



PRONGHORN

Official Publication of the Arizona Antelope Foundation, Inc., a Non-Profit, Tax-Exempt Corporation ~ Volume 11, Number 1, Winter 2005

FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE...



HOPE FOR THE SONORAN PRONGHORN!

Much has been written about what happened to this endangered subspecies over the last few years, particularly the U.S. population in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. From a high of a couple hundred animals, to a low of a couple dozen. Well the tide is turning on a few fronts!

You can follow the Game & Fish reports on a monthly basis on the “Facts & Research” page on our website, www.azantelope.org. We have also been sharing this information as it comes in quarterly in the *Pronghorn*. See page 6 for the latest news!

Aerial surveys are showing a population of 58 animals north of the border in the Cabeza, and a seemingly healthy herd of 625 animals south of the border in Mexico. There also remains one other herd to survey. So from a population standpoint, there remains some good diversity.

The pronghorn enclosure is performing well, and although breached by illegals a couple weeks ago, the damage was found quickly enough to ensure no problems. This predator free enclosure contains 7 animals, and the 6 does should be fawning in a few weeks! We'll keep you posted on the nursery!

The entire Cabeza is green from rain; some say the greenest in 30 years! While that is fantastic, Herculean efforts continue to provide forage plots and reliable water sources to ensure the pronghorn don't starve again as they did a couple years ago. You can read about some of the efforts underway in our latest project report on page 8.

Stay tuned for what should be more good news in the months to come!

... AND REFLECTIONS OF THE PAST

What was it like on the Arizona & Mexican Grasslands 50, 60 and 70+ years ago? While there are a few AAF members that may remember these times (and some that may have witnessed them) most of us can only read about them if we can find an article, or hear the stories, if we can find someone who was lived during those times. Through the *Pronghorn*, we are going to take a step back over the next few issues and reprint a number of old *Outdoor Life* articles telling us of a different time, and different places. While some of the places will be familiar, the circumstances and conditions will be different from today!

We have secured permission from *Outdoor Life* magazine to reprint several old articles from the likes of Jack O'Connor, Charles Askin, J.D. Bean, and H.M. McGuire. Our own Past President and Director David Brown, has written a forward to each of the articles too.

We hope you enjoy this series of stories from the past!

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VISIT US ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

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MEETINGS

Board meetings are held at 6:30 P.M on the 2nd Monday of each month at the Phoenix Zoo.

Visitors welcome!



Pronghorn is a quarterly newsletter for the members of AAF. Letters, comments, news items, articles, pictures and stories are all welcome and will be considered for publication. Address all such items to:

Jim Unmacht, at Pronghorn Editor, PO Drawer 15501, Phoenix, AZ 85060, or by email at azantelope@cox.net.

Photos in this issue are compliments of AZ Game & Fish and Jim Unmacht.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2004...what a year!

The 4th quarter of last year saw us extremely busy once again. We had a successful project in October, and tried to stay abreast of a number of important issues critical to sportsmen. These matters had us at numerous public hearings, Commission Meetings and WCC meetings. Montoya follow up dominated many, but other issues included State Trust Land reform, private parties closing access to public land, OHV legislation, and increased fees for licenses and tags. You can follow some of these developments on our website and via our Action Alerts.



With another year in the history books, the AAF can be very proud of what we undertook and accomplished! We successfully worked on 4 projects, making a difference on pronghorn habitat, access and water. From Bloody Basin to Anderson Mesa, and Basin Lake to the Babocomori, several miles of fence were altered, acres of junipers were cut, and access to water was eased.

Our Special Tag fund projects also resulted in the distribution of almost \$100,000 in money for habitat improvement. We broke records again with the auctioning of the two pronghorn tags at the ADBSS and AES banquets, providing \$126,500 for the next round of HPC projects.

You've already heard about the success of our "First Ever" Fundraising Banquet, but the final tally is in! Our net proceeds were \$66,218.76. This "shot in the treasury" has taken the AAF to a new level! We are now in a position to ensure the future. The Board has voted to allocate 35% of banquet proceeds to a permanent restricted fund, 15% to our general fund, and 50% divided amongst project funds, special projects, equipment needs etc.

You'll read about a number of the other issues in the following pages...

2005...what's in store?

Our work project slate has filled up fast, and we are likely going to have to turn down (or at least postpone) some requests. In the first quarter, we're off to the Cabeza on January 22nd and Buenos Aries March 12th. In the second quarter we're headed to Bloody Basin, Big Lake, and Anderson Mesa. Watch for details.

We'll have a booth again at the Sportsman's Expo at the Fairgrounds from February 18-20. If you want to help and get in free...call Dave Laird for details (623-936-3533). The Expo will also debut our 2005 AAF Rifle for Raffle...a custom made 25.06 by Joe Mahac. Many thanks for his work and to Nancy Lewis and Joe Bill Pickrell for donating the components. Now we need you to buy tickets!

Our Second Annual Fundraising Banquet is in the planning stages already...reserve August 6, 2005 so you don't miss it! If you want to help, contact us as fundraising meetings will begin soon. We'll be at the El Zaribah Shrine Auditorium once again.

Our 13th Annual Hunter Clinic is slated for August 16, 2005. We want to top our trophy display of 2004, so mark down that date too.

There's a sampling with a lot more to come! Thanks for your past support and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Jim Unmacht



AAF ANNOUNCES 2005 BOARD

At the annual meeting on November 8, 2004, the following slate of officers and directors were elected to serve in 2005.

President.....Jim Unmacht
Vice President...Dave Laird
Treasurer.....Jim Mehen
Secretary.....Bruce Johnson

Directors serving a term expiring on 12/31/06

Larry Erickson
Mike Perkinson
Sue Foote

Directors serving a term expiring on 12/31/05

Ignacio Beltram
Connie Taylor
David Brown

Special thanks to AAF Director Embe Kugler & Treasurer Bill Hook, for completing their terms of service on the Board!



GRAHAM COUNTY FENCE UPDATE

AAF PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF...

We've kept up the "fight" for 1 ½ years, and we're on the verge of seeing the wildlife "unfriendly" fence erected on 3 miles of State Trust land by Graham County modified to wildlife "friendly" standards!

Graham County struck a deal in 2003 for some right of way with a rancher along the Fort Grant Road which separates units 31 & 32. The deal was Graham County would put up a fence for 5 miles along the road to the ranchers specifications. A portion of the fence was on the rancher's private land. The longer section was State Trust Land being leased.

Allegedly the fence was to replicate the old fence the rancher had in place. Photos however showed the old dilapidated wooden fence with sometimes 5 strands no where near the "barrier" Graham County eventually erected. The net effect was to exclude almost any critter that didn't fly or climb, and it cut off the historical transition corridor for pronghorn in the Sulphur Springs Valley.

The AAF has been keeping this matter on the front burner for a long time. Inaction by the State Land Department and the Governor's office did not dissuade us from the cause. Finally a couple weeks ago, we sought the help of the AZ Game & Fish Commission. This on the eve of the Commissioners awarding Graham County an "Award of Excellence"!

Regardless of the reason for Graham County's award, we saw it as hypocritical in view of the inaction they took to comply with State standards for wildlife friendly fencing. We believe this inaction played a critical role in helping reduce the pronghorn population in units 31 & 32, reducing it by almost half over this period of time. Ironically just the opposite has occurred in the rest of Arizona with pronghorn populations and fawn recruitment all on the rise!

