



Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

February 26 through March 11, 2015

BRIEFING

The following is a summary of Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest. This project status update covers the period from February 26 through March 11, 2015.

LAMBS

Fifteenth Lamb of the Year Observed!

On March 6, 2015, an Arizona Game and Fish Department research biologist confirmed the 15th lamb born this season. The ewe, captured in the Plomosa Mountains in November 2014, and her newborn lamb were observed from a long distance using optics to minimize disturbance.



Ewe with her lamb (left); the 15th confirmed lamb this year. The same lamb on a rock outcropping (below).



Prior to that, one research biologist had observed 4 lambs, 3 of which were previously undocumented, with a group of ewes on March 3, 2015. This brought the total to 14 lambs observed this year. The band of 10 ewes were a mix of sheep from the Plomosa and Tonto Mountains from both the 2013 and 2014 releases.

LAMBS (cont.)

The bighorn sheep lambing season can last for several months, often occurring from December through April. The welcomed additions are encouraging for the future of the herd; however, they are not a guarantee that the population will increase proportionately as lamb survivorship is typically low. It is important to remember that the success of reintroduction efforts are generally determined over several years and that our most seasoned sheep have only been on the ground in the Santa Catalina Mountains for a year and a half. The continued observation of new born lambs is a good reminder for hikers and recreationists to stay on designated trails, maintain a good distance away from sheep, and to never take dogs into the Bighorn Sheep Management Area. The addition of lambs is critical to the establishment of the herd and their survival could be jeopardized by human-caused disturbance.

MORTALITIES

There were no known mortalities of collared sheep during this reporting period.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of March 11, 2015, 40 collared sheep are known to be alive.

RESEARCH FIELD NOTES

Research biologists have been busy this winter conducting habitat measurements in the Santa Catalina Mountains. Twenty volunteers are also assisting with these measurements, and together, they have visited about 200 sampling sites so far. These habitat measurements will be used to determine which factors influence habitat selection by bighorn sheep, as well as which factors may influence the risk of mortality for bighorn sheep. As noted above, research biologists have also been observing sheep via binoculars and spotting scopes to record group size and document the number of lambs born during this lambing period. These observations will be used to help determine how group size influences risk of mortality in bighorn sheep and will also be used to inform demographic models of the Santa Catalina bighorn sheep population.

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/catalinabighorn.

Additional project information can be obtained by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CatalinaBighorns, the Arizona Game and Fish Department webpage at www.azgfd.gov/catalinabighorn, the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society webpage at www.adbss.org or by visiting the Catalina Bighorn Advisory Committee webpage at 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 jsacco@azgfd.gov.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

The next written briefing will be provided on March 27, 2015.

CONTACT

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