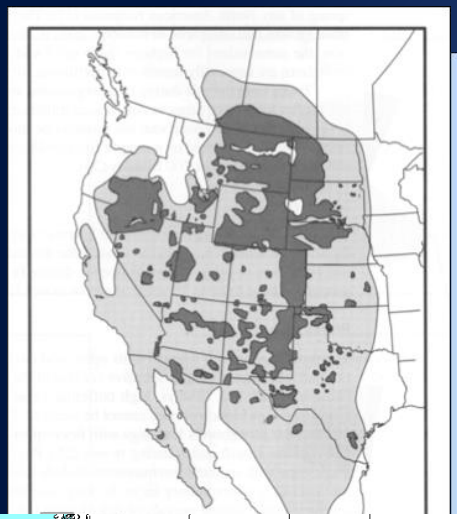
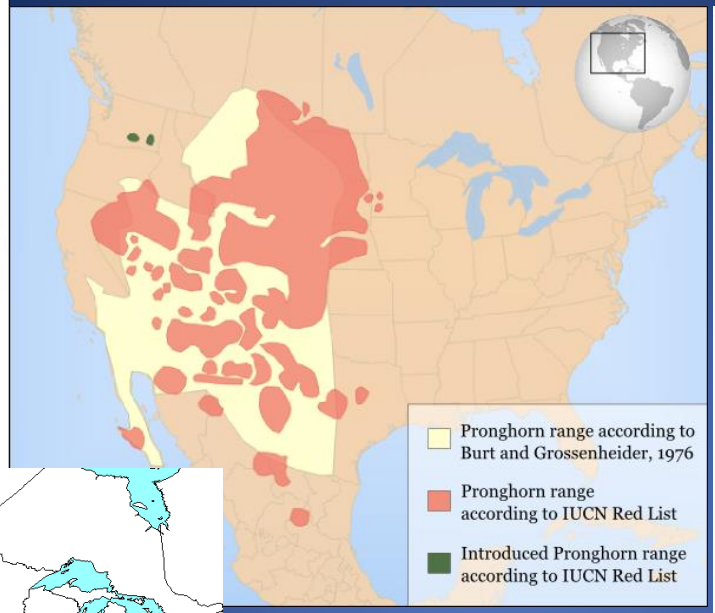
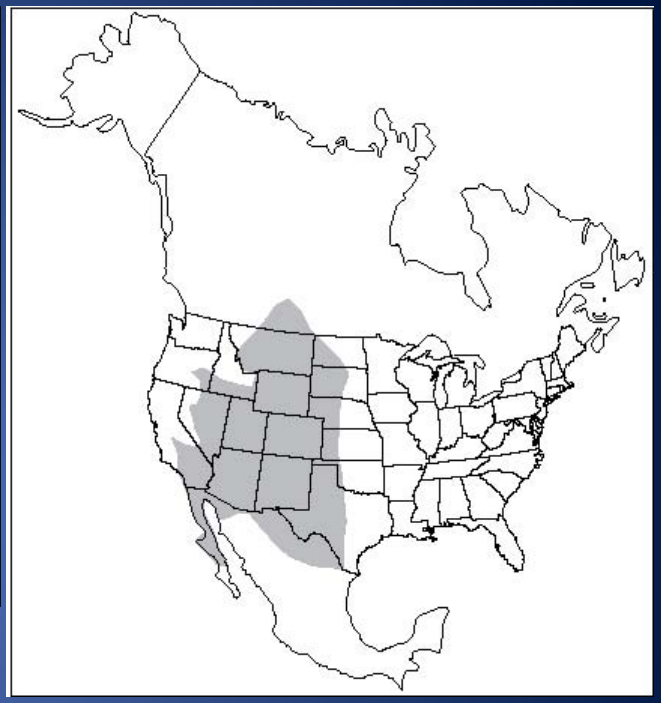
Pronghorn antelope in Washington: History, status, future options

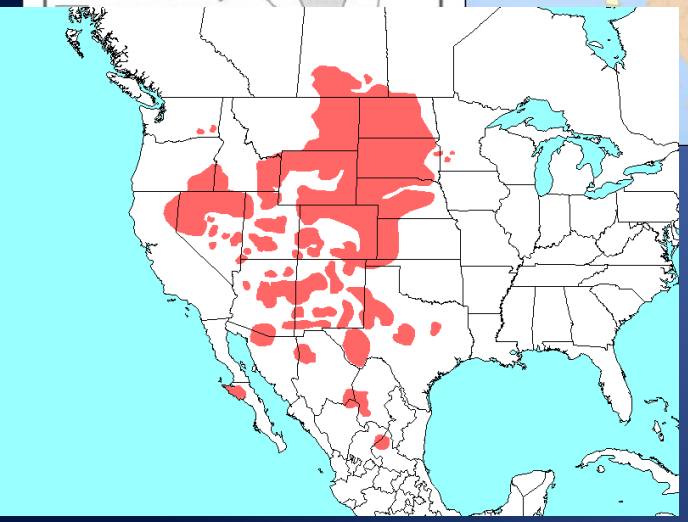
Washington Department of FISH and WILDLIFE