As this saga nears its end, we want to extend our appreciation and thanks to Commissioners Bill McLean and Mike Golightly, for helping us bring this matter to a favorable resolution.

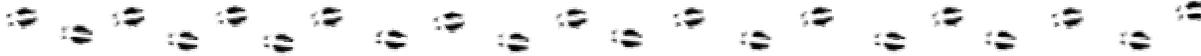
By the next issue of the Pronghorn, we hope to tell you the fence has been "fixed"!



YAVAPAI RANCH

How does the old saying go...”close, but no cigar”? Late in 2004, Arizona Senators John McCain and Jon Kyl announced they reached an accord on the Yavapai Ranch land exchange. The legislation passed the US House of Representatives, and headed to the US Senate. It didn’t make it out of the Senate, as it was unfortunately attached to another bill, and it didn’t reach a vote.

The AAF has supported this exchange for several years because of the large tracts of pronghorn lands and habitat that would be added back into the public domain in the trade. We continue to urge Senator McCain and Senator Kyl to get this on a fast track in this Session of Congress to make this happen. We would urge you to write them and tell them as much too!



SONOITA WORK PROJECT

The AAF’s last work project of 2004 took place near Sonoita on October 16th. It went off amazingly well despite only one member of the AAF Board attending, David Brown. The work that John Millican had outlined only involved raising the bottom wire and shifting the second strand downward so that more equipment was not needed.

The work project was on the private Babocomari Ranch, the fate of which is presently being negotiated between the owners and the BLM. Unless this former land grant is acquired by Uncle Sam, this luxuriant grassland will be almost certainly subdivided and lost to pronghorn. As it is, the area supports a small but viable population. One of the AAF workers, Shawn Clarno (backed up by Jerry Clarno) successfully bagged a great buck in the project area during the previous archery season. The rancher has been a good cooperater with AGFD and allows some hunting on the premises. Vern West, another AAF member, took a series of photos of a herd of 10 (one buck, 8 does, and one fawn) just prior to our arrival, while providing a series of great photos of the work project (watch for them soon on the website). The purpose of changing the fences is to allow the pronghorn better access and egress to the Babocomari where the Ranch property borders a newly paved road and several "mini-ranches,: thus complicating pronghorn movements.

All in all, we had 23 people show up--10 ASU folks, 10 AAF members, John Millican from the AGFD, Linda Kennedy from the Audubon Research Ranch, and Dan Robinett from the NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service). John's project was well organized and supervised, and because everyone worked exceptionally hard, we completed the entire four + miles of fence by 4:30 Saturday afternoon. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to nearly 80 (AAF member and former Game Management Chief Paul Webb). Fire restrictions prohibited a campfire so David Brown gave those who arrived on Friday night (mostly students), the option of ordering a steak dinner in Sonoita on either Friday or Saturday night.

Thanks to the following for their help: Bruce Wright, Jerry Clarno, Shawn Clarno, Eugene HTA, Warren Adams, Dan Robinett, Tucson; Vern West, Barb West, Tempe; Paul Webb, Scottsdale; Rene Dube, Hereford; John Rose, Sierra Vista; Linda Kennedy, Elgin; John Millican, Hereford; David E. Brown, Phoenix; ASU Students Elaine Anthonise, Cynthia M. Girardin, Nicholas R. Whipps, Keely Arnold, Benjamin L. Rreeser, Jeffery S. Clark, Laura Sloane, Lucia Ibarra, Iris Reino.



PABST FAMILY DONATIONS

The AAF received a \$1000 donation of stock this past fall in memory of longtime AAF member and supporter Gustave Pabst III. His daughter Kathryn made the generous donation in memory of her father.

Then we learned a few weeks later, Kathryn Pabst Rodriguez also passed away. In lieu of flowers, her family asked that donations be made to the Arizona Antelope Foundation. We received numerous memorials for Kathryn too, so far totaling \$1085.

Our condolences go out to the Pabst family, and we thank them for preserving their family member’s memory with donations to the AAF. This money will help us continue to preserve places for pronghorn for future generations!



SONORAN PRONGHORN

UPDATE



BY JILL BRIGHT AZ GAME & FISH

DECEMBER 22, 2004

Captive Breeding: A capture operation took place in Arizona on December 14 and 15. Four adult does were captured (3 from the Cabeza Prieta, one from the BMGR) and transported to the pen. A veterinarian used an ultrasound to check for pregnancy and all 4 were pregnant. All four are doing fine and don't appear to have any ill effects from the capture. Three of the does have joined up with the other animals in the pen and one doe seems to keep to herself for the most part. Personnel are aggressively monitoring the pen to watch for any problems related to the new animals but all the pronghorn are doing well.

Forage Enhancements: Personnel from the AGFD and the Fish and Wildlife Service, along with a group of volunteer students from the University of Arizona put together the irrigation system at Lower Well. We are still waiting for a smaller pump to put in the well, and above ground water storage tanks need to be installed before this well to be ready to pump water.

The larger pump from Lower Well was moved to Adobe Well and this well was pump tested and produced 150 gallon/minute for the ½ hour test. Consequently this larger pump was left in Adobe Well and it is now ready to go. Plans are to build that pipeline and irrigation system in the near future.

Other Projects: The US range wide survey took place from December 6-12. We saw 39 pronghorn on transects and estimate 58 pronghorn for the total population. This is over twice as many pronghorn as were seen in 2002 (18 pronghorn seen, estimated 21 in the population). Pronghorn were seen in 8 groups. Two groups were seen on the Air Force side of BMGR, one on the Marine Range, and 4 groups on the Cabeza Prieta NWR.

The Mexico survey took place December 17-20. Only the sub-population east of Highway 8 was surveyed due to wind and time constraints. We saw 439 pronghorn on transects and estimate 625 for the sub-population. Again this was many more pronghorn than we saw in 2002 (197 pronghorn seen, estimated 260 in the sub-population). Plans are to return to Mexico in January or February 2005 to survey the Pinacate area to complete the survey.

JANUARY 19, 2005

Captive Breeding: All 7 pronghorn are doing well in the pen. Observers report that they seem to be more wary and alert than the original 3 had become. They appear to pay attention to every stimulus including humans, vehicles, coyote howling, etc. Pen monitors reported that tracks indicated that a group of 5 illegal aliens crossed through the pen one night. They dug under the south fence to get in and climbed over the north fence to get out. The incident was reported to Law Enforcement personnel at Cabeza Prieta for investigation. Personnel have been trying to figure out a new irrigation set-up for the coming summer. We expect fawns in the next couple of months, so personnel are trying especially hard not to disturb the pronghorn for any reason. Interviews for the third pen monitor are scheduled for next week.

Water Projects: A work project is scheduled the weekend of February 12 to expand the storage capacity of the Granite Mountains and Sierra Pinta emergency water developments.

Forage Enhancements: Personnel from the AGFD surveyed and planned the pipeline and irrigation set-up for the Adobe Well forage enhancement site. A location for the freestanding water was also determined in the field. A work project the weekend of January 22 is scheduled to build the irrigation system, build the water, and lay out most of the pipeline. This will be accomplished by Game and Fish and US Fish and Wildlife Service personnel and volunteers from the Arizona Antelope Foundation.

