

# PRONGHORN

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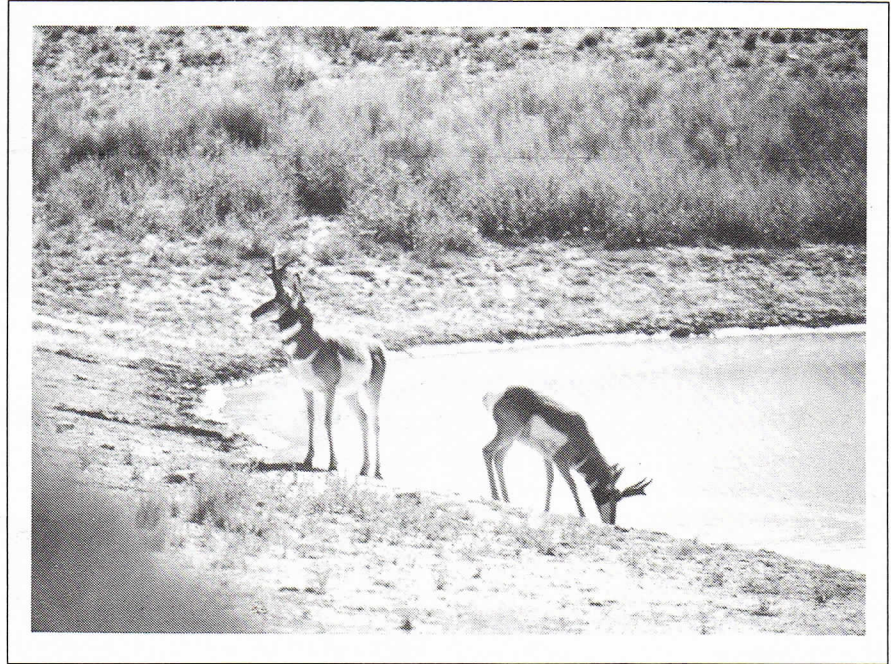
## "CANYON AREA ANTELOPE"

by Bob Birkeland  
Region II Wildlife Manager

Arizona Game Management Unit 9 includes approximately 675,400 acres in north-central Arizona on the Coconino Plateau. The boundaries run from Valle on the south (HWY 64) to the Grand Canyon National Park on the north, and from the Navajo Indian Reservation on the east to Cataract Canyon on the west. It shares borders with Units 7 and 10. The land ownership is distributed as follows: Kaibab National Forest 48%, Arizona State Land 28.6%, private land 23%, and the Bureau of Land Management owns less than 1%.

The elevation ranges from about 5500 to 7500 feet above sea level. Major vegetation types include ponderosa pine, pine-oak, pinon-juniper woodland, plains and desert grasslands, and sagebrush communities. Although antelope can be found in all these vegetation types, the highest concentrations are found in the plains and desert grassland areas and the more open pinon-juniper woodland habitats.

The antelope population currently numbers about 350 animals. Unit 9 records indicate that the population has been stable for many years. The 1993 surveys produced some promising figures with a buck:doe ratio of 33:100, and a fawn:doe ratio of 41:100. These numbers, especially the fawn:doe ratio, are significantly higher



*Photo courtesy of Arizona Game and Fish Department*

than numbers from the past which averaged around the mid to low 20's. This year, most of the bigger groups and older age class bucks were found on the west side of the unit.

In 1993, Unit 9 had 40 general firearms permits. This number has fluctuated between 40 and 50 for many years. The hunter success for the previous five years has averaged about 59%. Unit 9 may be known for its trophy elk, however there are many trophy quality pronghorn bucks available also.

What do we look at, and how can we improve the Unit 9 antelope population? HABITAT is the key. Food,

cover, water, and space are all components of the habitat that must be examined in order to formulate a plan and try to improve problem areas.

