



AZGFD
Game Species
Conservation

GAME TRAILS

Adopt-a-Ranch Program

The Arizona Game and Fish Department has various programs for partnering with landowners to maintain public access. One of these, the Adopt-a-Ranch Program, has proven to be a very effective tool for building good working relationships between landowners and the AGFD.



Under the program, groups such as conservation organizations, Boy Scout troops and OHV clubs, “adopt” ranches with the goal of helping the landowners address issues they are experiencing. With support from the AGFD, the groups help mitigate problems associated with recreational access by visiting their “adopted” ranches once or twice a year to perform routine maintenance, such as rebuilding fences, hanging gates, and picking up litter. It is a win-win-win program, benefiting ranchers, the Department, and the public.

Landowners are important partners to the Department not only in providing public access, but also for enhancing wildlife habitat. As Aldo Leopold wrote in 1934, “Conservation will ultimately boil down to rewarding the private landowner who conserves the public interest.” The Department recognizes that the most efficient and effective way to achieve its conservation goals is through cooperative conservation involving partnerships with landowners, other government agencies, and non-government organizations.

The Adopt-a-Ranch Program encourages these types of partnerships.

The program helps ranchers improve habitat on their lands which they might not have time to complete otherwise. For example, an unnecessary fence may be posing a hazard to cattle and wildlife alike, but the rancher can’t afford to spend several weeks of his time rolling up wire, pulling posts, and hauling away materials by himself. However, with the help of a large group of volunteers, miles of fence removal can be completed in just one day.

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George Andrejko

**“Over 30
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Similarly, putting in water tanks/troughs, running pipelines, and installing solar pumps are huge undertakings for a rancher, but sportsmen are happy to help because of the benefits the water and improved grazing conditions provide to wildlife.



Restoring spring developments and trick tanks are mutually-beneficial projects for livestock and wildlife that provide reliable year-round water. These ventures often would not get done without the help of volunteers.

Over 30 Adopt-a-Ranch projects were completed in 2015; 613 volunteers provided 4,620 volunteer hours, which represents a value of nearly \$64,500. Although the work projects slow down at this time of year while volunteers enjoy the holidays, work continues on setting up new partnerships on more ranches.



**By Troy Christensen
Access Program Coordinator**



Kanab Creek Sheep Restoration

On November 5, 2015, forty Desert Bighorn Sheep from Unit 15D were released into the Kanab Creek drainage in Unit 12A. This release was the culmination of an 11-year effort by a small army of state and federal employees as well as volunteers from the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society (ADBSS).

In 2004 Wildlife Managers noticed that a bighorn sheep disease outbreak was taking place in the Kanab Creek drainage. Managers observed coughing sheep, sheep with ocular and nasal discharge, lack of lamb recruitment and adult mortality. Theorizing that the extreme drought of 2002 resulted in stressed sheep gathered around limited water resources as the likely impetus for the disease outbreak prompted the development of a supplemental management plan. This plan focused on additional surveillance of the herd, disease monitoring, increased water availability and distribution, and population augmentation once the disease outbreak had run its course.

Over the next several years, hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant proposals were funded to repair existing water catchments, construct new water catchments, conduct additional bighorn sheep survey flights, capture sheep for disease assessment, and finally the 15D capture / 12A release effort. Federal partners at the Arizona Strip BLM and the USFS North Kaibab Ranger District worked cooperatively with the Department to pave the way for each of these efforts. The Development Branch and volunteers from the ADBSS worked long hours refurbishing water developments and constructing new catchments in very remote locations. Capture personnel risked life and limb to capture sheep for disease monitoring and for population augmentation.

As this long term effort enters its final chapter, the outlook for the restoration of the Kanab Creek bighorn sheep herd is indeed bright, thanks to the unsung efforts of a cadre of wildlife professionals working in concert with dedicated volunteers.

By Todd Buck
Wildlife Manager



The Regional Conservation Partnership Proposal

Last year, the Department implemented a 5-year project to improve habitat for pronghorn, scaled quail, and several other grassland obligate species at a landscape level. These projects highlight the impact partnerships can have on wildlife habitat by focusing on common goals and working together to find creative solutions. The Department's Landowner Relations Program initiated a Regional Conservation Partnership Proposal through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) that brought together the Arizona Department of Agriculture (ADA), Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), and the US Fish and

Wildlife Service Partners Program (USFWS). Together, these agencies will provide \$3 million in funding for on-the-ground projects that will restore 30,000 acres of grasslands, provide year round water on 75,000 acres of rangeland, and eliminate 20 miles of fencing that impede wildlife movement. Using Farm Bill funding to improve air, water, soils, and wildlife, NRCS is allocating \$1.5 million for this project. ADA is providing \$800,000 through an open space program called the Livestock and Crop Conservation Grant Program, ADEQ is providing \$400,000 through a Water Quality initiative, USFWS is providing \$150,000 for recovery of

By Al Eiden

federal trust species, and the Department is providing the remaining \$150,000 for restoration of pronghorn habitat.