MORE SONORAN PRONGHORN ADDED TO THE CAPTIVE BREEDING PROGRAM

By Lisa A. Shender, M.S., D.V.M. Research Branch, Arizona Game and Fish Department

My first interview question, “Tell us what you know about the pronghorn population in Arizona and nationwide in general” really stumped me. I was interviewing for a Wildlife Specialist III position with the Arizona Game and Fish Research Department and I knew next to nothing about pronghorn except for the few paragraphs I had read on the AZGFD web page. Now, just four months into my job, I was flying in a helicopter above the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, taking part in a Sonoran pronghorn capture. During my second year of veterinary school, I had seen video clips of these kinds of captures in a course titled “Wildlife Capture and Immobilization.” However, I never expected that less than six months after graduating from vet school, I would be fortunate enough to participate in such a capture.

The immediate goal was to capture four females and one male, which were to be placed in a fenced-in square-mile enclosure, along with the two does that were captured in January 2004 in Sonora, Mexico, and a buck from the U.S. population captured in April 2004, that had resided there since. The long-term goal was to facilitate a captive-breeding population, whose offspring could be released into the surrounding habitat to augment the wild population of this endangered species.

The evening before the capture (December 13, 2004), all those involved gathered in a small hotel room for a “briefing” of how the capture was to be run and who would take on what responsibility. Basically, there were two small fixed-wing airplanes in which the “spotters” rode, canvassing the landscape below for a glimpse of the pronghorn. Once the animals were spotted, the news was relayed via radio to the two helicopters. The first helicopter was deemed the “gunner ship” and the second, the “medical ship.” While the

gunner ship chased the antelope herd, the gunner took careful aim and fired the net gun over the targeted animal. As soon as the animal was down, the helicopter landed and the seasoned veterinarian would jump out, restrain the pronghorn, cover the animal’s eyes with a facemask, and immobilize the animal with a drug called Telazol. By this time, the medical ship had also landed and I was sprinting to the animal with a bag of blood collection tubes, IV fluids, and a variety of injections. Once an IV catheter was placed in the left jugular vein, I collected 35ml of blood for analysis of nutritional and



disease status. Then cold IV fluids were administered to help lower the body temperature, which increased dramatically during the exertion of the chase. Injections, including vaccinations and antibiotics, were given and the animal was then carried on a stretcher to the medical ship for transport to the captive enclosure. During transit, oxygen was administered and the temperature, heart rate, respiration rate, and oxygen saturation were monitored. Periodically, as the animal would begin to waken, a bolus of sedative drugs would be given IV. Upon arrival at the captive enclosure, the receiving crew unloaded the animal and carried it over to the ultrasound machine, where the abdomen was viewed

for pregnancy and a radio collar was fitted around the animal’s neck. The animal was then placed in a small, dark, and hay-filled enclosure within the captive pen, where it was allowed to awaken and rest before being released into the pen.

Overall, the capture was extremely successful. Although we did not capture a buck, we did get four healthy does, all of which were pregnant. The teamwork on the capture was amazing and if all goes well, there should be several Sonoran pronghorn fawns born in the enclosure this spring.

PRONGHORN QUIZ

What’s the difference between an antelope of the Sonoran variety, versus the American variety? (Answer on page 14)

CABEZA PRIETA WORK PROJECT

If you haven't seen a Sonoran sunrise on the Cabeza Prieta Wildlife Refuge, you should try it sometime! Our first AAF project of 2005 took us to the Cabeza to do some pipeline work related to an irrigation set up for the Adobe Well forage enhancement site. This project will help establish another forage plot and water source for the endangered Sonoran pronghorn. We had an excellent turnout for the work project, with folks from Ajo to Alberta joining us in this venture!

Mixed weather predictions turned out wrong, as the last sprinkles ended on the windshield north of Ajo, and the sun began its ascent on the Cabeza. For the work at hand the day was going to be almost too nice!

There were a few camps at the Adobe Windmill when we arrived early Saturday morning. At 8am, we were hoping for some more hands, as the small group of campers wasn't the turnout we hoped for. By mid morning however, we weren't disappointed, as we had on hand 24 hard working volunteers.

Six thousand feet of 4" water pipe lay in stacks near the windmill. At 20 feet long, we were looking at 300 sections of pipe. This wasn't going to be your run of the mill fence project!

The plan was to lay out the pipe across the desert floor from an established well, and build a freestanding water and irrigation system with laterals to provide additional food plots for the antelope. Although we didn't have all the material to complete the work, the goal was to get the pipe laid and connected from the water hole back to the well with the pipe at hand.

Each pipe had to have a coupler attached and secured with "tie", restacked, and then hauled out to the location of the line. The pipe had to be soaped, the coupler slid on and pounded into place. Then the "tie" had to be inserted into the groove of the pipe to hold it in place. This took the better part of the morning, and quite a few bottles of dish soap!

After lunch we completed the hauling at 50 pieces per trailer load. The pipe had to be stacked and loaded on the trailer, hauled out to the line, and pulled off the trailer and carried to the site. As the trailer would ferry the pipe, we pulled the pipe off piece by piece and went back for more...

While this was going on, a crew was beginning to connect the pipeline piece by piece along the designated route. Each piece had to be "popped" into place at the coupling, and another "tie" inserted to secure it in place. By mid afternoon, the "connecting crew" was keeping up with the "hauling crew" almost piece by piece, and by



3 pm, all the work we could do was completed!

Sunday saw a small remaining group of volunteers complete additional work on the underground storage tanks and line work and completed most of the remaining work possible.

At sundown they saw the enclosure and watched the 7 Sonorans that occupy it. A satisfying end to a great project! Thanks to all the volunteers, about half of the group AAF members, with the rest made up of G & F staff, F & WS staff, and four winter visitors, one from Idaho, one from Montana, and a couple from Alberta. Dave Laird, Sue Foote, Dustin Lockmanese, David Brown, Ryan Wilson, Jim & Tracy Unmacht (all from Phoenix), Art Boswell (Tucson), Jim & Joyce Sivley, Scott, Jennifer, Haley, & Allison Anderson, (all from Scottsdale), Thomas Hulen (Tempe), Hazel & Ron Boothman (Alberta, Canada), Dave Daniels (Blackfoot, Idaho), Lee Alt (Billings, Montana). The following G&F and US Fish & Wildlife employees led our team: Dan Nelson, John Hervert, Allen Zufelt, Jill Bright, Terry Henley, and Mike Coffeen.

DO YOU WANT TO READ ABOUT PRONGHORN?

A couple new Wildlife Management Institute books on Pronghorn are now for sale: **Pronghorn Ecology & Management** by Bart W. O'Gara and Jim D. Yoakum, and **Prairie Ghost Pronghorn and Human Interaction in Early America** by Richard E. McCabe, Bart W. O'Gara, and Henry M. Reeves. If you're interested, you can call 1-800-627-7377 for information.

MORE THOUGHTS ON AAF'S FUTURE

There are many conservation organizations across North America, most working for similar goals, but most are species specific, and usually geographically limited. There are some "national" groups for certain species, but more often than not, donations allocated to their paid administrative staff causes one to question whether you're getting your "bang for the buck", particularly on the state or local level. There are some national groups that cover the spectrum, but oftentimes some of the causes they pursue don't have a broad appeal. Are there exceptions? Sure there are, but the challenge is uniting a large diverse group of sportsmen and women with a variety of passions. It's a monumental task!