At first glance, the unit appears to have lots of accessible land, but there are some problems. The checkerboard land patterns between State and private lands can pose problems for all wildlife. Antelope are especially vulnerable to the obstacles created when man moves into their habitat. Along with man's developments come fences, roads, and increases in recreational use, which all affect antelope distribution. This also causes fragmentation of

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*AAF work project in Unit 5A*

*(photo courtesy of Jim McCasland)*

**NOTE!**

**Charter Memberships in the  
Arizona Antelope Foundation  
will no longer be available  
after December, 1993**

*With the holiday season upon us, purchase  
one for a family member or friend before the  
opportunity is gone.*



## "PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE"

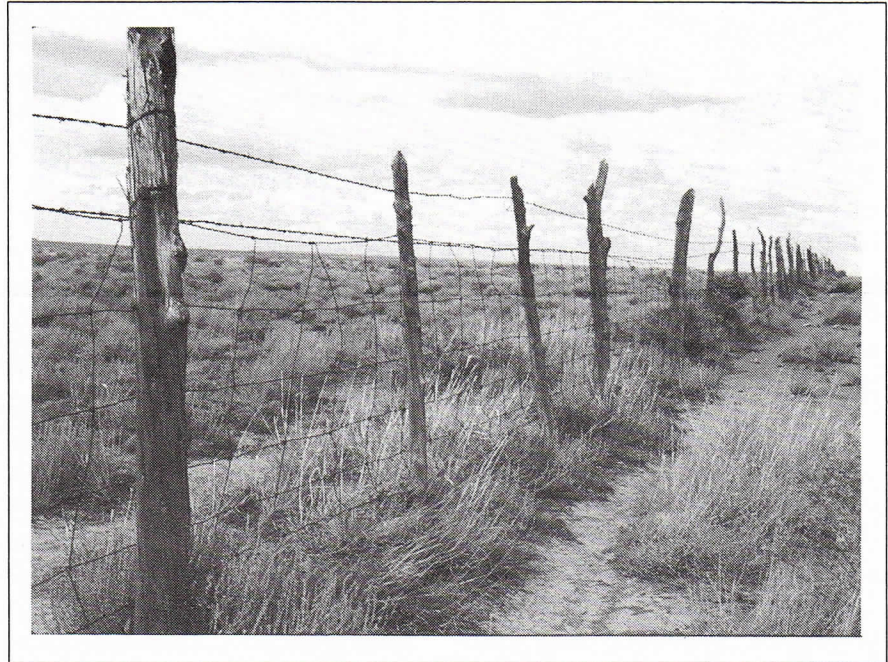
*To all AAF members and supporters,*

Looking back over 1993, the Foundation's membership can take pride in what we have started. We have come together over 200 strong to become a voice for Arizona's antelope.

1993 saw our first two projects take place in Units 17A and 5A. Both of these projects were fence modifications. In 17A we removed barbed wire, replaced it with smooth wire, and brought it up to wildlife specifications. In 5A we removed hog wire and replaced it with an electric fence. The latter project will allow antelope to move freely anywhere along the fence line. We certainly hope to see a lot more of this type of project in the future.

In August, we held our first antelope clinic. I am sure this will become an annual event for our organization. Approximately 250 attendees saw one of the finest collections of trophy antelope ever assembled. The feedback from those attending was very positive. We are planning to expand and improve the clinic in 1994, and would welcome your participation and suggestions.

Money is a key element in any organization's success, and fund-raising will continue to be an important part of the Foundation's direction. The first step toward raising funds for 1994 project work was the granting of two special antelope permits to the AAF by the Arizona Game & Fish Commission. Hopefully we'll be able to surpass last year's total of \$25,000 raised by the auction of these



*Hog wire fence to be removed in Unit 5A (photo courtesy of Jim McCasland)*

two permits. In the future we will notify you as to how and when these permits will be marketed.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this message, we can take pride in what we have started. We must use this first year's success as a springboard for the future. We must continue to improve our organizational skills, our landowner and agency relations, fund-raising capabilities, and, most importantly, continue to bring new members into the Foundation. Members who want to be involved at all levels and members from throughout the entire state.

The AAF Board of Directors needs to have representation from all areas of

the state. We want individuals who are tuned in to what is happening with antelope in their area, and who are willing to become involved. Please, if you are interested in spending some time investing in Arizona's wildlife future, think about serving on the AAF Board.

Thanks to all of our first-year members for your support, and your willingness to take a chance on a new, but very much needed, organization.

*Pete Cimellaro, President  
Arizona Antelope Foundation*



## "CANYON AREA ANTELOPE"

*(continued from page 1)*

herds, which can affect all wildlife, but, again, antelope are more handicapped by these problems.