Dr. Richard B. Harris
Section Manager, Game Division
Wildlife Program









Most sources suggest historic range barely included Washington

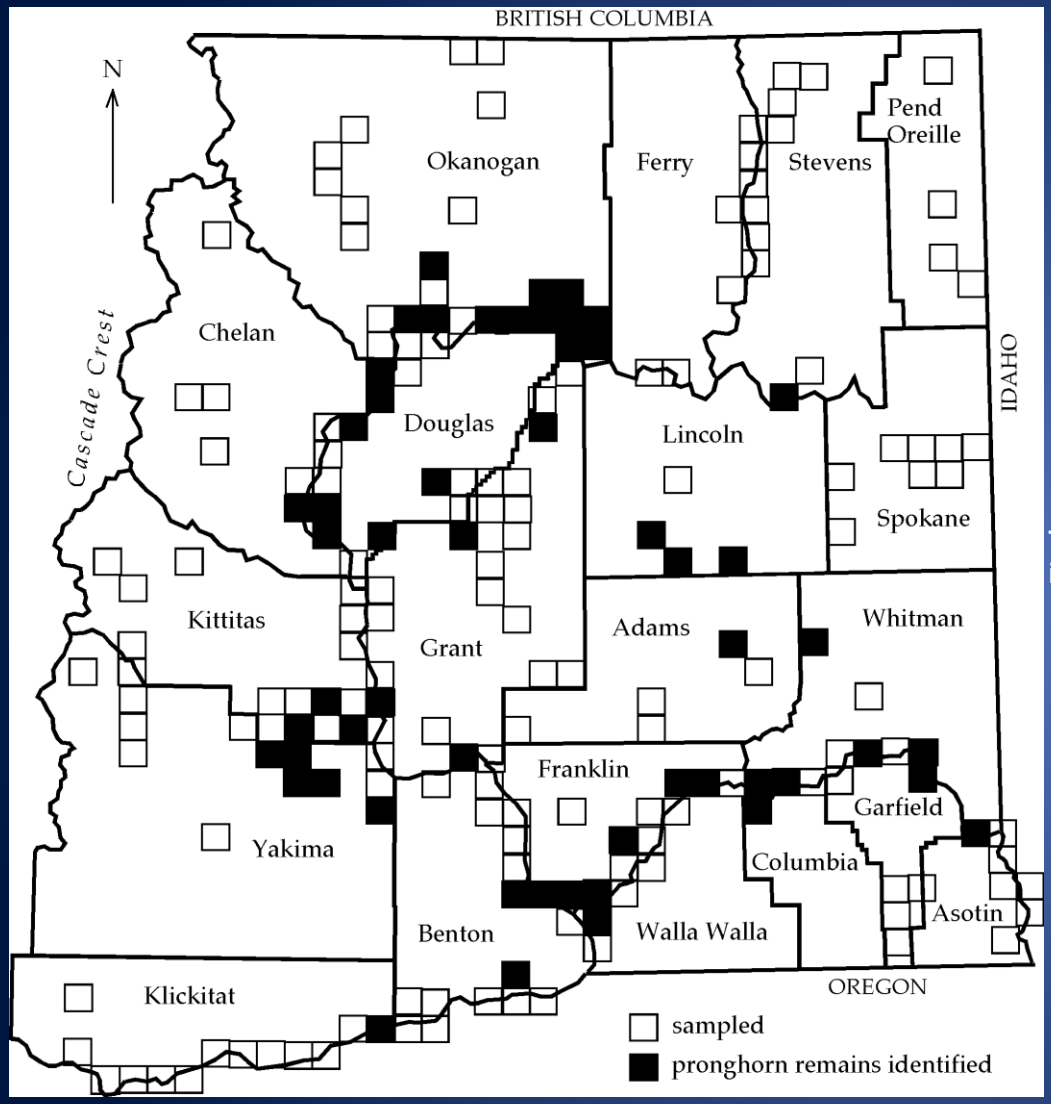


Figure 1. Map of eastern Washington State showing townships sampled (open squares) and townships where pronghorn remains have been identified (black squares).

The Holocene History of Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) in Eastern Washington State

R. Lee Lyman

Northwest Science, Vol. 81, No. 2, 2007

"Pronghorns were rare in eastern Washington in the nineteenth century, and likely had become locally extirpated by the beginning of the twentieth century…because (1) the route followed by immigrants was closed…and (2) eastern Washington was marginal habitat for pronghorn over the past 10,000 years or more, so it didn't take much human predation to deplete local herds.

Why previous efforts to transplant pronghorn to the state failed and how the probability of successful transplants in the future can be increased is unclear…. I suspect the reasons include a naturally marginal habitat which agriculture-related land use practices have now rendered uninhabitable for pronghorn…"

(from Lyman 2007)

Three department-conducted reintroductions:

Present-day YTC

Table 1. A summary of pronghorn introductions in W shington

Year	Source	Release site	# Acquired	# Released
1938	NV, Sheldon NWR	Squaw Cr., Kittitas Co.	25 fawns	1 sub adult
1939	NV, Sheldon NWR	Squaw Cr., Kittitas Co.	25 fawns	21 sub adults
1940	OR, Hart Mt. NWR	Squaw Cr., Kittitas Co.	88 fawns	16 sub adults
1950	WA, Squaw Cr., Kittitas Co.	Harder Rch., Ritzville, Adams Co.	10	10
1968	OR, near Burns, Harney Co.	Colockum, Kittitas Co.	11	10
		Summer Falls, Grant Co.	11	11
Total			170	69

} 38 -> 100, then to 0

- 10 -> 80, then to 0

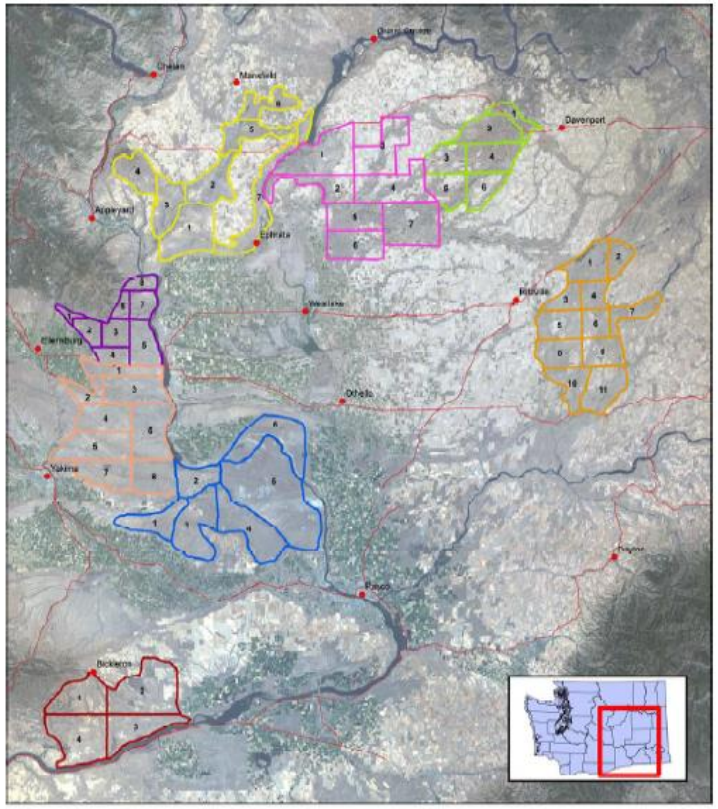
Both 1968 efforts ultimately failed

ASSESSMENT OF PRONGHORN HABITAT POTENTIAL IN EASTERN WASHINGTON

BY GEORGE K. TSUKAMOTO

JUNE 2006

APPENDIX A. Pronghorn Feasibility Study Areas



Left: field evaluations;
Right: GIS model results.
Note lack of concordance in ranking among the two…

McCarthy, Clinton and Jim Yoakum. 1984. An interagency approach to evaluating pronghorn transplant sites in Mono County, California. Proceedings of the Eleventh Pronghorn Antelope Workshop. Corpus Christi, TX. pp134-143.

Table 36. Pronghorn habitat field evaluation summary for eight areas of eastern WA.

Criteria / Area	Vegetation Forbs	Vegetation Shrubs	Vegetation Grass	Vegetation Quantity	Vegetation Height	Water Distribution	Topography	Size & Continuity	Land Owner-Ship & Use	Limitation & Obstructions	Total Score	Rank
Yakima Training Center	.46	.48	.30	.54	.70	.58	.46	.71	.70	.59	**5.52**	**1**
Quilomene	.46	.44	.29	.58	.66	.73	.33	.53	.63	.50	**5.15**	**2**
Swanson Lakes	.52	.48	.32	.63	.50	.80	.43	.50	.43	.43	**5.04**	**3**
Cow and Rock Creek	.43	.34	.30	.52	.50	.69	.59	.56	.33	.46	**4.72**	**4**
Grand Coulee, Wilson Cr., Black Rock Coulee	.34	.47	.20	.49	.53	.43	.54	.37	.35	.41	**4.13**	**5**
Moses Coulee, Badger Mountain and Mansfield	.36	.40	.29	.54	.46	.40	.41	.34	.39	.46	**4.05**	**6**
Rattlesnake Hills, Wahluke, Hanford	.27	.29	.25	.52	.43	.42	.43	.42	.47	.43	**3.93**	**7**
Bickelton	.29	.35	.23	.45	.49	.48	.33	.33	.31	.33	**3.59**	**8**
Mean	.39	.33	.27	.53	.53	.57	.44	.42	.45	.45	**4.51**	

A point score of 9.1 and above is considered excellent, 7.1 to 9.0 good, 4.1 to 7.0 fair and 0 to 4.0 poor.

Table 37. GIS Analysis of Pronghorn habitat normalized weighted rating (topography, aspect, vegetation & distance to water).

Area	Normalized Weighted Rating	Rank
Rattlesnake Hills, Hanford, Wahluke	7.21	1
Yakima Training Center	7.05	2
Bickelton	6.96	3
Cow & Rock Cr.	6.88	4
Mosses Coulee, Badger Mt., Mansfield	6.83	5
Swanson Lakes	6.84	6
Quilomene	6.73	7
Grand Coulee, Wilson Creek, Black Rock Coulee	6.45	8

The score values for each variable were normalized to range from 0 to 10.

