

# FOCUS

# Wild Arizona

## Key Words:

**Artifact:** a man-made object that remains from the past

**Commemorate:** to serve as a memorial or reminder

**Extinct:** no longer in existence; a species with no living representatives

**Game:** an animal that is legally hunted

**Historical Record:** a document describing past events



In honor of Arizona's centennial, we have decided to look back on the state's history and the role the Arizona Game and Fish Department has played.

While looking through our library, we came across an interesting **artifact**.

The photo on this page originally appeared in the March–April 1963 issue of this very magazine, *Arizona Wildlife Views*. But what does it show?

In 1899, 13 years before we became a state, Phoenix was named the capital of the Arizona territory. Two years later, on Feb. 25, 1901, the Capitol building was completed. This picture shows the front and back of a souvenir coin that was handed out to **commemorate** that event.

On one side, you see an image of the Capitol building as it looked more than 100 years ago. This building still exists today. As you can see from the recent photograph on the next page, it hasn't changed much! What similarities do you see?

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But it is the other side of the coin that draws our attention. It features a mountain and forest landscape with a deer. This seems to be an interesting choice for a coin that represents a state known for its deserts! Why do you think the deer was selected?

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To our knowledge, there are no **historical records** that explain the choice. All we can do is try to find clues in the writings people left behind.

By Eric Proctor



An annual report of the Arizona Fish and Game Commission from 1894 may provide such a clue. Richard Rule writes:

*“At the rapid rate which the wild game is being slaughtered out of season, especially the antelope and deer, there will soon be none left for the true sportsman or food for the hardy and venturesome prospector.”*

So, seven years before the commemorative coin, people were concerned that the deer might disappear. Was the coin used to not only commemorate the new Capitol building but also to remember the past — to warn of a potential future without deer? There is no way to know for certain, but it is an interesting thought.

But were they right? Were deer about to become **extinct**?

By the beginning of the 20th century, deer, along with other **game** animals such as elk, pronghorn and turkey, were in trouble. However, people recognized this problem and took quick action. The Arizona State Legislature required people to purchase a license before they could hunt. The State Game Warden’s office (an early version of the Arizona Game and Fish Department) used money from licenses to help those animals.

It worked! Today, the Game and Fish Department’s website describes deer as “the most numerous, widespread and popular big-game animals”

in the state. The department estimates there are well over 100,000 deer in Arizona. The money from hunting licenses was, and still is, a large reason for that success.

### Just for Fun:

This year, the people of Arizona are celebrating the Centennial — 100 years of statehood. If you were to follow in the footsteps of the earliest residents and develop a commemorative coin that would honor Arizona’s past, present and future, what would it look like? What animals would you choose? What other images would you include? Grab some paper and a pen and get creative. We would love to see your designs!

### Parents and Teachers:

If your children design commemorative coins, feel free to send them to us for potential use in a future article:

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- This feature is part of the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Focus Wild Arizona program, a free educational program for teachers, parents, students or anyone interested in learning about wildlife and habitat. Visit our Web site, [www.azgfd.gov/focuswild](http://www.azgfd.gov/focuswild), to find exciting lessons and resources.