Then throw in people that have some similar goals as yours, but maybe don't come from the same camp, and you find yourself in a very diverse mix of folks. That's likely where you'll find the Arizona Antelope Foundation as we move into 2005!

We remain a species specific organization, targeting Arizona's pronghorn as our primary emphasis and working on a set group of goals to help achieve those results. Along the way, we have begun to develop some partnerships with different groups that aren't just for sportsmen and women, but have the same goal of preserving places for pronghorn. This has begun to take us outside the narrow single species focus started in 1992. Is that a bad thing, - hardly - as long as we can keep our goals and objectives in mind in the process!

In 1991 the North American Pronghorn Foundation (NAPF) was begun, seemingly a national response to what the AAF was to embark upon locally. While remnants of the NAPF apparently remain, the organization has been essentially dormant for some time now.

Then in 2003, at least partially in response to the inaction of the NAPF, the North American Pronghorn Association (NAPA) was formed. NAPA looked like it had some early momentum, and a great looking website, but they are no longer on the web, and they too appear to have either dissolved or gone dormant.

While keeping our goals in focus, the AAF has branched out with input on pronghorn inquiries around the West. We have helped sponsor the National Pronghorn Workshops held every other year, and have been recognized for our efforts here in Arizona.

We have also begun to work on habitat projects with groups considered non-traditional in the sporting sense. Groups like the Diablo Trust and Grand Canyon Trust come to mind, which we have worked with on habitat enhancement projects on Anderson Mesa. And as we move into the new year, we are working on some collaborative efforts with the Arizona Wildlife Federation on a couple projects too.

Who would've thought we would participate with some environmental groups on the topic of State Trust Land reform! This group wasn't necessarily our first choice for input, but the Fox group of "stakeholders" did not want our input and never invited us to the table! We believe we have some important views for sportsmen & women, as well as wildlife, (including pronghorn!) and they need to be heard.

We remain an active member of the Wildlife Conservation Council, and will continue in that role this year. The WCC has the potential to play a prominent role in conservation activities and action in Arizona, and we remain optimistic it can rise to those challenges.

The AAF reached some new heights in 2004, notably the enormous undertaking of our own fundraising banquet. By all accounts our "First Ever" was a fantastic success! Do we have some opportunities for improvement, sure we do, but those opportunities aren't too different than what might be presented to an organization that has put on many fundraisers. Our Second Annual Fundraiser is set for August 6, 2005, and we anticipate this event will be as good as or better than our first!

If you've volunteered before, you know the magnitude of the challenge. Our core group of volunteers rose to the occasion in 2004, and I'm pleased to say they remain intact and ready to go in 2005!

However the door to help us remains wide open and we already have opportunities out there we could use some help on. So if you're inclined:

- Come to a project, you'd be welcomed, even if we've never met you! You will also find this is a very satisfying way of contributing to the cause, and, it's a family affair!
- Come to a Board meeting, and you'd be surprised at how much is happening in the pronghorn world!
- Help with the Fundraiser, our net earnings in 2004 of over \$66,000 didn't come without a great deal of effort!
- Help at the Clinic, you'll learn something even if you've successfully hunted pronghorn in years past.
- Send us a story or article for the newsletter and website, variety is the spice of life!

Finally, consider upgrading your membership status, and recruiting a friend. Arizona's antelope need your involvement and participation! Thanks for the confidence of electing me the AAF President for another year!

Jim Unmacht

Hunting with the Desert Pronghorn Society

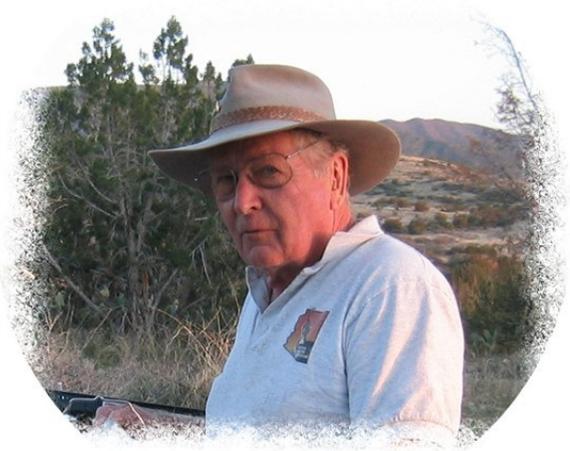
By David E. Brown

I remember a lot of down time when I was growing up in Wisconsin during World War II. I was about six or seven, and my father worked most weekends. Gasoline was rationed and most of his outdoor activities took place “back when I lived in Michigan,” or “after the War is over, we will...” As a result, I spent a lot of weekends visiting relatives, mostly my Aunt Margaret and Uncle Clark. Clark was an avid outdoorsman, and in his attic resided every *Outdoor Life*, *Field and Stream* and *Sports Afield* ever published.

One of my fondest memories is the afternoons spent poring over those old magazines--I can see the fading volumes even now, smell the must of the yellowing pages, and remember the ads that told us to “Keep Em Flying.” I had a scrapbook then, and collected the illustrations that came with each issue. Every *Outdoor Life* featured a full color portrait of a game animal by artist F. L. Jacques. *Sports Afield* had a series of paintings on “Know Your Ducks” by W. W. Short. I have forgotten what *Field and Stream* used to have.

While looking through the magazines and snipping out each month’s treasure, I would read those stories that would catch my fancy. My favorites were about Arizona and the desert southwest as that was where my father had once lived and where he said every kind of game animal in America could be found. There was not a lot of any one thing there, just some of everything. Sure to catch my eye were stories about hunting desert bighorn sheep and pronghorn antelope. As these species were then totally protected in Arizona, most of the hunts took place in Mexico. The pronghorn and sheep hunting seasons were closed there too, but that was never said. Besides, the authors who hunted these animals--Jack O’Connor, Ben Tinker, W. H. Ren, and George Parker—must have had licenses or they wouldn’t have written so openly about their experiences.

Prior to World War II, Mexico’s deserts appear to have supported more pronghorn than similar habitats north of the border. I am not too sure why. Apparently, it had just taken longer for the 20th Century to arrive south of the border. But E. W. Nelson, who conducted the first pronghorn survey of North America in 1925, estimated more pronghorn in Coahuila than in Texas, more in Chihuahua than in New Mexico, and more antelope in Sonora than in Arizona. The same was true for Baja and California. Now of course the situation has reversed. Pronghorn numbers rebounded greatly in the



U.S. since 1925 while Mexico’s pronghorn populations have gone into decline.

So appealing were the hunts for desert antelope that I have collected several of the more memorable accounts, and over the next several issues of the *Pronghorn* we are going to relive how it was to hunt pronghorn in those halcyon days of desert hunting expeditions—the good, the bad, and the ugly. For even though some of the hunt behaviors of both the *gringos* and their Mexican friends are outside the pale of modern standards, the stories retain an innocent ring about them. There is little or no thought to conservation practices and the attitude appears to be that Mexico has plenty of pronghorn and that “anything goes south of the border.” If only it could have remained so.