(From Tsukamoto 2006)

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January 23, 2011 in **Outdoors**

Pronghorns released for new start on Yakama Indian Reservation

Ancient inhabitants are of the Columbia Basin

Rich Landers The Spokesman-Review

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Tags: antelope outdoors pronghorns Safari Club International Washington Cattlemen's Association Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife wildlife Yakama Nation Yakama Tribe

Associated Press photo

Pronghorns were herded by helicopter in Nevada on Jan. 15 before being netted and captured for transfer to Washington, where 99 of the prairie speedsters were released on the Yakama Indian Reservation.
(Full-size photo)(All photos)

Related stories

- Game relocation science vastly improved January 23, 2011
- Nevada glad to provide 'lopers' January 23, 2011
- Pronghorn quiz January 23, 2011

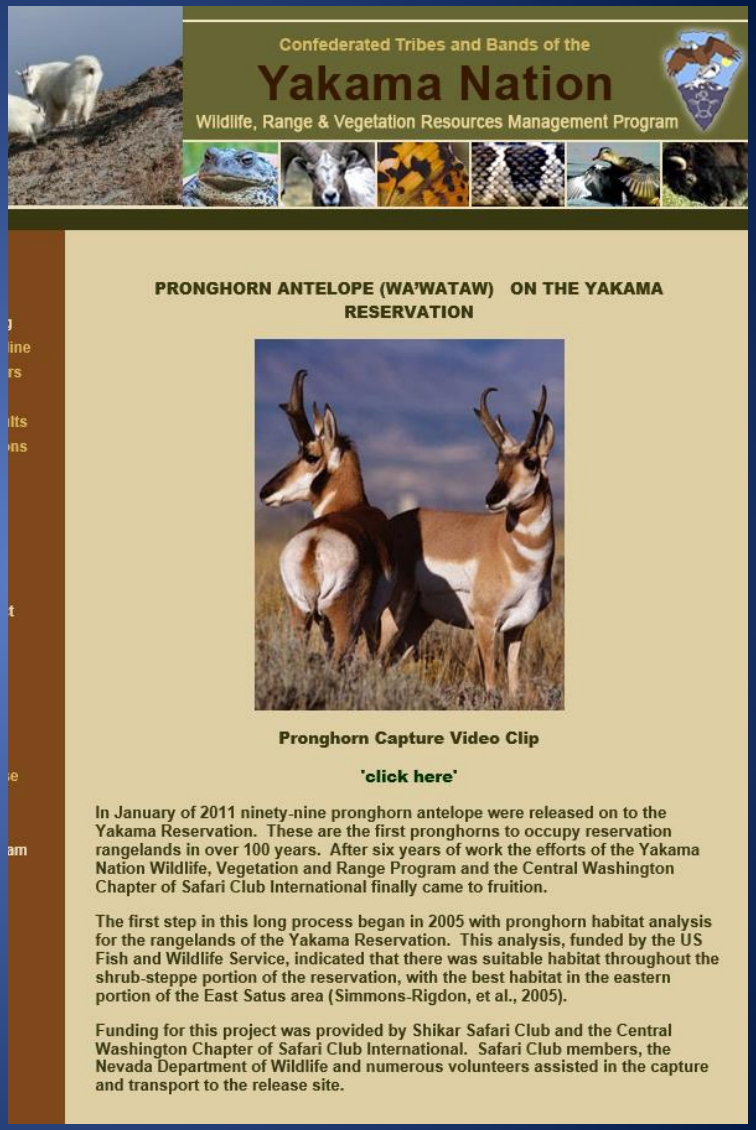
Pronghorns are reasserting themselves as the fastest land mammals in Washington, thanks to a sportsmen's group that joined with the Yakama Nation for an end run around state bureaucracy and environmental red tape.

Volunteers from Safari Club International and tribal members released 99 of the prairie speedsters last weekend on the Yakama Indian Reservation after trucking them 700 miles from their capture site in Nevada.

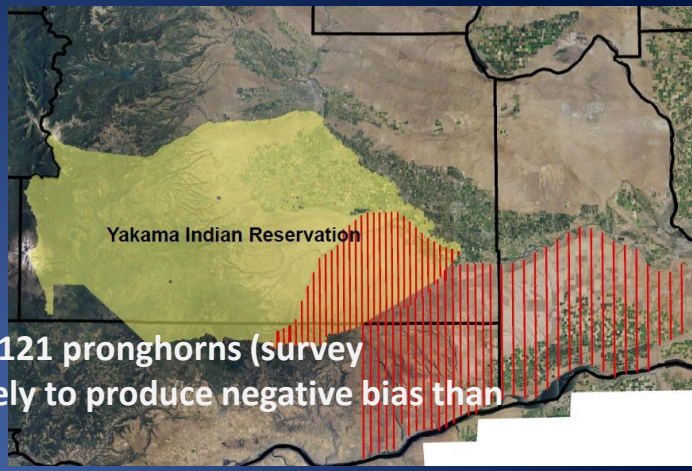
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife officials said they are supportive of the reintroduction. However, by not involving the state agency in the pronghorn capture and release, the Yakamas avoided dealing in advance with issues that get sticky for government agencies.

The remote potential for introducing disease to livestock already had been raised as an issue by the Washington Cattlemen's Association.

Other agricultural groups were concerned about the pronghorn's inclination to leave the sagebrush country for irrigated alfalfa and grain crops when foraging gets tough.

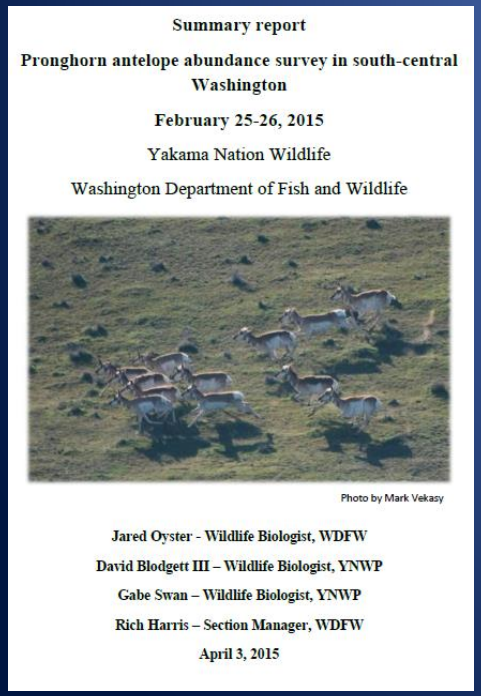


Two Joint YN-WDFW aerial surveys



Late February 2015: ~ 132 pronghorns, about half on Reservation, half off

Mid-March 2017: ~ 121 pronghorns (survey conditions more likely to produce negative bias than in 2016)



