

The pronghorn is the fastest land mammal on the continent, with bursts of speed up to 55 miles per hour. Even week-old babies can run faster than a horse. In the world, only the cheetah is faster. Pronghorns can run at high speeds longer than cheetahs, though, so it is the faster animal on earth over distance.

Many people call pronghorns that live in Arizona antelope, but that isn't correct. They're not related to the antelopes found in Africa. Pronghorns were first brought to the notice of the scientific community early in the 1800s by the Lewis and Clark expedition.



Courtesy Heidi Dahms-Foster.

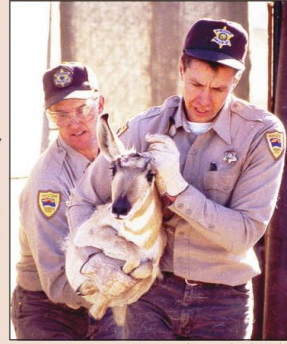
but the male's horns usually are larger. Males also can be told apart from females by a black patch of hair behind their cheekbones.

Pronghorns can get water from the plants they eat, but will drink when water is available.

They gather in large groups in the winter, and will follow each other in a long line when trudging through snow.

Thousands of pronghorns used to roam Arizona. Their numbers have been reduced

and Glassford Hill Road being built, the pronghorns were threatened by the increased traffic and lack of forage. Now Arizona Game and Fish officials are worried about the Glassford Hill herd, because a large housing development is taking its territory. So in January, Arizona Game and Fish relocated 45 pronghorns to prime habitat in Wilcox in southern Arizona. The Arizona Antelope Foundation and local



Arizona Game and Fish biologists carefully carry a pronghorn during a relocation event.

other parts of the state to near Mayer and Cordes Junction.

Arizona isn't the only state to relocate its pronghorns to give the animals a better chance of survival. Colorado does this within that state, as well. New Mexico sent 41 pronghorns to

Arizona—a dozen near Elgin, and another 17 to the San Rafael Valley of the Coronado National Forest—a few years ago for the same reason.

To make the habitat in southern Arizona friendlier to pronghorns, volunteers removed thousands of acres of mesquite, and modified miles of fences so that the lowest strand of wire is not barbed. Pronghorns don't leap fences,



PRONGHORNS!

North America's fastest land mammals live in Arizona

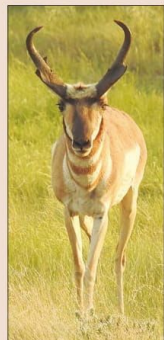
Story by Cheryl Hartz. Photos by Cheryl Hartz and Heidi Dahms-Foster.



A pronghorn dashes away from a group of volunteers trying to herd it to safer pastures in Prescott Valley.

After studying them, scientists decided that pronghorns merit their very own taxonomic family, Antilocapridae.

These animals don't have true horns or true antlers, but what are called their horns actually are a cross of both. True horns are made of bone and are shed each year. True antlers are made of compressed keratin (hair) and are not shed.



Courtesy Heidi Dahms-Foster.

Pronghorns shed their forked horns of keratin each year—the only animals to do so. Both males and females have horns,

drastically, because homes and businesses now fill up a lot of former pronghorn habitat. Building towns and cities also blocks the pronghorns' migration routes, so they can't meet up with each other to breed. Human development is the world's number one cause of wildlife extinction, so wildlife managers try to find new homes for threatened species, including pronghorns. Sportsmen became concerned about the pronghorns' continued existence as early as 1920 and began efforts to save them from extinction.

More than 20 years ago, in April of 1996, about 250 people of all ages in Prescott Valley got together in the center of town to create a "human chain" to drive a herd of about 30 pronghorns to a safer location. With a new Civic Center going up,

landowners helped with the project to reduce the 100-animal herd by about half. The remaining pronghorns will have less competition for food.

Volunteers erected a temporary corral with a chute area. A helicopter herded the ungulates toward the enclosure and a line of people got behind the pronghorns to move them into it. The pronghorns were allowed to calm down, then they were blindfolded to make them even calmer. Radio collars were fitted. Trucks took the pronghorns—each in its own special crate—to their new home.

Relocating pronghorns to less populated areas increases chances for survival of this unique species by allowing for more genetic diversity in the existing populations they join. Officials have moved pronghorns from Prescott Valley before, and also from



Veterinarians inoculate a pronghorn against disease during a relocation event.



Clayton Spedding, Travis McElwee and Tera pose with a realistic decoy pronghorn after the drive in 1996.

but rather crawl under them.

To support wildlife, Volunteers join together in groups such as the Arizona Mule Deer Foundation, Arizona Mule Deer Organization, Wild Turkey Federation and others to remove unnecessary fencing and invasive plant species, and to add water tanks and catchment basins which also benefit other wildlife, such as deer, elk, coyotes, mountain lions and bears.

Maybe someday you'll help make life better for wildlife.



Courtesy Heidi Dahms-Foster.