Our first story by Charles Askins, Jr. takes place in Sonora and features a pronghorn hunt in Sonora with George Parker and his father. Both Askins and Parker worked for the Border Patrol, and Askins was the gun editor for *Outdoor Life* prior to Jack O’Connor having this position. “*Antelope of the Borderland*” was published in the October 1934 issue of *Outdoor Life* and probably took place the previous winter. To fully appreciate the article, the reader must get past such poor sporting behaviors as hunting from a vehicle, “flock-shooting” at running antelope, and shooting does, and concentrate on the difficulties of the stalks. Also, from a biological perspective, the numbers of desert pronghorn seen are highly interesting—herds of 40 plus animals are rarely encountered today, even during the winter months. There are other clues of a different Sonora—the infrequency of people met the abundance of both deer and antelope tracks, and the lack of any roads near the coast. I also found the references to “weeds” of interest given the scarcity of forbs around most of Sonora’s *playas* at present.

I had met George Parker on several occasions and interviewed him for the 1985 Arizona Wildlife Trophy book shortly before his death. The Mexican rancher in the article had good cause to be wary, as George had the

reputation of not only being a great hunter, but for being a tough customer. An expert Coues whitetail hunter, George was an inveterate desert sheep hunter, killing his first desert bighorn in the Sierra Viejo in 1930, and eventually killing four desert rams, each having horns longer than 40". His trophy room in Amado, if it still buck.

exists, contains one of the very few giant sables in existence and the head of a pronghorn native to the Cerro Colorado Mountains in Pima County. No pronghorn native to southeastern Arizona remain other than a few museum specimens and this trophy



ANTELOPE

of the Borderland

By Chas. Askins, Jr. (October 1934, *Outdoor Life*)

For a long time I dreamed of a grand antelope hunt in Sonora. I resolved that if the opportunity ever presented itself, I would certainly make the most of it. So when I received an invitation from my friend George Parker Jr., of Ajo, AZ to go along with him on a *gran caza* into Sonora after antelope, I accepted with alacrity. When I reached Ajo, I found George packed and ready to start the next morning. There were to be only three of us - George, his father, and myself-a circumstance which pleased me greatly, since I heartily detest anything like a crowd on a hunting trip.

We left Ajo by automobile early in the morning and were soon at the Mexican port of entry. George, who is a United States border patrolman, knew the officials, and we went through the customs and immigration without delay. The Mexicans told us to keep a sharp lookout for roaming bands of *bandidos*, and started us on the road to Sonora. It was a military highway in very passable condition, rough and winding, but far better than I had expected to find in western Sonora.

We drove steadily along this road all day. The trip was of great interest to me, for I had never before been more than ten or twelve miles into Mexico. The country through which we passed was a combination of

mountains and desert, typical of a large part of western Sonora. Nearby the land was a wide, rolling expanse of cactus-covered hills and low, level plains. In the distance stood the ever-present mountains - bold, jagged peaks nameless and solitary in their splendor.

We stopped frequently to look for signs of game. We saw scores of deer tracks, and apparently there were thousands of *javalinas* in the country. Now and then we were encouraged by traces of the passage of bands of antelope. Time and again we flushed coveys of Mexican blue quail, and by the end of the day we had shot enough of them for five messes.

At length we came to a small settlement which, according to a government signboard, rejoiced in the name of Costa Rica. We drove to the most pretentious of its few houses and started a conversation with the owner, who was apparently the *Don* of Costa Rica. He was not unfriendly, but he was not particularly informative. We knew we were in good hunting country, but we wanted to camp and hunt in the very best section, and so felt we ought to learn from the natives where game was most plentiful.

Our friend the *Don* was talkative but like many Latins, he could talk a great deal and say nothing. He showed us the head of a pretty blacktail he (Cont. on page 12)

If each of us had a fairy godmother who could lift us up with a wave of her magic wand and transport us to our favorite hunting ground, each of us no doubt would select a different spot. Some would go after deer; others would hunt moose; still others would search for bear; and many would pursue the elusive mountain sheep. For my part, I would choose that species of game which, in my opinion, is the swiftest, wariest, and most sagacious of them all - the antelope.

This fleet and graceful animal is now almost extinct in the United States, where it is protected by law. But in the wild desert regions of Sonora, Mexico, antelope are as plentiful as they were 100 years ago.

(Cont. from page 11)

had killed, but he was vague about the locality in which he had hunted. We were ready to give up in despair when the conversation shifted to the weapons of the chase. It developed that the *Don* had a rifle in the *casa* but had no ammunition for it. We asked to see the gun, explaining it was possible we might have *cartuchos* to fit it. The rifle proved to be a Winchester Model '95, .30-'06. We gave the owner a couple of clips of '18 stuff and his reticence vanished immediately.

If the gentlemen wished to kill deer, antelope, and possibly sheep, they must turn toward the west and camp that night near the *Sierras Prietos* (Black Mountains). Antelope were there by the hundreds. *Si*. Also *muchos venados grandes* (many big blacktails). As for sheep, they could be found in the *Prietos*, but they were much more plentiful in the *Sierras Blancos* to the north.

We thanked our friend, wished him luck with his new cartridges, got into the car, and headed west toward the Gulf of California, which was only about thirty miles away. To our surprise we found another very fair road and a drive of fifteen miles brought us to the foot of the *Sierras Prietos*.

The country did not look as though it were teeming with animal life. Away from the mountains, as far as the eye could see, stretched a vast plain whose flat expanse was broken here and there by a hill or long ridge of sand. At regular intervals the plain was gashed by dry sand washes, the result of heavy rains during the wet season. The washes were several miles apart, several hundred feet wide, and generally rather shallow. All of them wandered off toward the sea, which could be seen from the nearby peaks.

The washes were thickly studded with the only two types of tree found in this desert region of Sonora – *Paolo Fierro* Iron Wood) and *Paolo verde* (Green Wood). Low greasewood

shrubs grew in abundance. Out on the plain itself grew more greasewood, as well as the giant *Sajura* and the dread *Cholla Patalla*, and *Ocatilla* cactus. The cactus was so profuse that you could not see more than a couple of hundred yards while traveling cross-country. There was no grass, and absolutely no water. Game and what livestock there is in this country subsist on the desert plants, which are living reservoirs of the precious liquid. We brought thirty gallons of water with us, which had to last until we left. We made camp that night by the simple expedient of dumping the cooking gear out of the car and unrolling our beds. Supper was a delicious meal of the Mexican blue quail which as far as I am concerned has no equal for delicacy of flavor.

In the morning we decided to make a thorough exploration of the country. The plain was so vast that even if game were thick as fleas on a houn' dog, a man could hunt a week without getting a shot. We had no horses, and our only alternative was to use the car. We lightened it as much as possible, climbed aboard, and started a scouting trip toward a large plateau we could see in the distance. The little car bounced and bounded over the uneven ground but never faltered. After several miles of hard going, we came to the plain – a barren expanse of sand broken only by *Cholla* thickets. We climbed a nearby slope and with glasses swept the surrounding country for antelope and deer, but saw no sign of life. We got back into the car and plowed through the loose sand to the north end of the wide *plalla*. There we hunted through the *Cholla* for several hours without success. We saw innumerable *javelina* tracks but traces of deer or antelope were scarce. Somewhat discouraged, we went back to camp and ate our lunch.