Summary report

Pronghorn antelope abundance survey in south-central Washington

February 25-26, 2015

Yakama Nation Wildlife

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Photo by Mark Vekasy

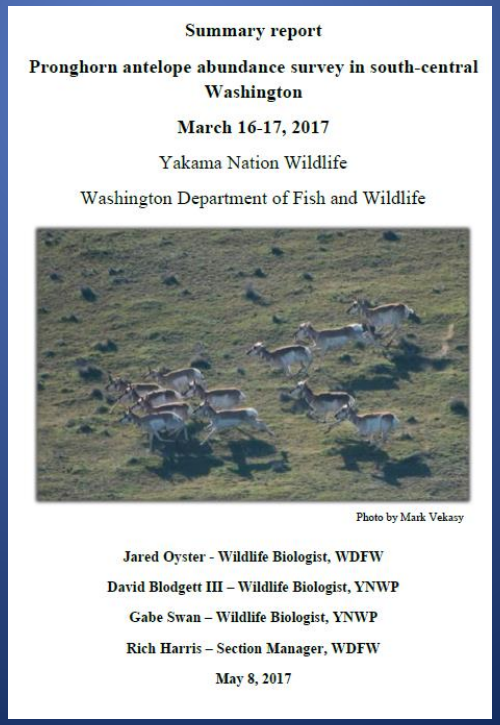
Jared Oyster - Wildlife Biologist, WDFW

David Blodgett III – Wildlife Biologist, YNWP

Gabe Swan – Wildlife Biologist, YNWP

Rich Harris – Section Manager, WDFW

April 3, 2015



Summary report

Pronghorn antelope abundance survey in south-central Washington

March 16-17, 2017

Yakama Nation Wildlife

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Photo by Mark Vekasy

Jared Oyster - Wildlife Biologist, WDFW

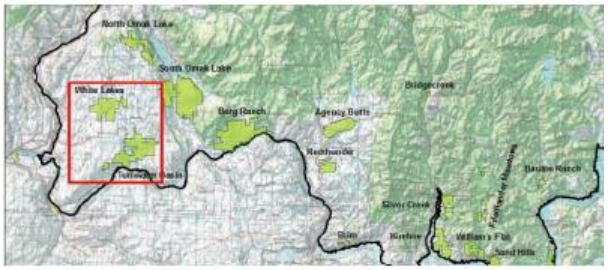
David Blodgett III – Wildlife Biologist, YNWP

Gabe Swan – Wildlife Biologist, YNWP

Rich Harris – Section Manager, WDFW

May 8, 2017

3rd joint survey funded, Tentatively planned for Jan 25, 2019



PRONGHORN ARE A NATIVE SPECIES TO THE HOMELANDS OF OUR PEOPLE

A wildlife team from the Colville Tribes' Fish and Wildlife (CTFW) Department will head to Nevada this coming January to assist with capture efforts of up to 100 pronghorn antelope. The animals will be released near the Tumwater Basin and White Lakes Mitigation Areas, which are located on the southwest corner of the Colville Indian Reservation.

"Our staff will work with the Nevada Department of Wildlife," said Richard Whitney, wildlife manager. "We will utilize an aerial capture company from Nevada to roundup and corral the pronghorn groups into a capture area. From there, the ground crews will move them to a processing area."

Once in the processing area, each animal will receive shots, veterinarian check-ups, have blood drawn for disease testing, and get GPS-collars attached (to aid in monitoring efforts), and other basic information will be gathered. After they are processed, the pronghorn will be loaded into livestock trailers. Wildlife officials say the release should happen within 24 hours after being captured.

The Wildlife Management Areas where the animals will be released were purchased by the Colville Tribal Wildlife Mitigation Project, and are primarily managed for the benefit of wildlife and their habitats. These parcels of land were purchased using funding supplied by Bonneville Power Administratio to offset a portion of their wildlife mitigatio obligation for Grand Coulee and Chie Joseph hydropower projects. Wildlife sta have protected these lands from livestoc conducted planting and seeding effort removed unneeded fencing and mad existing fencing more wildlife friendly b removing the bottom wire and using smoot wire so pronghorn can go under fence without injury.

"There is enough native habitat on th plateau to support them," said Whitne "We chose to move forward with th reintroduction at this time since a primar goal of the wildlife program is to restor native and desired non-native species t the Colville Reservation. Pronghorn ar a native species to the homelands of ou people. Since they have been extirpated fro Wash., our tribal members have had to go t other states in order to utilize these animal for subsistence."

Pronghorn reintroduced to north-central Washington

Mon., Feb. 1, 2016, 4:55 p.m.

Fifty-two pronghorn were captured in Nevada and released on land owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservati last week. (Courtesy Of Confederated Tribes / Courtesy Of Confederated Tribes)

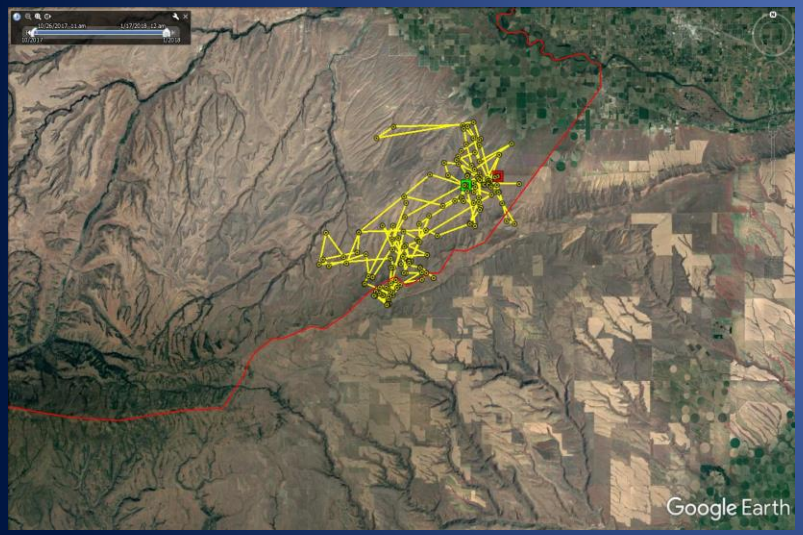
2017 Pronghorn Capture

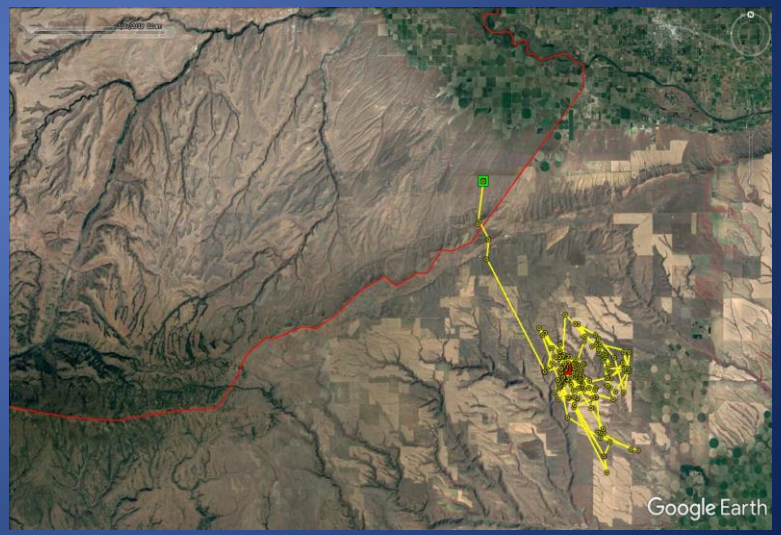
- Goal: Translocate 100 pronghorn from Central Nevada to YN Reservation
- Result: 52 pronghorn captured on Oct 26
  - 30 Adult females
  - 6 Juvenile males
  - 16 Juvenile females

