



MARINES

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA

Photo Release

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Date Released: Dec. 19, 2012
Release #43-2012

Sonoran Pronghorn find new home in Southern Arizona

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz. (Dec. 19, 2012) – Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, along with local partner agencies, helped in the relocation of an Arizona endangered species from the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge to Barry M. Goldwater Range West near Yuma, Ariz. Dec. 17-19 and will continue relocation efforts through Dec. 21.

Imagery from the Sonoran Pronghorn catch and release can be found at :

<http://www.dvidshub.net/image/804482/sonoran-pronghorn-catch-and-release>

The Sonoran Pronghorn, an endangered desert sub-species of the antelope family, are currently part of a captive breeding program in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. Cabeza Prieta, established in 1939, spans over 56 miles in Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico. The purpose behind this relocation effort is to transfer several Sonoran Pronghorn from the refuge to join with a wild herd of approximately 14 Pronghorn on the Barry M. Goldwater West Range. The animals will be fitted with radio collars, providing both wildlife officials and biologists an improved method to track the wild population without having to disturb the animals in their natural habitat.

MCAS Yuma is also working closely with the U.S. Air Force 56th Fighter Wing, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument to help protect the Sonoran Pronghorn during this outreach project as well as throughout the year.

As a part of this relocation, Marines and civilian employees of MCAS Yuma have volunteered to assist wildlife officials during the catch and release.

“I’m honored to participate in the Sonoran Pronghorn operation in the coming weeks,” stated Col. Robert C. Kuckuk, commanding officer of MCAS Yuma. “I believe my participation reflects the level of commitment the Air Station and the Marine Corps have to protecting and preserving the lands, animals, vegetation and cultural sites entrusted to our care. Your Marines train hard on these ranges to fight our nation’s wars, but that doesn’t mean we won’t do everything possible to ensure the survival of a species whose habitat shares the same space.”

In preparation of the relocation, a temporary holding pen was constructed in late November by wildlife biologists from the Arizona Dept. of Game and Fish and U.S. Marines from MCAS Yuma’s Range Maintenance Department.

“I believe this is a great project that shows the military’s willingness to work closely with other federal and state wildlife agencies to bring the Sonoran Pronghorn back from near extinction,” said Bobby Law, MCAS Yuma’s natural resource specialist. “Of course, the ultimate goal is to get the Sonoran Pronghorn delisted, so they no longer need protection under the Endangered Species Act and are a viable self-sustaining wild herd. This would show that we were successful in our recovery efforts.”

Approximately 100 Sonoran Pronghorn are believed to remain in the wild in the United States. There is also a small population held in a captive breeding program on the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Arizona. There are believed to be approximately 650 pronghorn in Mexico.

The Sonoran Pronghorn has been protected under the Endangered Species Act since 1967. Since this time, the U.S. population very nearly died out in 2002 when a 13-month drought wiped out all but 21 animals. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intervened to prevent extinction by providing water and forage and initiating a captive breeding program.

For more details pertaining to wildlife conservation efforts, please contact Chris Bedinger, Arizona Game and Fish Department, at (928)341-4045 or cbedinger@azgfd.gov.

MCAS Yuma public affairs is scheduled to provide coverage of these wildlife conservation efforts throughout the week and will post photos and video products at www.dvidshub.net/mcasy for public distribution.

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Contact Cpl. Bill Waterstreet, MCAS Yuma Public Affairs Office, at 928-269-3682 (office) or william.waterstreet@usmc.mil for more information.