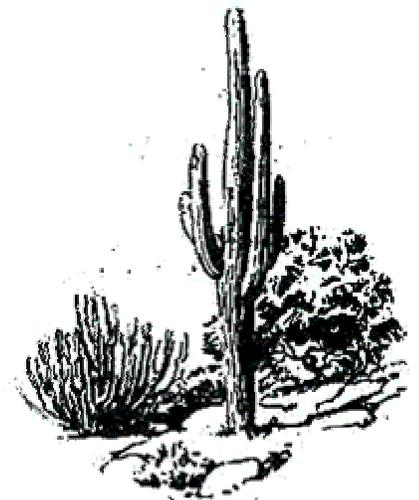
In the afternoon, we set out in a westerly direction toward the *Sierras Blancos* and the sea. Almost immediately we saw considerably more game sign than we had during the morning and cut the track of

several herds of antelope and a number of deer. We saw plenty of traces, but luck was against us when it came to spotting the animals themselves. Although we repeatedly surveyed the countryside from likely hilltops, we saw no game, and we returned to camp that night with another fine mess of quail and nothing more.

In the morning, we started out in the car again. A short distance from camp George climbed a small hill and immediately sighted a band of thirty antelope feeding on a small bare strip of ground three miles away. We drove to within two miles of the grazing band and continued the approach on foot. We left George's father at a point 800 yards away from the unsuspecting animals, and George and I made a wide circle in order to approach the game on the only side offering the necessary cover. We stooped down and worked our way slowly toward the left until we were 600 yards from the herd.

Here we came to an opening in the desert vegetation fifty yards in extent, sparsely covered by a growth of short weeds. We crouched as low as possible and began edging across. In an instant we had been spotted by a telescopic-eyed old buck, and to our chagrin the whole herd began moving slowly away. They did not act as though they were alarmed, but simply as though they were planning to leave that particular part of the world.

They disappeared in the cactus and we hurried forward to take up their trail. We caught (Cont. on page 13)



(Cont. from page 12)

fleeting glimpses of a number of them at 300 yards. After following the band for several miles, we saw by their tracks that the wary creatures were stopping occasionally to watch their back trail. When they saw us they would move on again. After six miles of this fatiguing and fruitless pursuit we gave them up and returned to the car.

George's father meanwhile had climbed a sand ridge and jumped another band of thirty antelope. He had taken a few running shots at about 200 yards, but was certain he had not connected. The day was almost over, so we returned to camp, sadder, wiser, and with a tremendous amount of respect for the eyesight and cunning of the little beasts we were hunting. In all my many years of hunting experience, I had never seen any game to compare with them.

At dawn the following day we set out for the sand ridge where George's father had jumped the antelope. As soon as we got there we saw two of the desert creatures about three miles to the left, apparently grazing. We looked the terrain over thoroughly and felt confident that we would bring to bag one or both of the distant white specks. The antelope were moving slowly westward along the ridge. The wind was in our favor, so we drove the car down a wash parallel to the ridge until we judged we were opposite our quarry. Then we scaled the ridge on foot, and in fifteen minutes were peering over in search of our elusive targets

They were nowhere in sight. George moved up the ridge in search of a shot, I went the other way; and George Sr. stood where he was. After a short walk I saw a pair of antelope 600 yards away, walking slowly westward. I broke into a run across the uneven sandy ground in an attempt to head them and possibly get a shot. I ran until I was nearly exhausted. As I gained the top of the ridge again I found that luck was with me. The antelope had apparently scented some

member of the party and they were passing my position at a fast trot. I dropped to a sitting position and fired at the nearest buck, which I estimated to be 350 yards away. The bullet missed, passing just under the animal's neck. Both antelope broke into a swift run at the sound of the rifle, and I fired my four remaining shots without result. Later in the day we spotted a band of seven and stalked them for several hours. We jumped them finally without getting within range.

Day followed day and our bad luck continued. We had seen more than 100 antelope since making camp and had not brought down one. We had driven the car 130 miles in trips from camp. We had seen more than fifty black-tail deer, but invariably we had jumped the deer while stalking antelope, and as the antelope were the real objects of our trip, we passed the *venados* by.

The dawn of our last day in this hunting country arrived. We had to



connect within a few hours or go home empty-handed. We started off in the car as usual, with myself and rifle in the rumble seat. A short distance from camp I saw five black-tails in the cactus and greasewood 200 yards ahead. One of them was a huge buck. I shouted to George to stop the car and fired on shot at the buck as he ran with the others through the underbrush. He vanished as I fired, but I had heard the bullet strike. We drove to the spot and found one of the largest and handsomest mule deer I have ever seen. His head was magnificent, carrying twelve points

and measuring thirty inches from tip to tip; almost a record.

George Sr. had never killed black-tail, so he and I went after the others while George scouted through the country for antelope. We trailed the deer for several miles and gave them up. On the way back to the car we heard two shots in rapid succession. We hurried forward and found that George had knocked over another big mule deer, as large if not larger than mine. He had spotted him as he sat on a rise looking for antelope. The big buck was picking his way slowly through the rocks on a saddle below the rise, and the two shots brought him down. George picked up his glasses again and promptly discovered a band of antelope far to the west, grazing on a barren *plalla*.

We hung our two grand old bucks in a nearby *paolo Pierro* tree, got into our trusty little auto again, and jolted off toward what would be probably our last opportunity to bag the elusive quarry that we had been hunting so diligently and so unsuccessfully. We followed one of the ever-present washes, and as we rounded a curve we unexpectedly came upon three antelope quietly feeding 200 yards away. As soon as they saw us the broke into a run.

Never in my life have I seen any creatures which run with the effortless ease of the antelope. They do not run in bounds as deer do, but seem to skim over the ground at a rate of speed that is truly amazing. They moved so swiftly that their forms appeared blurred to my eyes.

As the speed demons got off to a flying start, George and I opened fire on them. After two shots from each of us, one of the racing creatures collapsed. We had fired almost simultaneously, but investigation showed that the honor of bagging the first antelope went to George. The victim was, unfortunately, a doe, and the shot had broken both hind legs. We stuck her and loaded her into the car. (Cont. on page 14)

(Cont. from page 13)

I was greatly surprised at the size of the antelope. I had never seen one at close range before, and had always thought of them as being fairly large. This one was only slightly larger than the average domestic goat, and I now knew the reason why I had missed the pair at which I shot a few days before.

We continued our advance toward the big band the George had sighted. When we were two miles from them, we left the car and dropped into a convenient wash through which we moved toward the quarry on foot. First we walked upright; then we went ahead in a crouching, uncomfortable position. Soon we were within 800 yards of the band, which appeared to number about forty head, and was scattered out on a barren table-land.

The wash petered out at this point and it seemed impossible for us to get closer to the grazing herd. The wind was in our favor and we waited patiently in the hope that some careless old buck would make the mistake of walking toward us. But the band again showed that uncanny awareness of danger that had been our nemesis on other occasions, and began to drift slowly in the opposite direction. If we were going to get a shot, we would have to move quickly. We began a long, tiresome, encircling movement in an attempt to approach the herd from another direction.

Apparently the leaders were no longer alarmed. The animals had quieted down. Some were leaping and frisking about, others were peacefully grazing, still others were lying down. We moved as close as we dared, crouching as we walked. Then George's father took a stand and George and I dropped to our hands

and knees and crept forward. The cover was so scant that it would have been impossible to get within range in any other way. The nearest likely buck was still 600 yards distant.