2nd translocation to Yakama Nation Reservation

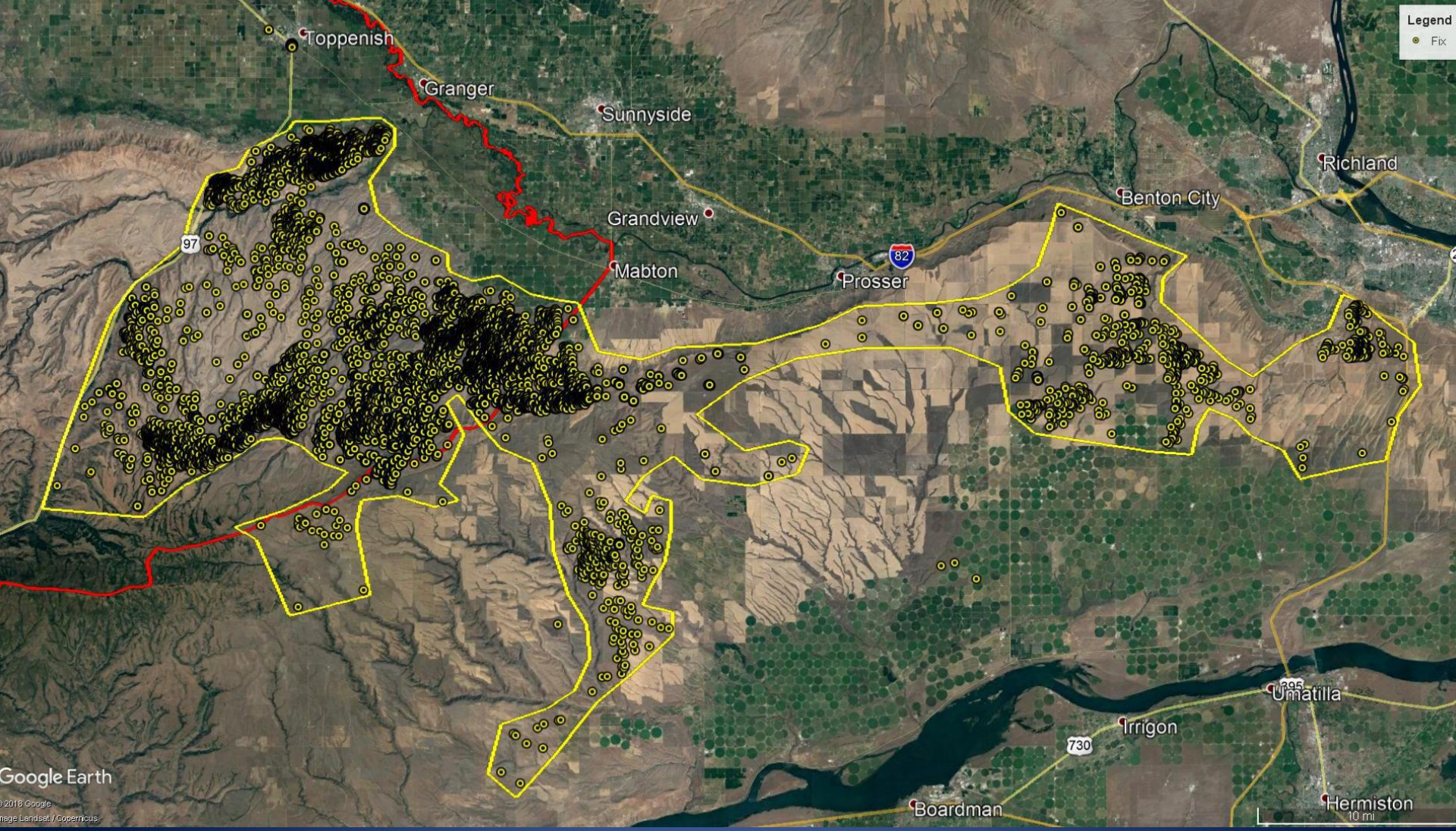
Also supported by local Safari Club International chapters

Yakama Nation November 2017

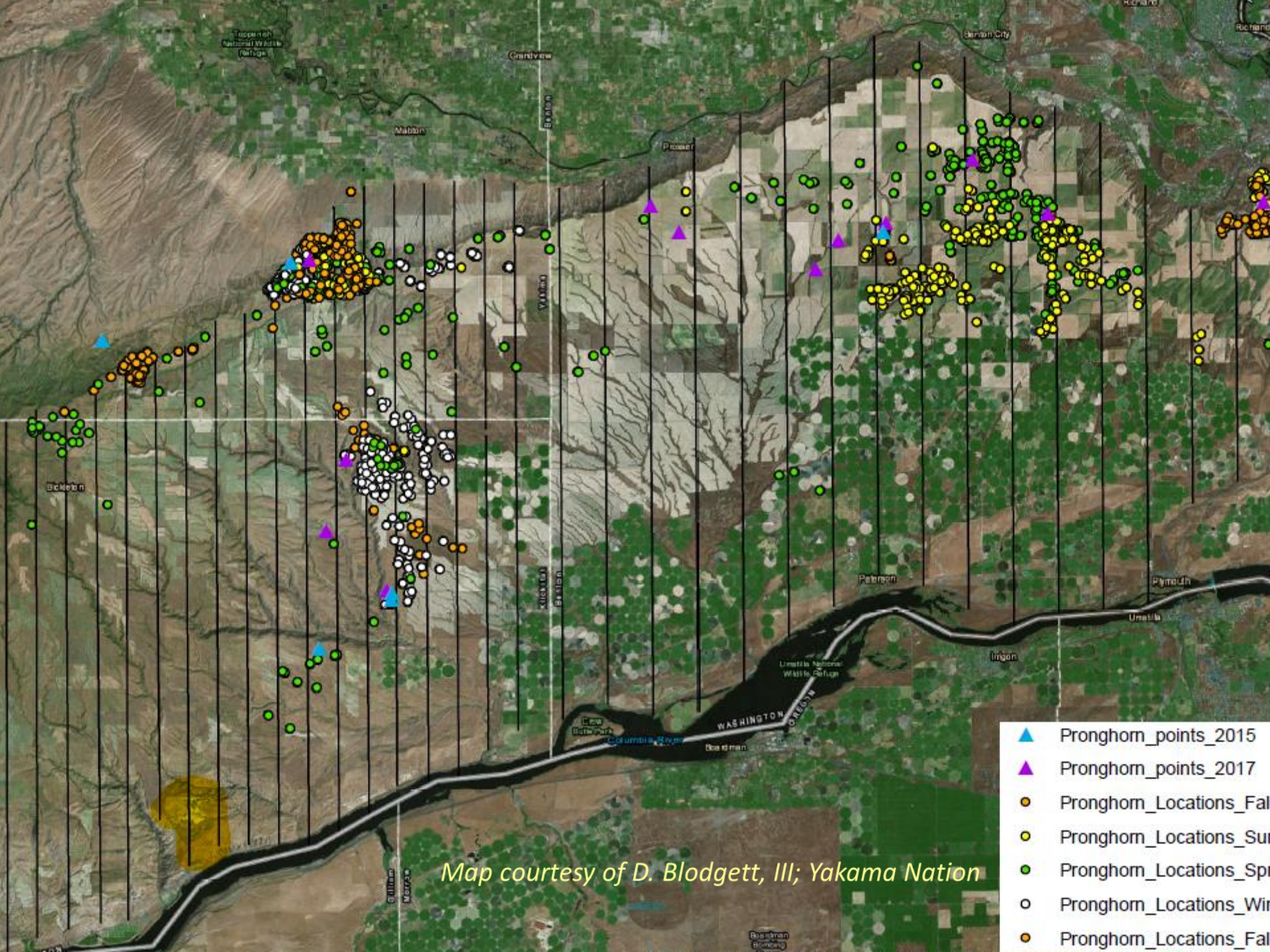




From YN Progress report Jan. 2018 (D. Blodgett III)



