



# Arizona Game and Fish Department Wildlife Matters

June 2004

Volume 2  
Number 1

## Protecting Wildlife with Highway Underpasses

### Making Highways Safe for Humans and Wildlife

In northern Arizona, collisions with elk are a big concern. Weighing 600 or more pounds, a collision with an elk can cause substantial vehicle damage, and in the worst cases can result in serious injury or death to motorists.

The Game and Fish Department has teamed up with the Arizona Department of Transportation and federal agencies to try to minimize collisions with wildlife along a section of highway in central Arizona. At the site of our research, 2 wildlife underpasses have been completed and



others are being constructed to allow wildlife to cross underneath the highway safely and avoid being struck by motorists. A total of 11 wildlife underpasses and 6 bridges will function as crossings for wildlife. Safe passage of large animals, like elk, are the main focus since they are the most dangerous to motorists, but all species of wildlife will benefit from these large structures.

#### **Location:**

This research project is being conducted in central Arizona, east of Payson along a 17-mile stretch of State Route 260 just below the Mogollon Rim.

#### **Approach:**

The Department is primarily using 3 methods to evaluate the effectiveness of wildlife underpasses and other measures developed to minimize wildlife-vehicle collisions:

1) We are monitoring the use of underpasses by wildlife with infrared video surveillance systems and observing track beds.

2) Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) collars have also been placed on 33 elk between May 2002 and October 2003, where construction is ongoing to record elk locations.

3) Lastly, we are monitoring the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions that occur before, during and after construction to assess reduction



## Addressing Human-Lion Conflicts



of the collision rate.

### **Benefits:**

Information gained on this project will result in a better understanding of wildlife crossings and wildlife-highway relationships, and in the long run lead to safer highways for both the public that travel the highways and the wildlife that cross them. This research project is scheduled to continue through at least 2006.



## Mountain Lion Workshop

The Arizona Game and Fish Department held the first of a series of statewide mountain lion workshops in Tucson to encourage stakeholder input on protocol for mountain lion management actions in urban settings.

Workshop participants were briefed about the mountain lion status in Arizona, lion biology and factors that can lead to lion-human conflicts. Smaller group discussions focused on the research needs, public information and education needs, funding, legislative approaches to address wildlife-human conflicts, and the department's response protocol for urban mountain lion encounters.

Due to the increase in mountain lion sightings in the Tucson area, much of the discussions focused on clarifying how the agency should handle lions that have interacted with humans. People who attended Saturday's meeting agreed that the issue is very important because as people continue to move into lion habitat, similar cases are bound to occur.

Potential resolutions to lion-human conflicts were considered. Game and Fish explained that a resolution hinges on whether human-lion interaction is defined as an "encounter" or an "incident." That may seem like semantics. But in an encounter - described as a "neutral meeting" - lions are left alone. In an "incident" - marked by "aggressive or abnormal behavior" by a cat - the lion may be destroyed.

As the discussions conveyed, it is difficult to define 'danger,' 'aberrant' and 'problem animal' when talking about wild animals doing, in many cases, what they do naturally. Participants attempted to define the thresholds for action and explored research needs and ways to reduce human-lion conflict in the first place.

The protocol for dealing with lions in urban areas is not clear-cut. The current policy, revised in 2002, separates human-lion meetings into four categories - sightings, encounters, incidents and attacks - all of which fed the workshop debate.

A sighting is defined as observation of a lion, or a report of tracks or other signs. The agency is supposed to fill out a complaint form and respond with educational outreach, such as handing out brochures.

This may seem clear...however, should all sightings be recorded, or just those in urban areas? Should a report by a homeowner carry the same weight as one made by a biologist? Paul Beier, a cougar expert at Northern Arizona University, said that, of the 300 lion sightings he examined, about

## Rescuing Bald Eagles

80 percent of the reports were wrong.

An encounter is an "unexpected, direct, neutral meeting" between a person and lion that ends without incident. Agency staff members are encouraged to verify the encounter in the field, suggest ways for reducing future conflicts and file a report.

