



Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

January 14 - 27, 2016

BRIEFING

The following is a summary of bighorn sheep reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest from January 14-27, 2016.

With the continued positive indicators on this project (including a successful November 2015 release and 2013 collars now dropping off as anticipated) the Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project is running smoothly and requiring less intensive management. Coupled with this milestone is an anticipated reduction in the frequency of the current routine bi-weekly project updates. Beginning in March we intend going to a monthly update schedule (issued on the last Friday of each month). More timely project information will continue to be posted on the Arizona Game and Fish Department Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CatalinaBighorns as it becomes available. We believe this approach will continue to provide valuable information about the project in a timely fashion and we welcome feedback from readers on this schedule change.

LAMBING SEASON

There have been a minimum of 8 different lambs confirmed to date. Over the next month, project personnel will be spending considerable time afield confirming lambs and maternity. Photos and videos from our efforts will be posted on the project's Facebook site.

Below, the second and third lambs observed this season were seen with a group of five ewes that included individuals from each of the three bighorn sheep releases. One of the two lambs was likely born to a ewe from the 2013 release. The other mother could not be determined. The ewes were foraging on cacti while the lambs were romping around and climbing on boulders.



The second and third lambs observed in 2016 are shown here with one of the mothers.
Photo by Andrew Jones/AZGFD

Reminder - We are currently within the lambing season for bighorn sheep, and many of the ewes may be in the later stages of pregnancy (see photo below). 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.

Ewe 39539 photographed on January 21st ready to give birth any day
Photo by Ben Brochu/AZGFD



MORTALITIES

There are no mortalities to report during this time period.

BIGHORN SHEEP COLLARS

There is a correction from the last update. Three collars, rather than two, remain on adult ewes from the 2013 release. Eight of 11 collars have fallen off as scheduled; however, collars 34654, 34655, and 34663 did not drop due to a likely malfunction with their release mechanisms. After talking with the collar manufacturer, it is unlikely that these collars will drop. This does not create any added potential risk to the animals since they are mature adults. The collars will remain on the sheep and we will continue to receive data until the batteries fail.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of January 27, 2016, 46 collared sheep are known to be alive.

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

The next written briefing will be provided on February 12, 2016.

CONTACT

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