Map courtesy of D. Blodgett, III; Yakama Nation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Pronghorn_points_2017
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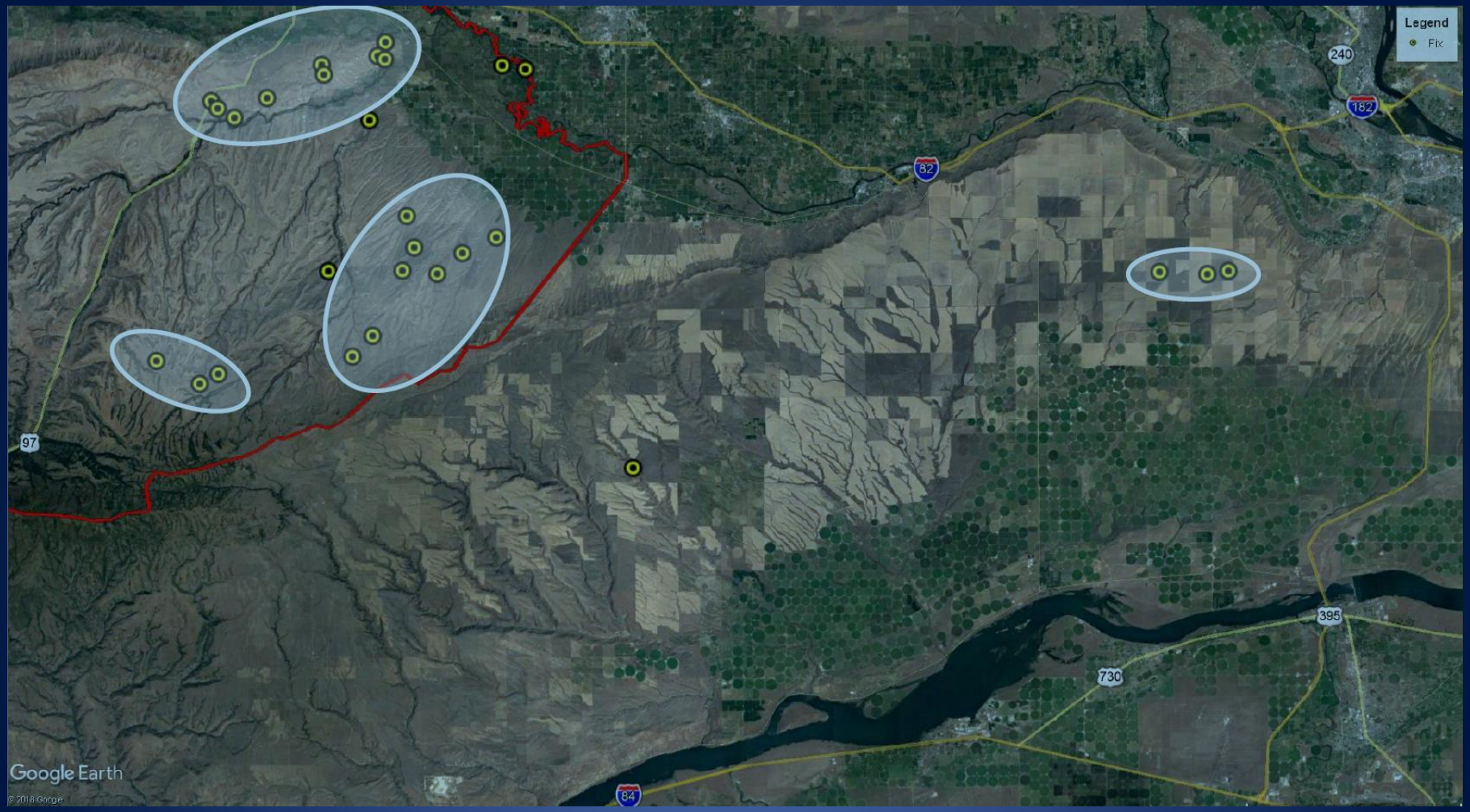
Map courtesy of D. Blodgett, III; Yakama Nation



Map courtesy of D. Blodgett, III; Yakama Nation

The Star

Transplanted pronghorn surviving, producing offspring

By Jacob Wagner

July 11, 2018 | LXXVIII, No.16

Sam Rushing listens for the tracking radio signal of the antelope on a dirt road east of Bridgeport while Rich Whitney searches the horizon with binoculars. - Jacob Wagner photo

Pronghorn antelope, native to the area before being wiped out, were transplanted on the Colville Indian Reservation by way of Nevada in 2016, and again in 2017, and appear to be doing well.

With 51 of the animals wearing tracking collars, there are at least 89 adults and 29 fawns, according to an aerial headcount by Colville Tribal Fish & Wildlife Biologist Sam Rushing.

"I know there's more out there," Rushing said.

The animals have been roaming as far south as Wenatchee and Quincy, and as far north as Jackass Butte and Okanogan.

A July 10 field trip to see the antelope from a distance east of Bridgeport in the boonies was attended by Fish & Wildlife employees, journalists, and Colville Tribal Chairman Michael Marchand.

Pronghorns are the fastest animal in North America, capable of running an estimated 55 miles per hour to outrun their predators.

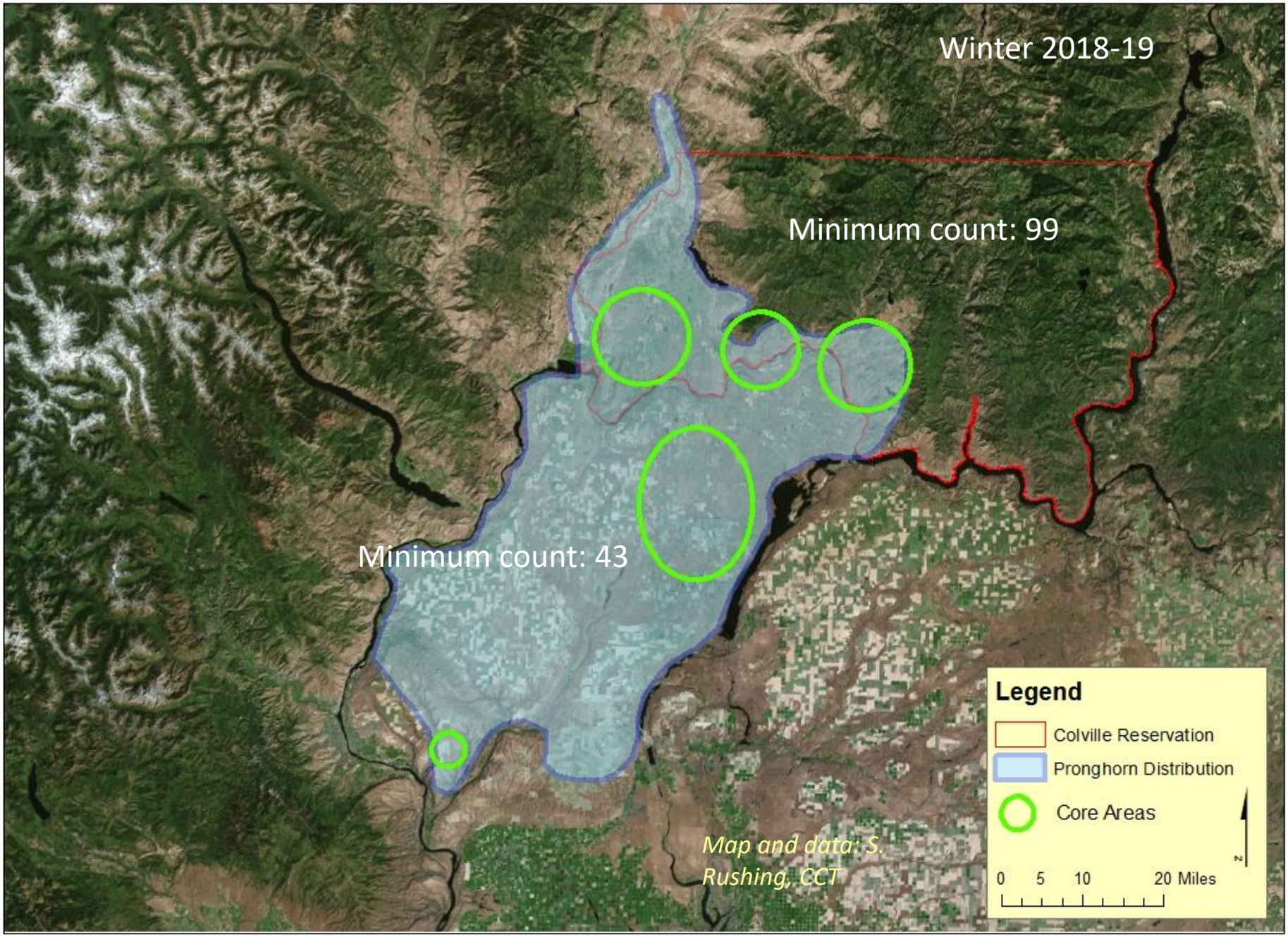
Rich Whitney, the wildlife program manager for Fish & Wildlife, said that the pronghorns evolved to run that fast to outrun a now-extinct North American cheetah.