In an incident, "the human must take an action to make the lion back down, or the lion exhibits aggressive or abnormal behavior," such as daylight activity, failure to yield or an unusual interest in humans.

An incident may be sufficient cause for Game and Fish to kill a lion. The department is supposed to consider the location, other reports, if pets were present, if the lion was protecting a kill or its kittens, what actions the person took and other factors.

An attack occurs when someone is chased, is injured or is killed by a mountain lion. In such cases, Game and Fish is supposed to immediately contact federal predator control agents and request that they track and kill the lion.

Similar mountain lion workshops will be held elsewhere in the state, and Game and Fish hopes to present recommendations to the commission around year's end.

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## Bald Eagle Banding

### **Public can track rescued eaglet, thanks to new satellite transmitter**

The movements of an eaglet rescued by the Arizona Game and Fish Department can be viewed by the public via the internet. Bald eagle biologists with the department fitted the fostered nestling with a radio transmitter just north of Horseshoe Lake.

Arizona currently has 41 breeding pairs of bald eagles. The Arizona Game and Fish Department has a nest watch program that monitors the progress of these raptors during the breeding season.

This particular nestling was one of two eggs rescued, when their male parent was found severely injured near a recreation area along the lower Salt River. The eggs were taken to Liberty Wildlife Rehabilitation in Scottsdale, where they hatched. While the other eaglet did not survive, this nestling was placed into a nest with a foster family on April 12. This type of eagle can live up to 25 years in the wild and can grow to have a six- to seven-foot wingspan.

"So far, the eaglet is doing well," says the head of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's bald eagle management program, James Driscoll. "She has been accepted by her foster family and getting bigger. We expect this nestling, named "Sutton," to take her first flight in the next three weeks."



Biologists with the Arizona Game and Fish Department have fitted several young eagles with satellite transmitters. This allows the scientists to monitor the progress of the juveniles along their migration routes to northern parts of the United States. The nestlings spend summers in the northern states exploiting the trout and salmon spawns, and return to Arizona in the fall.

The public can track the movements of the eaglets, as well, using the Migration Maps on the Southwestern Bald Eagle Management Committee's webpage, [www.usbr.gov/lc/Phoenix/SWBEMC](http://www.usbr.gov/lc/Phoenix/SWBEMC). The webpage will start monitoring the movements of this nestling as soon as it begins its migration in 7 weeks.

"This is a great way for people to learn more about bald eagles," says Driscoll. "It's an interactive tool that lets the public get more involved with Arizona's bald eagle management program."

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## Fish Arizona!

### Arizona Urban Fishing Program

Arizona's Urban Fishing Program is recognized nationally as one of the best in the country. The Program is a partnership with the Game and Fish Department and local Parks and Recreation Departments to intensively stock and manage park lakes for fishing recreation. Simply put, the Program operates on the premise that "if people can't get out of town to fish, we will bring fish into town for the people." The Program provides convenient, affordable, accessible and fun fishing for anglers of all ages and abilities.



There are currently 19 designated Urban Fishing Program lakes in 11 cities. These lakes are intensively stocked approximately 22 times per year with trout, catfish and sunfish. The cost of bringing these keeper-sized fish into city park lakes means that anglers age 14 and over must purchase a \$16 Class U (urban fishing) license to fish Urban Program lakes. Participating lakes are identified by signs posted at each park. Locations, park hours and regulations, fish species lists, and all kinds of fishing information are available in the 2004 Arizona Urban Fishing Regulations at your nearest license dealer, Game and Fish office or the Game and Fish website.

These specially designated Program lakes are stocked with healthy, catchable fish on an every-other week basis throughout most of the year. Farm-raised channel catfish (15-18 inch average) are stocked from mid March through early July and from late September through mid November. Rainbow trout (9-12 inch average) are stocked from mid November to March. Sunfish are stocked three times during the year in March, May and November. There are no fish stockings scheduled between July 15 and September 15 due to high lake temperature conditions and the high risk of transporting fish this time of year.

