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## Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

December 31, 2015 – January 13, 2016

### **BRIEFING**

The following is a summary of bighorn sheep reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest from December 31, 2015 – January 13, 2016.

### **BIGHORN SHEEP COLLARS**

All but two of the collars on bighorn sheep released in 2013 have dropped off, so these events decreased the number of collared sheep by nine.

### **LAMBING SEASON**

The first lamb observed this season was seen on January 10 jumping from rock to rock on somewhat unsteady young legs, attempting to nurse from two ewes. The mother was captured in the Tonto National Forest in 2014.



*The first lamb  
observed in 2016  
is shown here  
with its mother  
and another ewe.  
Photo by Brett  
Blum/U of A*

We are currently within the lambing season for bighorn sheep, and many of the ewes may be in the later stages of pregnancy. Ewes with new lambs are particularly sensitive to disturbance, and recreationists are being asked to help minimize human-caused disturbance by adhering to the trail restrictions within the Pusch Ridge Wilderness Bighorn Sheep Management Area. From January 1 through April 30, travel more than 400 feet off designated Forest Service trails is prohibited. Dogs are prohibited year-round.

## **MORTALITIES**

On January 6, the GPS component of the collar on Ewe #39553 sent a mortality signal indicating the bighorn sheep had died on January 5 just northeast of Biosphere 2. This ewe from the 2015 release had been in the vicinity of the Biosphere since the beginning of December. On January 11, the mortality was investigated and determined to be a result of lion predation. This predation event occurred outside of the project's designated area for administrative mountain lion removals, so no attempt was made to locate the lion responsible for the kill. Ewe #39553 was captured in the Middle Mountains in 2015.

The GPS component of the collar on Ewe #39551 sent a mortality signal indicating this animal died on January 7. On January 9, her carcass was located, and the cause of death was not determined; however, predation was ruled out. No necropsy was performed due to a lack of staff time. Ewe #39551 was captured in the Imperial Hills in 2015.

On January 8, the GPS component of the collar on Ewe #39543 sent a mortality signal indicating the bighorn sheep had died earlier that day. On the evening of January 9, field personnel confirmed the mortality was the result of lion predation, likely two or three lions. On January 10, pursuit of the lions responsible for this predation event was initiated, but efforts were unsuccessful. Ewe #39543 was captured in the Imperial Hills in 2015.

## **CURRENT POPULATION STATUS**

As of January 13, 2016, 45 collared sheep are known to be alive.

## **LINKS**

For project background and previously-reported information on project events, including photos and videos, as well as meeting notes and minutes please visit [www.azgfd.gov](http://www.azgfd.gov) and click on "Wildlife", then "Catalina Bighorn Sheep" under the heading "Additional Wildlife Information".

Additional project information can be obtained by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/CatalinaBighorns](https://www.facebook.com/CatalinaBighorns), the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society webpage at [www.adbss.org](http://www.adbss.org), or by visiting the Catalina Bighorn Advisory Committee webpage at [www.catalinabighornrestoration.org](http://www.catalinabighornrestoration.org). This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose.

## **TO SUBSCRIBE**

If you would like to receive project updates as they are published please send your email address to [ldesouza@azgfd.gov](mailto:ldesouza@azgfd.gov).

## **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

The next written briefing will be provided on January 29, 2016.

**CONTACT**

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