Returning the pronghorn to the area is part of an effort to maintain a healthy ecosystem. With a larger pronghorn population, predators could hunt them, which could help other populations such as sharp-tailed grouse, who've had a dwindling population in the area.

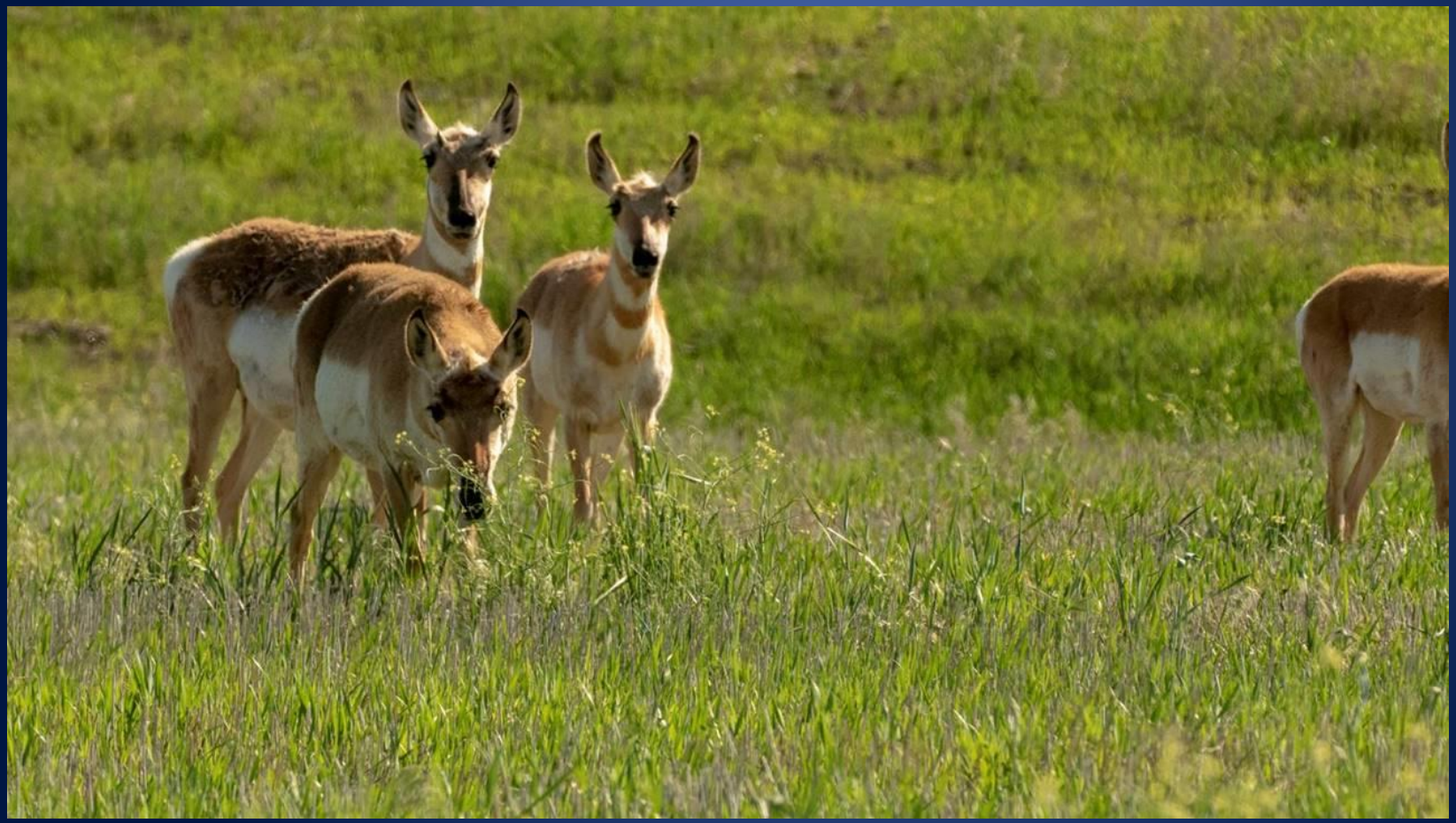
"Our biggest challenge right now is fenceline," Whitney said, referring to the pronghorns' inability to jump over fences. That leads to them being cornered by predators they could otherwise outrun, or getting tangled in the fences.

Predators may include cougars or other large cats, and coyotes.

General Pronghorn Distribution



WDFW efforts to date



Photograph:
Ivar Husa

WDFW database – incidental observations

- Documenting pronghorn locations

For date pronghorn observed, please use mm/dd/yy format. Observer and Reporter may be different or same individuials. If Observer is WDFW employee, indicate job; if not, indicate 'hunter, farmer, etc' to get a sense of how credible observation is. For UTM, please use Lat, Long, please use decimal degrees. If photograph taken, please send to Rich Harris, section manager, and post to this Sharepoint Site.

Date observed	Observer name	Observer credentials	Reporter name	WDFW Region	WDFW District	County	Lat	Long	Group size	Photograph?
10/31/14	Pat Kaelber	WDFW Access & Wildlife Techni	Ryan Stutzman	3	4	Benton	46.156323	-119.20716	5	Yes
8/25/14	Ryan Stutzman	WDFW Private Lands Bio	Ryan Stutzman	3	4	Benton	46.128303	-119.619213	1	No
Summer 2014	Ryan Stutzman	WDFW Private Lands Bio	Ryan Stutzman	3	4	Benton	46.169911	-119.551071	4-7	No
Fall 2013	Chad Smith	Private Landowner	Ryan Stutzman	3	4	Benton	46.093522	-119.68693	unk	No
12/31/14	Joe Greenhaw, Greg McLure, De	SCI members	Deb Barrett	3	4	Benton	46.151389	-119.603822	29	Yes
5/13/15	Public	several members of public inclu	Jason Fidorra	3	4	Benton	46.147	-119.208	3	No
5/14/15	Don Hand	WDFW conflict specialist	Jason Fidorra	3	4	Benton	46.166012	-119.206063	7	No
5/15/15	Ryan Stutzman	WDFW Private Lands Bio	Jason Fidorra	3	4	Benton	46.133386	-119.713214	2	No
5/8/15	Ryan Stutzman	WDFW Private Lands Bio	Jason Fidorra	3	4	Benton	46.106579	-119.546002	5	No
6/30/15	Jim Unsworth	WDFW	Jason Fidorra	3	4	Benton	46.006489	-119.247528	1	No
10/22/15	Ryan Stutzman	WDFW Private Lands Bio	Ryan Stutzman	3	8	Yakima	46.063514	-120.237944	27	No
2/22/16	Laurie Ness	DFW Volunteer	Jason Fidorra	3	4	Benton	46.18666	-119.601586	2	YES
3/14/16	Ryan Stutzman	WDFW Private Lands Bio	Ryan Stutzman	3	4	Benton	46.0402	-119.822467	2	no
4/19/16	Ray Gekosky	NRCS Resource Conservationist	Ryan Stutzman	3	4	Benton	46.128875	-119.754491	6	no
4/27/16	Ryan Stutzman	WDFW Private Lands Bio	Ryan Stutzman	3	4	Benton	46.068279	-120.229201	3	No
4/27/16	Garrett Moon	Private Landowner	Ryan Stutzman	3	4	Benton	46.11983	-119.520985	5	No
5/22/16	Deb and Doug Barrett	SCI volunteers	Deb Barrett (via Jason Fidor	3	4	Benton	46.0559.83	-119.364314	3	Yes
12/18/16	Larry Martin	RRGC Volunteer	Jason Fidorra	3	4	Benton	46.151875	-119.612835	40	Yes
12/20/16	Jason Fidorra	WDFW Biologist	Jason Fidorra	3	4	Benton	46.15419	-119.64522	40	No
12/23/16	George Brady	Former WDFW Officer	David Volsen	2	7	Douglas	47.806898	-119.362773	16	No
12/20/16	Eric Braaten	WDFW Private Lands Bio	Eric Braaten	2	7	Douglas	47.797517	119.327312	13	Yes
1/20/17	Rich Whitney	Colville Conf Tribe	Ella Rowan	2	5	Grant	47.299859	-119.708033	unk	No

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Living with Wildlife

Pronghorn Antelope

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Figure 1. The pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) is the rarest and least-known hoofed-mammal classified as a game species in the state of Washington.

