



Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

July 16 – 29, 2015

BRIEFING

The following is a summary of bighorn sheep reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest from July 16-29, 2015.

RELATED NEWS

The recent Buster Mountain fire burned approximately 200 acres in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness. Fire is a natural process in this ecosystem, and one benefit of fire is improved forage for bighorn sheep. Summer rains will likely rejuvenate the herbaceous understory vegetation. The resulting increase in quantity and quality of herbaceous vegetation will provide improved nutrition for bighorn sheep and lambs. GPS collars reveal that two bighorn sheep have already been investigating the burned area.

MORTALITIES

Early on the morning of Saturday, July 25, Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) personnel received a mortality alert from the collar vendor website for GPS collar #37439. Later that morning, a volunteer conducting the daily VHF telemetry check of each collared sheep notified the Department after he received a mortality signal for the same sheep, which prompted a site visit by Department personnel. It appears that ewe #37439 died at approximately 3pm on Friday, July 24 as a result of a fall from a small cliff on Pontatoc Ridge. The Department will conduct a necropsy and submit samples for lab testing to examine the ewe's general health status and to determine if any detectable health issues were present. Although mortalities due to falls are not common, they have been noted in other studies of collared sheep.

Ewe #37439 was captured in the Tonto National Forest in 2014. She was an older ewe, aged at approximately 8 years old. The average lifespan for bighorn sheep is 10-12 years. She had a lamb early this year, but young only nurse for about 2 ½ months, so the lamb would have been weaned and independent by now.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of July 29, 2015, 39 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 August 14, 2015.

CONTACT

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