Alternately crawling and resting, we reached the edge of the weed growth which sheltered us. As we looked out, we saw to our chagrin that as usual the band was moving away very slowly. The crawling began again. We crawled and crawled and crawled on our hand and knees, and when the cover became sparse we wriggled forward on our bellies.

There are limits to human endurance. After 600 yards of this form of travel, I whispered to George that I'd be jiggered if I would crawl any farther. The race had been even for several hundred yards, the antelope drifting away as fast as we crawled toward them. We peered cautiously through the weeds and saw the band about 300 yards away. We looked them over with the glasses, and each of us selected a buck standing broadside. We got into as comfortable and secure shooting positions as possible, and both fired together, certain that the trophies we had been seeking so long were now ours.

To our amazement, neither buck fell. At the sound of the shots, they gave mighty bounds and ran to join the others of the herd, who began milling wildly. Thoroughly alarmed, the animals wheeled and turned aimlessly for a moment or two. Then apparently they recognized one of their members as a leader, fell in behind him as he flew across the prairie, and dashed away with the traditional "speed of the antelope." It will be a long time before I forget that

picture of reddish-white bodies skyrocketing over the plain.

We did not want to kill another doe, but there was nothing for us to do but hold above the mass of running animals and fire again. Two antelope turned end over end as we shot. A few short seconds later the band passed George's father, and we heard him fire several times.

George and I approached our dead game eagerly. We found we had another doe but also had a pretty buck with a splendid pair of horns. The distance from our position to the spot where the animals had fallen was 361 steps. As he stuck the buck, George remarked,

"Well, this is the first time I've done any flock shooting with the rifle."

There was little enough to commend in our shooting. But we either had to fire into the band on the chance of getting the buck we coveted so much, or watch the whole herd vanish over the horizon. George's father came up as we were discussing the kill, and said the herd had passed him at such a distance that his shots had missed.

The antelope hunt was over. Behind lay many, fruitless days of stalking, miles and miles of tramping and crawling over the cactus-filled desert and through the washes. The heartbreak of missing so many shots was forgotten in the prideful feeling of joy as we looked down upon our antelope – game animals which had won our sole-hearted admiration for their craftiness, their amazing watchfulness, and their most unbelievable speed in flight.

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ANSWER TO PRONGHORN QUIZ (from page 7).... Sonoran Pronghorn are covered in Cholla!



HOUSE ROCK RANCH ANTELOPE TRANSPLANT... ARIZONA GETS PRONGHORN FROM UTAH

By Erin Riddering, Wildlife Biologist, Game Branch

What an exciting way to start a new position with the Game Branch of the Arizona Game and Fish Department! I have worked for the Department for almost three years and have never had an opportunity like this one. In early December 2004, I traveled with Velma Holt, Rick Langley, and Brian Wakeling to Torrey, Utah for a pronghorn capture, where we intended to obtain and transport 40 pronghorn to the House Rock Valley in Arizona. On the morning of December 6, 2004 we met up with biologists from Utah Division of Wildlife, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Idaho Fish and Game, and Bureau of Land Management. Our caravan took us to two locations south of Bicknell where Utah biologists had erected two wing traps with raceways to contain the pronghorn. The helicopter being used to herd the pronghorn began to fly and immediately I got butterflies in my stomach. The anticipation of wrestling one of these delicate creatures with dangerous horns was a mixture of concern for individual animals and for me.

The radio blared that there were about 120 pronghorn in the trap and that they were ready for us. The mass of “pronghorn muggers” moved to the trap. What an amazing site. There at the head of the trap was a circle of fencing 10 feet tall with a curtain over 8 feet tall hanging from its peak. Everyone was whispering, talking about how many pronghorn were going where, and how they were being marked. People were peaking through the curtain at the pronghorn; I was surprised to see that they were all herded into one-half of the circle, with another 10-foot fence with curtain dividing it down the center.

Then the real fun began. A dozen people moved into the empty half of the circle and as the gate closed them in, another gate was opened. Slowly pronghorn started to enter the arena, the gate closed and the “rodeo” began. I had opted to stay outside on the initial “mugging.” I couldn’t believe the noise coming from inside the circle. I stood there listening to pronghorn “baa” like the sickest goat I have ever heard and was dumbfounded when one

attempted to leap over the fence and actually got its front hooves OVER the top. A dozen more people, including myself entered the gate to see the muggers lying on top of folded up pronghorn. I went over to Rick and helped him pick up our first doe, what a chore! Picking up the pronghorn with its four legs tucked under wasn’t easy, but once we got her up we carried her to the staging area. Nevada biologists quickly tagged her and drew blood, and then we loaded her into the trailer. By the time Rick and I were done handling the first pronghorn we were covered in hair. And the smell was certainly... distinct.

The process continued until all the pronghorn were loaded into trailers. However, our trailer was not full and it was getting dark. Brian and Rick decided we would stay another day. The next morning we did it all again. But the second day I was bound and determined to wrestle my own pronghorn. So as they began entering the arena I spied a little one and went for it. Instead, I

ended up hopping onto a doe that was getting away from Rick and watching the fawn being captured by another biologist. Once we had our pronghorn all loaded up, we drove to the House Rock Valley and released them just before sunset. Ten pronghorn were released about 2 miles north of 89A and 29 were released about 20 miles south of 89A. It was amazing to watch these beautiful; animals lope off



into the distance.

It was a trip of firsts for me. My first time handling live big game, my first time tagging pronghorn, my first time watching Velma “bulldog” a runaway pronghorn. It was an amazing experience and hopefully the first of many learning adventures with the Game Branch. In all Utah wanted to relocate approximately 500 pronghorn; Arizona only took 39, Nevada took 100, Idaho took 200 and BLM took over 100 to the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument. Along with my learning experience, we also added something to Arizona. Hopefully, these pronghorn will enhance the declining pronghorn population in House Rock Valley by adding numbers and genetic diversity.



COMMISSIONER'S SPECIAL TAGS

For the last 12 years, the Arizona Antelope Foundation (AAF) has been awarded North America's premier pronghorn antelope hunting permits by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission. These two auction tags consistently result in record book pronghorn for the successful auction winners. In 2002, Dr. David Meyer bought one of the tags and took the Boone & Crocket World Record Pronghorn scoring 95"! In 2004, Wayne Webber purchased both tags, and put his name in the record books with pronghorn bucks scoring in the 90" range.

The tags will be sold at auction in concert with the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society (ADBSS), and the Arizona Elk Society (AES). The first tag will be auctioned on February 26, 2005 at the 22nd Annual ADBSS Fundraising Banquet, and the second tag will be auctioned at the 4th Annual AES Fundraising Banquet on March 26, 2005. Both banquets will be held at the El Zaribah Shrine Auditorium in Phoenix, Arizona. One hundred percent of the proceeds will be returned to the Arizona Game and Fish Commission to help fund its pronghorn management and habitat enhancement efforts.

Since 1985 the Commissioners have awarded Special Tags for antelope resulting in a total of \$775,121 for pronghorn habit improvement. The AAF has contributed \$688,600 while being awarded the tags, or 89% of the money earned.