On the surface these agencies may seem to have different goals and objectives; however, through building trust and strong relationships the agencies have developed a common goal to improve grasslands and rangelands for future generations of Arizonans. Restoring grassland habitat and distributing livestock grazing by allocating water throughout rangelands reduces soil erosion, improves water quality, and ensures open spaces for wildlife and livestock to thrive. During the first year of this project, which ended in November 2015, nearly 1,500 acres of grassland were restored, 40,000 acres of rangelands improved with reliable waters, and 5 miles of fencing removed. In the second year of implementation 20,000 acres of grassland will be restored and another 40,000 acres will be enriched with reliable water sources.



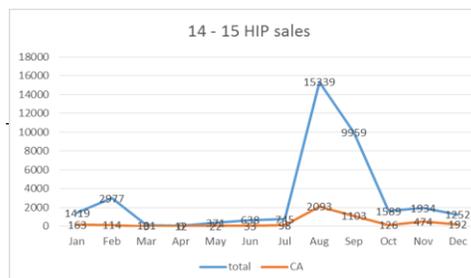


Yuma Dove Hunt by Anis Aoude, Small Game Management Supervisor

To say that dove hunting is big in Yuma is a major understatement. The town goes all out to welcome hunters with banners, special banquets, and big sales at the local sporting goods stores. Nonresident hunters, mostly Californians, flock to this destination to partake in excellent dove hunting. Residents of Arizona also come from all corners of the state to enjoy the good hunting. This carnival atmosphere is good for the town's economy and for conservation. We often see a spike in migratory bird stamp sales just before and during the dove hunt.

What makes Yuma such a good place to hunt doves? A combination of seed crops and nesting cover entices large numbers of doves to nest and migrate through this area.

Although there are still many places that hunters can go to find birds, these trends are changing. Changes in agricultural practices are reducing the numbers of doves that call Yuma home. Many farmers are growing the types of crops that do not benefit doves. Farmers are also realizing the financial benefit of dove hunting and have started to charge for access, limiting the amount of land available to the common hunter. To maintain good dove production and hunting, the Department's Landowner Relations Program is working with farmers who are willing to grant access and plant dove-friendly crops. The landowner specialists encourage these farmers to plant specific crops and harvest them in a way that is conducive to dove production and hunting. In 2015, five farmers partnered with the Department on 157 acres of farmland to provide access and plant seed producing plants that are favorable to doves. If this model continues to be successful in maintaining dove numbers and hunter participation, the Department may expand the program into other agricultural areas throughout Arizona to promote dove hunting, and improve local economies and wildlife conservation.





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Upcoming events:

Region 1

- **February 1-3, 2016:** Turkey captures in Unit 27 on the Blue River for translocation to Region 3
- **April 15-17, 2016: Youth Spring Turkey Hunting Camp – Marvin Robbins Memorial**
Locations: Payson area, Colcord Ridge Campground, Units 23, 4A, 4B, 3C
Register: Rich Williams, azgobbler60@gmail.com
- **April 15-17, 2016: Turkey Sciences and Hunting Camp – Post Wallow Fire**
Location: White Mountains area, Unit 1, 27
Register: www.youthoutdoorsunlimited.com

Region 3

- **January 18-21, 2016:** Deer surveys in Unit 15
- **January 21-24, 2016: Youth Javelina Camp**
Location: Unit 20C
Register: www.youthoutdoorsunlimited.com
- **February 2016:** Javelina hunts
- **March 8-15, 2016: Silver Creek Catchment Build (NEW)** weekend event March 11-13, 2016

Region 4

- **January 2-25, 2016:** Deer and javelina surveys
- **January 22-24, 2016:** Fawn Hills pronghorn water with Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club
- **February 2016:** Bighorn sheep captures Kofa NWR and Gilas/Tinajas Altas scheduled (dates TBD)
- **February 2-9, 2016:** Hunt's Tank redevelopment with Sheep Society and Development Branch
- **March 2016:** 582 redevelopment with Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club (dates TBD)

Region 5

- **February 2016: Women's HAM Javelina Camp**
Location: Unit 36A
- **March 2016: Jr Jack Kamp**

Region 6

- **February 3, 2016:** East Maricopa Natural Resources Conservation District (EMNRCD) Public Workshop – Water and Recreation Workshop with AGFD/SRP at Scottsdale Community College from 6:00pm – 8:00pm
- **April 16, 2016:** Griffin Ranch Cleanup Project

For more information about any of these articles, visit www.azgfd.gov or email azgamebranch@azgfd.gov.

Arizona Game and Fish Department Mission

To conserve Arizona's diverse wildlife resources and manage for safe, compatible outdoor recreation opportunities for current and future generations.

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