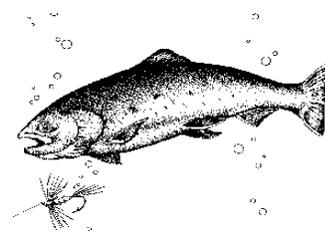
Many fishing clinics and educational programs are held each year at park lakes. Youth participation is a high priority and they represent 25% of the Program participants. In addition to catching healthy and delicious 11-inch trout and 1.5 pound catfish, anglers benefit socially and psychologically by spending time with friends and family and relaxing along the shores of a sparkling lake in a comfortable and safe park setting-making a positive

quality-of-life impact for our communities.

## Tips for catching double-digit fish in triple-digit heat

When temperatures consistently soar into the triple digits in the low country, it's time to pursue one of three fishing strategies:

1. Get out your flashlights and switch to fishing at night.
2. Grab your trout fishing tackle and escape to the cool high country.
3. Get a little crazy. Get a broad-brimmed hat, possibly a personal mister system, and brave the heat on the desert lakes.

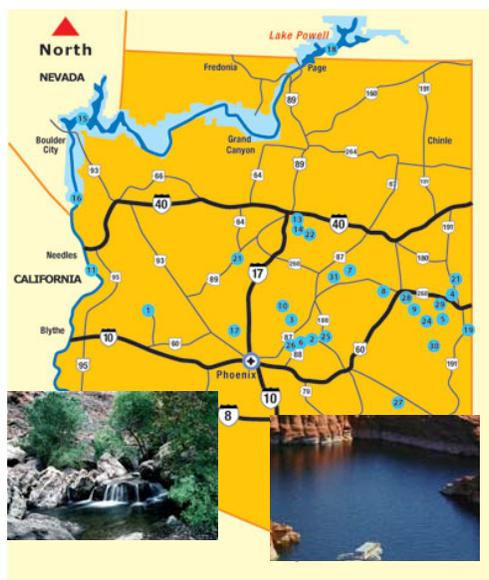


Whatever your choice, this is a good time of year for fishing, but you may have to modify your techniques and expectations a little.

In the low country, June signals the time for anglers to become nocturnal like the other desert denizens. If you have a boat, it's tough to beat having a crappie light. However, desert nights are also made for shore angling, especially for catfish and carp. Remember, on each pole you can have two baits. You can also get a \$4 two-pole stamp and set up two poles with two baits each.

If you're greedy and like going for everything. Set up one pole with a catfish bait such as chicken liver or hot dogs on one hook and a carp bait such as corn or dough bait on the other hook (trebles). For the second pole, set up a mealworm in-line (drop-shot technique) and a live minnow, both fished under a slip bobber. Try using a slip sinker between the minnow and the mealworm. With those two rigs, you'll have a chance at any catfish, crap, bass or bluegill cruising by. Give it a try.

Late spring, early summer evenings are also perfect for treating your youngsters to some sunfish angling. Worms under bobbers are often the trick. Canyon and Saguaro lakes both have good fishing piers available, but the rocky areas or back of coves at any lake can be good for sunfish.



If you want a multi-dimensional family outing, take along a pair of binoculars. Our clear desert nights are just perfect for stargazing. However, if you are looking for cool with a capital C, it's tough to beat a high-pines excursion for trout or for bass, pike and walleye. The new manufactured trout baits have made trout fishing, or really trout catching, much better over the years. These baits are terrific. There are so many on the market that you can literally fill up a whole tackle box with choices, or you can keep it simple: pick one

and go for it.

Go Fish  
Arizona

## Building Safer Habitats



Bottom fishing for trout is often the most productive, especially after first light. Trout can come up to feed near the surface off-and-on throughout the day, so it is always a good idea to have a second pole outfitted with something like an in-line spinner (Mepps, Rooster Tail, or Vibrex), or possibly a spoon such as a Z-ray. Try using rainbow trout-colored Rapalas.

