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Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

February 11 - 24, 2016

BRIEFING

The following is a summary of bighorn sheep reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest from February 11 through 24, 2016.

LAMBING SEASON

A total of eighteen lambs have been confirmed by visual observations this season. The sixteenth and seventeenth lambs of the season were observed on February 18 with their mothers who were translocated from the Plomosa Mountains in 2014. The group they were with also contained two more ewes and their two lambs, two yearling rams, and one yearling ewe. The eighteenth lamb was confirmed on February 22. Its mother was translocated from the Imperial Hills in 2015.



Four lambs are shown here with a single ewe (part of the group of four ewes, four lambs, and three yearlings observed on February 18).

Photo by Andrew Jones/AZGFD

We are currently within the lambing season for bighorn sheep, and many of the ewes may be in the later stages of pregnancy. 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.

RESEARCH FIELD NOTES

Department research biologists located and observed fifteen groups of bighorn sheep over the last two weeks. At least one yearling was observed in eight of the fifteen groups, and one group had three yearling ewes and two yearling rams.

MORTALITIES

On February 16, a volunteer bighorn sheep monitor received a mortality signal on VHF for Ewe #39555. Department researchers investigated and discovered her carcass on February 17, and the cause of death was determined to be mountain lion predation. It appears that she was killed sometime between the evening of February 14 and the morning of February 15. Pursuit of the lion responsible for the kill was initiated, but was unsuccessful. Ewe #39555 was captured in the Middle Mountains in 2015.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of February 24, 2016, 44 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 March 11, 2016.

CONTACT

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