information about any of these articles, visit www.azgfd.gov or email azgamebranch@azgfd.gov.

Arizona Game and Fish Department Mission

To conserve Arizona's diverse wildlife resources and manage for safe, compatible outdoor recreation opportunities for current and future generations.

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