Don't ignore the high country bass or cool-water fishing opportunities. Bass can be found at Willow Springs Lake, Fool Hollow, Rainbow Lake, Long Lake (almost dry), Concho Lake, Black River, and Upper Lake Mary.

This is a good time of year to try for high country walleye at Show Low Lake and Fool Hollow. Upper Lake Mary also has walleye.

For those who don't mind triple-digit heat, you can join some of the select few anglers who are out looking for bass during the day, especially at lakes that build up a thermocline. A thermocline—which is when a layer of warm water is sitting over a denser layer of colder water—results in a higher oxygen content in the warm upper reaches of the lake. Threadfin shad gravitate to that high oxygen level. The predatory fish, such as bass, come looking for those big schools of baitfish. When they meet during the day, the results (and fishing opportunities) can be spectacular.

The key is using topwater lures that resemble dying or wounded shad on the surface, or spoons such as KastMasters and Hopkins that mimic dying shad falling through the water column. Sometimes this type of bite doesn't get going until mid-summer. Those who fish this way might be considered the elite few. But if you try it, drink plenty of liquids, eat lightly, and wear something you can swim in. If the heat starts getting to you, a quick plunge into the water can make all the difference.

Have fun. Maybe we'll see you out there

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## Threatened frogs hop to new Arizona home

Some of Arizona's endangered leopard frogs have hopped to a new home, with a helping hand from biologists with the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Biologists released 50 Chiricahua leopard frogs at Sierra Blanca Lake in the White Mountains on May 28. The Chiricahua leopard frog is listed as a threatened species by the federal government.

Until the 1970s, the Chiricahua leopard frog could be found in many areas of the state. Today, its populations have declined because of habitat destruction, disease, and non-native species like the crayfish, which eats tadpoles and young frogs.

"We're pleased that we were able to place these frogs in a safer habitat than

where they started out," says Mike Sredl, a Game and Fish Department herpetologist.

The released frogs came from the Three Forks area of the White Mountains. They were removed when they were eggs, then were hatched and raised at a Game and Fish Department hatchery in Pinetop. The frogs were placed in coolers and taken by truck to their new home. Biologists hope they will thrive there.

"We look forward to creating a stable population of the Chiricahua leopard frog in this lake," says Dan Groebner, a department biologist. "We want these frogs to breed and flourish here."



The Chiricahua leopard frog was listed as threatened in 2002. This type of frog is greenish-brown and can grow to be about four inches long.

The Chiricahua leopard frog is just one of the native species the Arizona Game and Fish Department is working to reestablish in our state. Other efforts involve the Mexican gray wolf, the California condor, and the Apache trout.

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## Meet Our Newest Commissioner

### **William H. McLean**

Bill McLean of Gold Canyon is Arizona's newest Game and Fish commissioner.

McLean said he would bring a wealth of professional background as well as an understanding of wildlife conservation and management issues with the ability to achieve a balance among the often competing objectives of wildlife management (the Department), sportsmen, ranchers, environmentalists and the expanding issues of urban encroachment on wildlife habitat.

McLean has belonged to many sportsmen's organizations in the state over the decades, has served on the board of directors for many of them, and has been an officer for others including the Phoenix Chapter of the Safari Club International and the Arizona Antelope Foundation.

McLean is a native Arizonan and was raised in the community of Ajo. He practiced law in the Phoenix area for 25 years before moving to Gold Canyon, where he took over as the chief civil deputy for the Pinal County Attorneys Office almost 12 years ago.

McLean says he is ready to take on the responsibilities as a Game and Fish Commissioner and attended his first commission meeting in Pinetop on May 14<sup>th</sup>.

