

Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

March 10 – 23, 2016

BRIEFING

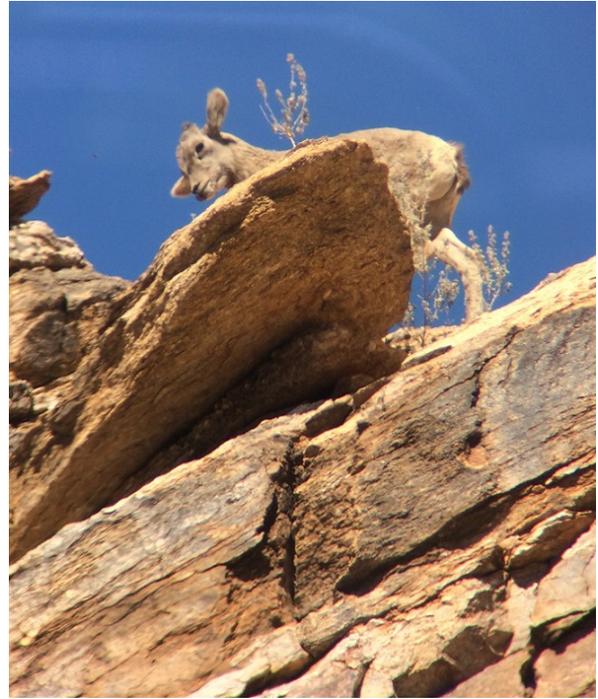
The following is a summary of bighorn sheep reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest from March 10 through 23, 2016.

LAMBING SEASON

On March 10, research biologists confirmed the twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second lambs observed this season. One lamb was born to a ewe captured in the Trigo Mountains in 2013, and two lambs were born to ewes captured from the Tonto National Forest in 2014.



On March 10, three previously undetected lambs were observed by research biologists. This ewe was released into the Santa Catalinas in 2014. Photo by Andrew Jones/AZGFD.



On March 10, three previously undetected lambs were observed by research biologists. The ewe in the photo on the left was released into the Santa Catalinas in 2013. Her lamb is also seen navigating boulders in the photo on the right.

Photo by Andrew Jones/AZGFD.



On March 10, three previously undetected lambs were observed by research biologists. This ewe was also released into the Santa Catalinas in 2014.

Photo by Andrew Jones/AZGFD.

The lamb shown here behind its mother on the boulder was first observed in February, but was seen again on March 10. Photo by Andrew Jones/AZGFD.



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 March 17, the GPS collar for Ewe #37454 sent a mortality alert. Discovery of the carcass on March 18 revealed the cause of death to be mountain lion predation. Although the sheep had been recently killed, the carcass was largely consumed, indicating that more than one lion had fed upon it. Pursuit of the lions responsible for the death of this ewe resulted in the removal of one subadult mountain lion on March 18. An adult female and a second subadult mountain lion were subsequently pursued, but the pursuit was unsuccessful. The last mountain lion removal occurred just over two years ago, and this was the fourth lion removed as part of this bighorn sheep reintroduction effort.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of March 23, 2016, 43 collared sheep are known to be alive. There could be as many as 46 uncollared sheep in this population as well, bringing the total potential population to 89 bighorn sheep. Uncollared bighorn sheep include those released without collars, those from the 2013 release whose collars have dropped off, and those born in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

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 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, 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 ldesouza@azgfd.gov.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

We will be moving from a bi-weekly to a monthly update, which will be issued on the last Friday of each month. The next written briefing will be provided on April 29, 2016.

CONTACT

Mark Hart is the Public Information Officer for this project and can be reached at (520) 628-5376.