



Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

December 4 through 17, 2014

BRIEFING

The following is a summary of Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest. This project status update covers the period from December 4 through 17, 2014.

LINKS

For project background and previously-reported information on project events, including photos and videos, please visit www.azgfd.gov/catalinabighorn. To view meeting notes and minutes please visit http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/CatBighornReintroProj.shtml.

Additional project information can be obtained by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/azgafd#!/CatalinaBighorns>, the Arizona Game and Fish Department webpage at <http://www.azgfd.gov/catalinabighorn>, the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society webpage at <http://www.adbss.org> or by visiting the Catalina Bighorn Advisory Committee webpage at <http://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 jsacco@azgfd.gov.

SURVEY

On December 3, 2014, the Arizona Game and Fish Department conducted the first survey of the Santa Catalina bighorn sheep population. A helicopter was used to survey for approximately 5 hours. During this time, 16 sheep were observed; 15 collared sheep (14 ewes and 1 ram) and 1 lamb born in the spring of 2014 were located. We conducted the survey without consulting the collar data so that we could determine a baseline observation rate using collared animals. Along with future survey efforts, this data will be used to determine how many sheep are observed from a known quantity. The observation rate can then be used to calculate a population estimate in the future when collars are no longer on the sheep. This year's observation rate was approximately 37%, meaning that we observed 37% of the sheep present in the survey area.

MORTALITIES

On December 7, 2014, Arizona Game and Fish Department personnel confirmed the mortality of a yearling ewe, ID number 435, transplanted to the Catalina Mountains from the Plomosa Mountains on November 21, 2014. The mortality was caused by a mountain lion; the lion has not been located and no pursuit is underway.

On December 3, 2014, Arizona Game and Fish Department personnel investigated the status of sheep ID number 649, a ewe from the Plomosa Mountains. During the survey flight detailed above, we checked on the last known location of sheep ID number 649, collar for which has possibly been malfunctioning since March 2, 2014. From the air we observed a scapula (front shoulder bone) consistent with one the size of a sheep's, close to the last known location of sheep 649 which is now presumed to be dead. Biologists had searched for the ewe by foot since March but were unable to access the area due to the steep and rugged terrain.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of December 17, 2014, 40 collared sheep are known to be alive; one of the new collars may be malfunctioning.

LAMBS

One lamb born earlier this year was observed during the survey flight on December 3, 2014. There have been reports of lambs already being born in the Canyon Lake area where 11 of the ewes came from. Because females with new lambs are especially sensitive to disturbance, there are trail restrictions in place inside the Bighorn Sheep Management Area to minimize any negative impacts from human disturbance on the sheep. Both trailhead notices and volunteers on the trail have been reminding hikers of the potential adverse impacts to the sheep caused by dogs or by people hiking more than 400 feet off-trail within the bighorn sheep recovery area during lambing season. For additional information, please visit the U.S. Forest Service webpage at www.fs.usda.gov/coronado/.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

The next written briefing will be provided on January 2, 2015.

CONTACT

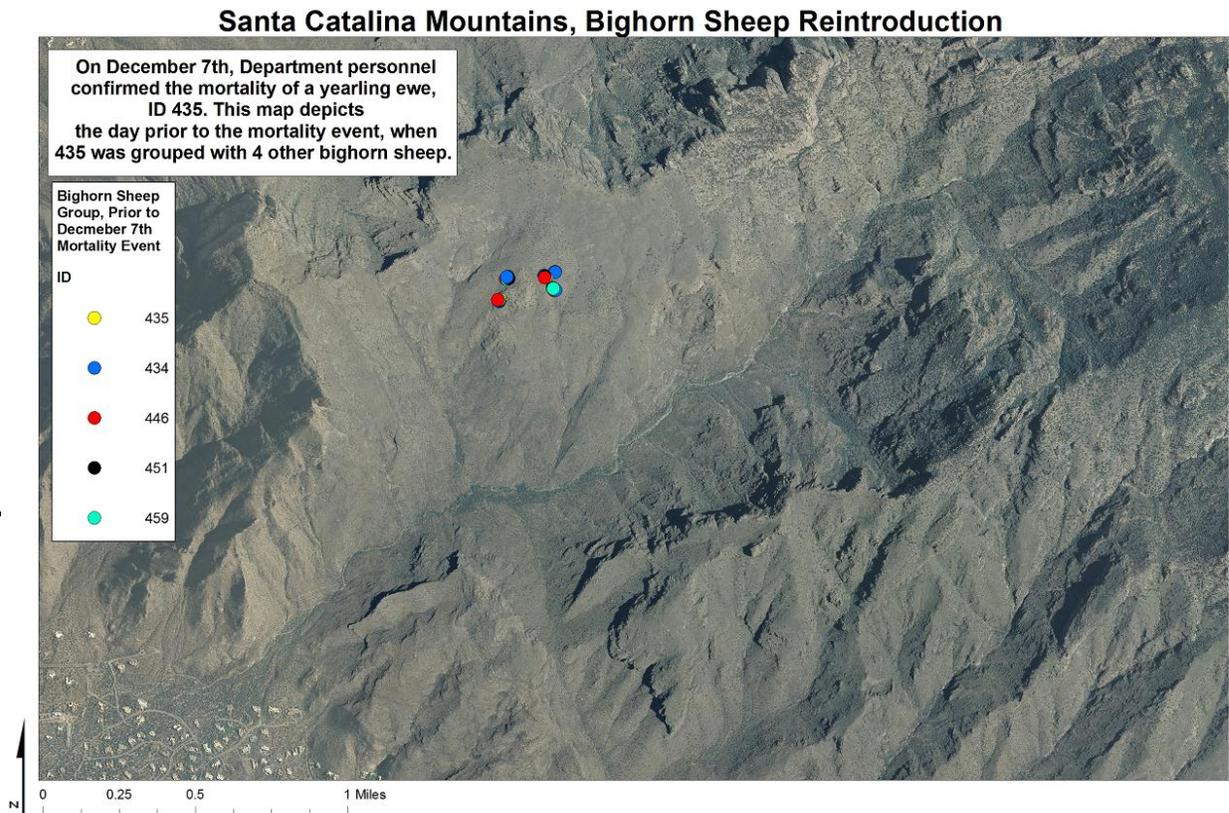
Mark Hart is the Public Information Officer for this project and can be reached at (520) 628-5376.

RESEARCH FIELD NOTES

There are no new field notes for this reporting period.

MAPS

During this reporting period ewe ID #435 was killed by a mountain lion. She had been in a group with four other sheep (5 in total). The maps below show the sheep prior to and after the mortality event. The remaining sheep dispersed; two staying together while the other two split off and remained separated. This scattering is a normal escape response to a traumatic event. In the first map the location of 435 (represented as a yellow dot) is in the same location as the other sheep however due to the overlap of the locations the yellow dot is not visible.



Santa Catalina Mountains, Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction

