



Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

August 13 - 26, 2015

BRIEFING

The following is a summary of bighorn sheep reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest from August 13 to 26, 2015.

SHEEP OBSERVATIONS

On August 13, Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) biologists observed three groups of bighorn sheep totaling 21 animals in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness Area. The first group consisted of 2 rams, 9 ewes, and 3 lambs. A second group was spotted later on an adjacent ridge. This group consisted of 2 adult ewes, a yearling ewe, and 1 lamb. The yearling ewe was born to a ewe from the 2013 translocation in January 2014. The third group consisted of 1 ram, 1 ewe, and 1 lamb. All groups appeared healthy, in good body condition and were observed foraging.

On August 14, a Department research biologist observed two additional groups totaling 13 animals in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness. The first group consisted of 1 ram, 5 ewes, and 2 lambs. A second group was observed later that morning and consisted of 1 ram, 2 ewes, and 2 lambs. Both groups appeared healthy, in good body condition and were observed foraging.

The recent sightings of 9 lambs are encouraging, as typical lamb survival in desert bighorn sheep is about 25 percent, and 16 lambs were born in the Santa Catalina Mountains this year.

MORTALITY

The carcass of ewe #37444 was discovered by Department biologists on the afternoon of August 24 after they got a VHF mortality signal. The GPS component of her collar had not uploaded her location since August 21, and it did not send a mortality signal. However, Department staff had been monitoring her decreased movement patterns over the preceding days and surmised she was likely sick. Her carcass was found at her last known location from August 21, and there were no signs of predation. Samples were collected from the carcass for disease testing.

Ewe #37444 was captured in the Tonto National Forest in 2014. She had a lamb early this year, but it would have been independent by now.

RELATED NEWS

On August 23, lightning ignited another fire in the Santa Catalina Mountains about ¼ mile east of Bighorn Mountain in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness. The Bighorn Mountain Fire only burned about 3 acres before it

was extinguished by rain.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of August 26, 2015, 36 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 September 11, 2015.

CONTACT

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