SPORTSMAN'S EXPO

Mark your calendar for February 18, 19, and 20...the AAF will once again be at the ISE Sportsman's Expo at the Arizona State Fairgrounds. Come out and visit our booth, where you can buy some AAF gear, purchase raffle tickets for the custom made 25-06 rifle specially made for the AAF, and talk about antelope in Arizona!

If you want to help us man the booth, we'll get you a free pass to the Show...let us know!

WCC MEMBERSHIP

The AAF once again has renewed our membership in the Wildlife Conservation Council. AAF President Jim Unmacht served as WCC Vice President in 2004, and has been re-elected for the same position in 2005. The WCC consists of a group of sportsman's clubs, conservation groups and individuals interested in Arizona's wildlife and related issues. You can check out the member organizations and purchase a wildlife conservation license plate by going to their website at www.arizonawildlifecouncil.org.

NEW AAF PROJECT TRAILER

The next time you participate at one of our work projects, you're likely to see the AAF even more organized than in the past! By March, our new enclosed trailer should be completed to our specifications with the AAF logos on all sides! For many years our gear, tools and cooking equipment have been transported by one or more volunteers. Most of the time everything has made it to the site and back, but keeping track of it all, and storing it all was cumbersome at best. That should change soon!

WHY ONLY ONE AAF HUNTER CLINIC?

Some of you have asked this question, and here's the answer: lack of volunteers!

We had three Clinics in 2003, in three successive nights, in three different cities, Tucson, Phoenix, and Flagstaff. We had 3 AAF volunteers attend two nights, Tucson & Phoenix, 2 AAF volunteers attend Phoenix & Flagstaff, and 1 AAF volunteer able to make it to all three Clinics, in back to back to back evenings!

Ironically, when you tally the attendance numbers in prior years, when we had only one clinic, and compare those numbers to the recent years when we offered two clinics, then three clinics, and back to one in 2004, the numbers were almost identical. We're planning one Hunter Clinic in 2005, and if you can help us, let us know!

SAVE A FAWN COYOTE CALLING EVENT

The AAF, Arizona Elk Society, and Arizona Deer Association, in cooperation with the Arizona Predator Callers, are putting together a coyote calling event rescheduled for February 26-27, 2005. For more information contact Mike Burris at www.AZPredatorcallers.com or you can call him at 480-654-1411.

RIFLE RAFFLE

Look for the announcement of our 2005 Rifle Raffle in the mail soon! Tickets for this beautiful custom made 25-06 rifle by Joe Mahac are \$10 each, or 3 for \$25. The winner will be drawn at our Second Annual Fundraising Banquet August 6, 2005. With all the custom rifle work (Joe Mahac), and rifle components & scope (Nancy Lewis & Joe Bill Pickrell) donated, this is an excellent opportunity to help the AAF with some ticket purchases, and at the same time give yourself a chance at winning a great looking rifle!



THE LATEST TO & FROM THE AZ GAME & FISH DEPARTMENT...

The January Commission meetings resulted in a number of issues moving forward in the Rule process. Some of the latest included the following, all of which the AAF Board recommended for approval:

- Approval of Loyalty Bonus point for those that have applied for a Big Game tag in at least 5 years in a row.
- Changed the 10% pass rule to 20% for those with maximum bonus points per species.
- Recommended a broad range of fee increases that would give the Department flexibility in the fee structure for the next few years.
- New time table set for Conservation Bonus Point program tentatively set for implementation in 2006.

The AAF Board recently voted unanimously in favor of the Department's Big Game Hunting Recommendations for 2005-2006. Of note on the pronghorn front, we concurred with the elimination of the Junior Antelope Hunt (juniors have better odds to draw a tag in the General Hunt!) and we suggested that elk management in selected units be governed by population levels, particularly in areas where elk are encroaching on historical pronghorn habitat.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It's that time of the year again; please renew your commitment to Arizona's antelope! Your membership dues help us cover the cost of project mailings, newsletters, tools and supplies.

In last year's big game draw, 31,007 people applied for a pronghorn tag, and 27,200 were Arizona residents. While applicants desiring to hunt pronghorn have exploded to record numbers, and the pronghorn population has dropped in the drought, our membership has remained relatively stable with around 300 members.

Think about the impact we could have if we had 1000 members, or even more! Recruit a friend and help us expand the number of people helping us help antelope!

OHV LEGISLATION

Another issue that may work its way through the Arizona legislature this year is an Off Highway Vehicle bill. While we haven't seen the bill yet, it could do a number of things, like coordinating State & Federal rules for OHV use and enforcement, charge fees for use, etc. We're watching this topic too.

STATE TRUST LAND REFORM

The AAF has been following the Reform efforts underway across the state with a great deal of interest. There might be two bills put forth in the new session of the legislature, one from a consortium of conservation groups, and the other from a collection of ranching interests. We will keep you posted as we make an effort to provide input on behalf of Arizona's sportsmen & women, and wildlife.

FRIENDS OF THE AGUA FRIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

A group of volunteers coordinated by the BLM folks involved with the AFNM have organized a group of people and organizations interested in the activities and issues surrounding the AFNM. If you weren't aware, our longtime Adopt-a-Ranch partner, the Horseshoe Ranch, is surrounded by the AFNM. Accordingly, the AAF Board recently voted to become a member of the "Friends" group, so we could stay abreast of what was happening there, and positively influence any action or efforts related to the growing pronghorn population on the AFNM. We want to see our many years of sweat equity and efforts continue on in a positive way for antelope.

The first cooperative effort had David Brown teaching the group how to collect pronghorn pellets for the ongoing forage study in Unit 21. This took place on January 23, 2005, and we'll look for a report from David in the near future!

UNIT 21 PRONGHORN COUNT

Most of you know the AAF has spent a considerable amount of time and effort over the years on the Horseshoe Ranch and Prescott National Forest in Unit 21. Our efforts are beginning to pay off, with this year's pronghorn census one of the best in years! This past October's survey yielded 172 animals, with 88 on the Horseshoe! The gratifying thing is, most of the animals were found in areas where the AAF had modified the fences!

OTHER NEWS

- Good Luck to Tice Supplee on her retirement from the Department after 29 years! Tice will switch hats to the Audobon Society, but hopefully will continue to help us out on some pronghorn matters in the future too!

- **Please note the start time of our February Board meeting has been delayed to 7:00 PM.**



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

SPORTSMAN'S CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS!

<i>WHAT?</i>	<i>WHEN?</i>	<i>WHERE?</i>
The Arizona Antelope Foundation Board Meetings	February 14 7:00 PM March 14 6:30 PM April 11 6:30 PM	The Phoenix Zoo 455 N. Galvin Parkway
AAF Work Projects	March 12 April 23	Buenos Aires Unit 21
The Wildlife Conservation Council Board Meetings	February 22 6:30 PM March 22 6:30 PM April 26 6:30 PM	AZ Game & Fish Department 2221 W. Greenway Rd
International Sportsman's Expo	February 18-20	AZ State Fairgrounds
AZ Desert Bighorn Sheep Banquet	February 26 4:00 PM	El Zaribah Shrine
AZ Elk Society Banquet	March 26 4:00 PM	El Zaribah Shrine
AZ Deer Association Banquet	April 16	Rawhide

If you have an upcoming event, send us the information at azantelope@cox.net.