Another problem that affects antelope distribution is livestock fencing. Fences are necessary for livestock management, however some fences are difficult for antelope to cross. There are still some old net wire sheep fences remaining in Unit 9, and some additional fencing that is much too low to the ground for antelope to maneuver under. Luckily, these exist only in some isolated areas.

Water, or lack thereof, is a problem that always comes up when discussing pronghorn management. Unit 9 is no different. Lack of permanent water is a problem. At first glance, in some areas there appears to be good water distribution. However, these water tanks are shallow and permeable, and don't hold water much of the year.

This past year is a good example of how quickly water disappears in Unit 9. Good snowfall, coupled with above average rains, provided plenty of moisture to fill most tanks. However, by June, most were dry or close to it. This past summer was dry and our July surveys showed most antelope were within a mile of a permanent water source. Additional permanent water sources would greatly benefit the antelope, especially during fawning season.

Range conditions can affect antelope in a number of ways. Good cover around watering areas is important during fawning time. The presence of nutritious foods are also important to pregnant does, especially during their third trimester when their energy requirements are much higher than normal. Therefore, a variety of perennial forbs, grasses, and shrubs with a good spring "green-up" are essential elements of good range conditions, all of

which will help increase fawn survival. Hiding cover from predators is essential when antelope begin to drop their fawns in April and May. Improper grazing methods or overgrazing coupled with lack of permanent waters create poor spring range conditions. This usually results in very low fawn survival.

The Unit 9 pronghorn population appears to be in good condition. There are some range improvements that could be implemented which may increase and better distribute the population. Coordination with ranchers and their grazing methods is a good place to start.

Installation of permanent waters would help in a couple of ways. One, it would better distribute antelope and their predators. Two, antelope does during fawning season would not have to drop their fawns near the tanks that have had heavy grazing pressure resulting in lack of cover.

Changing the sheep fences and fence lines that are too low to ones which are more "wildlife friendly" would aid pronghorn movement.

Opening up dense juniper woodlands with some prescribed fuelwood or commercial cuts is another range improvement that may benefit antelope. Prescribed burning in some areas may decrease the abundance of undesirable plant species, promoting more palatable ones.

Predator control, a touchy subject, is an effective tool in antelope management that can boost fawn survival when needed. Problems are being identified so that land management agencies, livestock operators, conservation groups, sportsmen, and the Game & Fish Department can all work together to improve antelope habitat for the future.



*Photo courtesy of George Welsh*



# "AAF MEMBER ENJOYS UNIT 10 SUCCESS"

by Don Johnson

Harry Hussey's 16-year string of those dreaded pink rejection notices was finally over this year when he drew one of Arizona's coveted Unit 10 antelope permits. Although his persistence was finally rewarded, Harry had to do some serious negotiating with his wife to justify missing his 40th wedding anniversary, which fell on opening weekend of the hunt.

Preseason scouting by Harry's son, David, resulted in the location of a very nice trophy buck. David preceded Harry to the hunt area on Wednesday to set up their camp and keep an eye on "Harry's" buck, watching him until dark on the night before the hunt. Meanwhile, Harry and friends, Jim Marquardt and Don Johnson, were putting the finishing touches on their camp and getting ready for opening day.

Memories of the previous night's campfire and dinner were blurred when alarm clocks began ringing at 4:15 a.m. After a quick breakfast, the party was on their way for a short drive to the starting point for the hunt. Moon and stars were still evident as we climbed a cedar ridge to relocate the buck and his does where they were the previous evening. Four pairs of binoculars scanned the valley below as the first hint of daylight appeared. They should be right THERE . . . but they're gone! Where are they?

We worked along the ridge to the west, glassing as we traveled. And, then further west, and then south, and



*AAF Charter members Harry and David Hussey with Harry's record book antelope.*

then east, and so on until well into the day. At last we found the herd, two valleys away from where they were supposed to be. Don't they know they are supposed to stay where you leave them at night?

After a long and patient approach, we were in position to make the final stalk. Harry and David crawled carefully into position undetected by the bedded buck. After another hour's wait, the buck was on his feet moving

about with his does. When he moved into a clear position in the cedars, Harry was ready and took him with one well-placed shot. When the buck went down, a shout came from the hill above, "Nice shot, Harry!!"

The buck was heavy and mature with 17" horns and bases of over 7". As a trophy, Harry's buck will score over 86 B & C points, but the real thrill of this hunt was in the stalk and expert shot.