

Trans-Pecos Pronghorn Restoration Efforts Continue

The continuation of the Trans-Pecos Pronghorn Restoration Project progressed with another successful relocation of almost 100 pronghorn recently.

The animals were captured from healthy populations around Pampa and moved to an area southeast of Marfa to supplement severely depleted pronghorn populations.

The relocation process was coordinated among the Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University (BRI), Trans-Pecos Pronghorn Working Group, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and USDA-Wildlife Services. Quicksilver Air, Inc. conducted the capture.

The objective of the Trans-Pecos Pronghorn Restoration Project is to bolster pronghorn populations that have reached historic lows through translocations, habitat improvements, and predator management.

At least 17,000 pronghorn once roamed the West Texas region; today there are less than 3,000. The Trans-Pecos Pronghorn Restoration Program is a five-year \$1.4 million public-private partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. To date, \$1 million has been secured.

Last year, 125 pronghorn were captured from the Dalhart area and released on ranches near Marathon. Currently, TPWD estimates about 80 percent of the transplanted pronghorn remain and reproduction was also high with a fawn crop of over 70% in the Marathon area. The transplanted pronghorn and their offspring have

significantly boosted the local population within the release area near Marathon, which had less than 50 animals prior to the translocation.

"We hope this population will continue to grow and become another source for pronghorn in the next few years to help supplement other herds in the Trans-Pecos," said Shawn Gray, TPWD Mule Deer and Pronghorn Program Leader.

"The release areas in 2013 and 2014 had favorable range conditions. We also spent months working with landowners to prepare each release site, including fence modifications and predator management. Trans-Pecos field staff and BRI students, headed by local Wildlife Biologists Mike Janis and Mike Sullins were instrumental in this effort," Gray stated.

For the 2014 transplant, Trey Barron, TPWD Wildlife Biologist stationed in Pampa spent endless hours coordinating with local landowners to obtain trapping permission and working on trap-site logistics.

"Without Trey's dedication and local landowner support, this project would not have happened" said Gray.

At the capture site, workers took each animal's temperature to monitor stress, along with blood and fecal samples for disease surveillance. The pronghorn also received a mild sedative to minimize stress related to capture and transport. Ear tags were attached for identification. Sixty six of the captured pronghorn were fitted with radio collars, including 53 GPS collars programmed to collect GPS locations every hour. One year post-release, the GPS collars will automatically drop from the animals and be retrieved by researchers to download and analyze the GPS data.

After processing, the pronghorn

were transported by trailer to the release site southeast of Marfa.

"The capture could not have gone any smoother," said Dr. Louis Harveson, BRI director and Sul Ross professor of Natural Resource Management. "The pronghorn were in excellent shape and traveled really well."

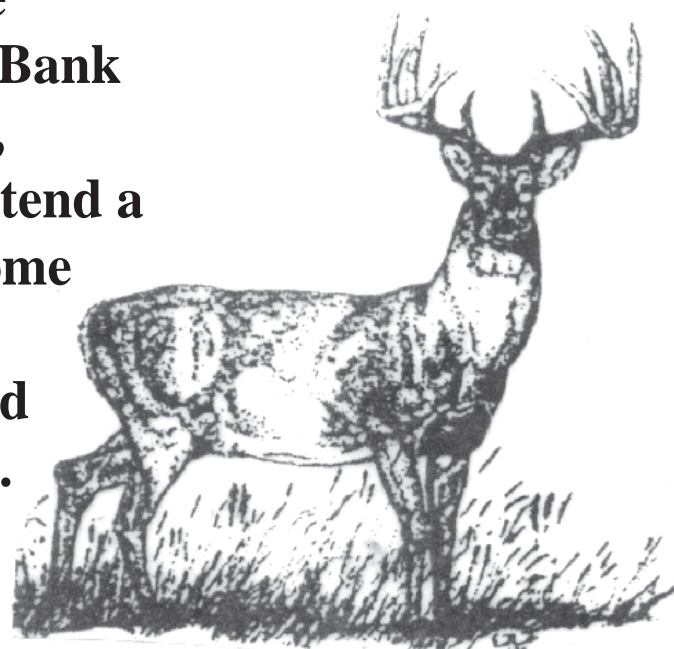
During the next year, the BRI and TPWD will closely monitor the translocated pronghorn to determine survival, reproductive productivity, fawn survival, habitat utilization, and movements. This research will help define the best management practices essential in growing pronghorn populations in the Trans-

Pecos region.

"We sincerely appreciate all the cooperation and support from our partners and the Pampa and Trans-Pecos communities," stated Gray. "Their continued support will help ensure pronghorn herds will recover and continue to roam the desert grasslands of Texas."

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