

SONORAN PRONGHORN
(Antilocapra americana sonoriensis)

STATUS: Endangered, March 11, 1967 (32 FR 4001). Critical habitat has not been designated for the pronghorn.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Pronghorn are long-legged, small-bodied artiodactyls (hoofed mammals with an even number of toes on each foot). Upper parts are tan; the underpart, rump, and two bands across the neck are white. The male has two black cheek patches. Both sexes have horns, although they are larger in males. Males weigh 100 to 130 pounds, while females weigh 75 to 100 pounds. The Sonoran pronghorn is the smallest and palest subspecies of *Antilocapra americana*.

HABITAT: Data collected from radio-collared animals and fecal pellet analysis have provided detailed information on habitat use. All Sonoran pronghorn populations occur in Sonoran desert scrub vegetation communities. Creosote (*Larrea tridentata*) and white bursage (*Ambrosia dumosa*) comprise the major vegetation in the Lower Colorado River Valley subdivision. Plant species along major water courses include ironwood (*Olneya tesota*), blue palo verde (*Parkinsonia floridum*), and mesquite (*Prosopis velutina* and *P. glandulosa*). Species in the Arizona Upland include foothill palo verde (*Parkinsonia microphyllum*), catclaw acacia (*Acacia greggii*), chain fruit cholla, teddy bear cholla (*Cylindropuntia bigelovii*), buckhorn cholla (*C. acanthocarpa*), and staghorn cholla (*C. versicolor*). Typical habitat ranges in elevation from 610 to 1,219 meters (2000 to 4,000 ft). The habitat of the pronghorn in the U.S. consists of broad alluvial valleys separated by block-faulted mountain and surface volcanics. The Sonoran pronghorn diet typically consists of anywhere from 20-99% forbs in certain seasons so the presence of these plants in the vegetation communities is vital.

On the Gulf Coast of Sonora, Mexico, pronghorn also occur in the Central Gulf Coast subdivision of Sonoran desert scrub. This form of Sonoran desert scrub is very rich in species, particularly stem succulents, but there is a general absence of a low shrub layer. Elephant tree (*Bursera microphylla*, *B. hindsiana*), sangre de drago (*Jatropha cuneata*), and *Jatropha cinerea* are common, but creosote is only locally abundant.

RANGE: Historical: Southwest Arizona, south of the Bill Williams River and east to the Santa Cruz River. In Mexico, the subspecies is also found in the northern part of the state of Sonora.

Current: Three populations of the Sonoran pronghorn are currently extant, including: (1) the U.S. population in southwestern Arizona; (2) a population in the Pinacate Region of northwestern Sonoran; and (3) a population on the Gulf of California west and south of Caborca, Sonora. The populations are geographically isolated due to barriers such as roads and fences, and in the case of the two Sonora populations, by distance.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Conversion of habitat to other uses and barriers to movement caused by roads, canals, train tracks, and fences are the primary causes of the decline of the Sonoran pronghorn. Other compounding and equally important causes include such things as overgrazing, diseases brought in with domestic livestock, and overhunting, particularly during the earlier half of the 20th Century.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Air Force, National Park Service, and Tohono O'odham Nation.

NOTES:

- A Recovery Plan was completed in December 1982, revised in December 1998, and updated in 2001.
- Sonoran pronghorn is listed as a Species of Special Concern by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD).
- Based on biennial surveys conducted from 1994-2000, AGFD has estimated the Sonoran pronghorn population has varied from a recent high of 282 individuals in 1994 to a low of 99 individuals in December, 2000. Additionally, in the last five years since 1995, every year but 1998 has been a drought year with low fawn production (zero to 15%). Since female Sonoran pronghorn are only reproductive thru 10 years of age, the current U.S. population is rapidly aging with this low recruitment level.
- In 2002, during the worse drought in 100 years in Arizona, the Sonoran pronghorn population experienced a dramatic decline. Over 70% of the Arizona population has in the drought. The Fish and Wildlife Service and several cooperating agencies are currently undertaking emergency actions in an attempt to save the Sonoran pronghorn in the U.S.