- Pronghorns in Washington
- Living with Pronghorns
- Food habits
- Diseases
- Avoiding or minimizing conflicts

The pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) is the rarest and least-known hoofed-mammal classified as a game species in the state of Washington. (Woodland caribou, *Rangifer tarandus caribou*, are rarer, but are classified as Endangered under both Federal and Washington's state endangered species statute). Although often called simply "antelope", pronghorns are not true antelope at all; most authorities consider them the sole modern member of the family Antilocapridae, whereas all other horned-ungulates (mammals with hooves) in North America belong to the family Bovidae.

Pronghorns are rather small ungulates, measuring from 1 to 1.5m (3 to 5 ft) from head to tail, and from 0.8 to 1.0m (2.5 to 3 ft) at shoulder height. Adults weigh from 35 to 70 kg (77 to 154 lbs). As their name implies, males (and occasionally females) carry black horns that consist of a sheath made of keratin overlaid atop a permanent, boney core. Female horns, if present, are little more than protuberances, but those of males have a distinctive shape, with a sharp, backwardly tip and a forward-point "prong". The horn sheaths of males are shed after rut, and re-grown each year. Both males and females feature a cinnamon-brown coat on their back, with white- under-side pelage, as well as 3-4 white-colored bands on the under surface of the neck.

Supremely adapted to open, relatively flat grasslands and shrublands, pronghorns are great travelers, and some populations migrate large distances annually. They are generally considered the fastest land mammals in North America, sometimes referred to as "speed-goats". Pronghorns typically live in groups (larger in winter than summer), although breeding males will separate themselves into small territories in autumn to which they attempt to entice adult females.

Pronghorn females typically give birth – often to twins – on about their 2nd birthday. When on a high nutritional level, pronghorn populations can thus increase rapidly. Pronghorn fawns, however, are susceptible to coyote predation, starvation, and other sources of mortality. Pronghorns do not tolerate deep snows well, and thus populations can decline severely during harsh winters, particularly if they are unable to migrate to areas with less snow. Although their anatomy enables them to sprint with ease, they are poor leapers, and do not easily jump over fences the way deer and elk do. Instead, pronghorn typically crawl under fences when wishing to cross, but poorly constructed fences can impede normal migratory movements and cause mortality.

Pronghorns in Washington

Washington represents the northwestern extent of historically occupied pronghorn range. Pronghorns declined greatly throughout their range in the 19th century, at which time they were extirpated from Washington. This may be the reason some books and references continue to show their native range as excluding Washington. That said, pronghorns were probably never numerous in the state; rather, their populations ebbed and

Working to enhance landowner acceptance

Existing WDFW plans regarding pronghorns

- The statewide goals for pronghorns are:
- 1. As time and funding permits, monitor existing fragmentary pronghorn populations to anticipate the point at which more active management may be necessary.
- 2. As time and funding permits, work with private land-owners to ensure that conflicts with agriculture are minimal.
- 3. As time and funding permits, work with interested private parties to investigate the biological, social, and economic feasibility of landowner-driven pronghorn reintroductions.

No hunting of Pronghorn Antelope

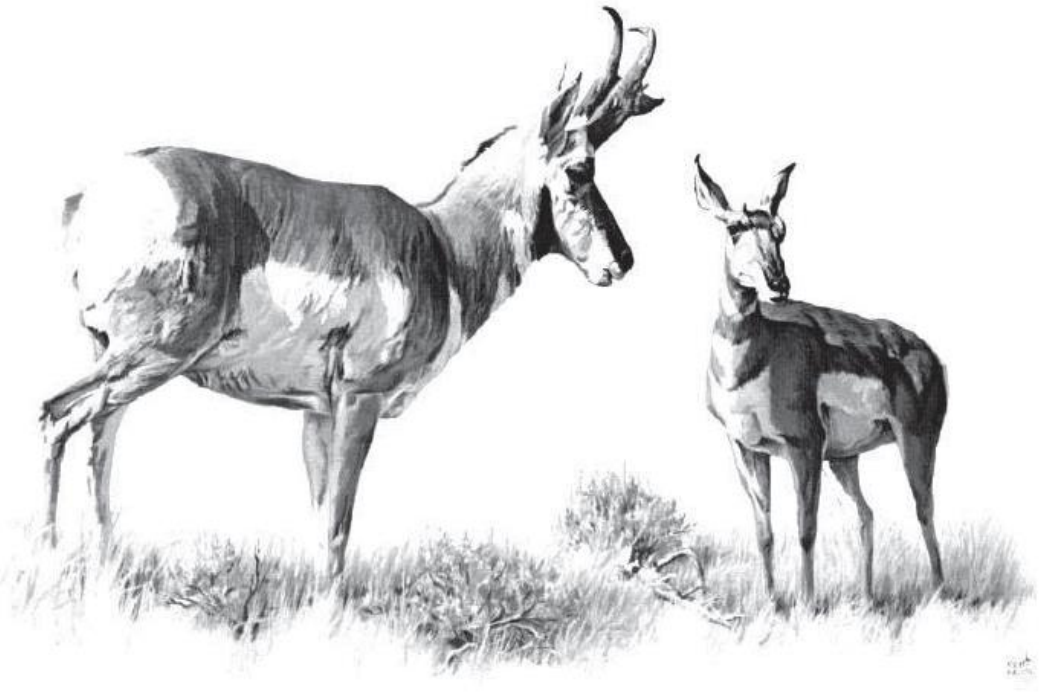

Illustration provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Pronghorn antelope disappeared from Washington decades ago, but have recently been reintroduced to both the Yakama and Colville Reservations (where tribal governments have authority over wildlife). You may encounter small groups, both within, and well beyond the borders of these reservations. Although classified as a game species in Washington, there is currently NO harvest of pronghorns authorized by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. The distribution of pronghorns in Washington overlaps that of mule deer. Hunters: Please be aware of the difference.

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From WDFW Big Game Pamphlet

Disgruntled land-owner

Planning for the future

- Preliminary management plans for both Upper Columbia Basin and Lower Columbia Basin pronghorn groups
- Work closely with Tribes to develop complementary plans and strategies
- Public meetings to gather input and suggestions

Issue Statement

Pronghorn recovery in Washington would be hastened by a successful reintroduction onto lands that are both biologically and socially suitable. However, reintroduction is expensive and will only succeed where supported by local communities.

Objective 86:

As time and funding permits, work with private parties prepared to take the lead in reintroducing pronghorns to investigate the biological, social, and economic feasibility of specific proposals.

Strategies:

a. Coordinate necessary biological feasibility studies.

b. Coordinate necessary (SEPA or NEPA) public processes.

c. If both biological feasibility and public processes indicate that pronghorn reintroduction is suitable and funding sources are identified, develop site-specific plans.

Questions?