Welcome  
Commissioner  
McLean



**Heritage Fund**  
Lottery dollars at work

## Legislative Tours

Enjoy Arizona's Wildlife! The Arizona Game and Fish Department will be conducting tours and site visits for Legislators this summer. We will be contacting your offices in the next few weeks in order to provide further information regarding these upcoming tours. We will be highlighting Department projects located in your district or we can coordinate tours based on wildlife issues that you may want to further explore.

The purpose of these tours is to provide an opportunity for legislators to become familiar with the Department and the services that we provide. If you have any questions, regarding these upcoming tours please contact, Tony Guiles, Legislative Liaison at (602) 789-3280.

## Becker Lake

Becker Lake was created in 1880 by constructing a dam at the head of an old oxbow of the Little Colorado River. The Lake was used principally for irrigation purposes. However, a fishery did exist. In 1973 the Becker Family sold the Game and Fish Commission 338 acres, which included the approximately 100 surface-acre lake. In that year, the Commission directed the Arizona Game and Fish Department to manage Becker Lake as a quality trout fishery. Since that time the Department has managed the lake as a "Blue Ribbon" fishery with special regulations, such as motor restrictions, bag and possession limits, restricted methods of take, and seasonal closures. In January 2002, an additional 291 acres of adjacent land was purchased by the Department through the Department's Heritage Fund to protect and enhance stream-riparian habitat along the Little Colorado River for wildlife species of special concern.



Becker Lake is a shallow reservoir. The surrounding edges of the lake are dominated by emergent wetland vegetation including bulrush, cattail, willow and smartweed .

The lake is stocked with rainbow trout per the Department's Wildlife 2000 Strategic Plan. Brown trout recruit naturally from the Little Colorado River. The lake also contains Little Colorado suckers, fathead minnows, and stocked populations of Apache Trout, which are considered an enhancement population, strictly for put-and-take and not for recruitment..

A high diversity of waterfowl is found on the Wildlife Area throughout the year. Big game species that occasionally use the area include pronghorn and mule deer. Small mammals potentially occurring on the Wildlife Area include the White Mountains ground squirrel. Raptors occurring on the area include the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, rough-legged hawk, golden eagle, osprey, and peregrine falcon. Several birds recorded rarely in northeastern Arizona have been observed at Becker Lake, including the red phalarope, least flycatcher, and northern shrike. A host of nongame passerines utilize the area.

Special status species occurring on or near the Becker Lake - Enders

Wildlife Area have been identified through the Department's Heritage Data Management System. In January 1997 a pair of bald eagles built a nest in the trees at the margin of Becker Lake. Like nearby Luna Lake, which is another recent addition to the increasing number of wetlands used by nesting bald eagles, Becker Lake eventually may sustain regular nesting attempts by bald eagles.

# Arizona Outdoor Calendar

## June/July Key Dates & Events

### June

June 18-19, 2004

*8 a.m.-5 p.m.*

#### **Commission Meeting**

Arizona Game and Fish Department Commission meeting. Budget will be discussed. Wildlife Building, 1826 W. McDowell Rd., Phoenix. Call 602-942-3000.

*June 19, 2004*

*5:00 PM*

#### **6th Annual Wild Turkey Superfund Conservation Dinner & Auction**

Location: Hon-Dah Casino, Pinetop, AZ

Fine art, bronzes, jewelry and much more for the whole family. For more information contact Mark Slone or Dusty Parsons at 928-537-1813 or e-mail [dusty.parsons@co.navajo.az.us](mailto:dusty.parsons@co.navajo.az.us)

*June 20, 2004*

*Sunrise*

#### **Desert Archers 3-D archery shoot**

Desert Archers is hosting a 3-D archery shoot at the Tucson Mountain Park archery range. Sharpen your archery skills by shooting at 30 3-D targets at unmarked distances. Registration fee is \$20.00 and registration. The Tucson Mountain Park archery range is located one mile north of Old Tucson on Kinney Road. From I-10 and Speedway, go east on Speedway over Gates Pass to Kinney road. Turn right and look for signs. For more information, contact Rick Holder via e-mail at [desertarchers@cs.com](mailto:desertarchers@cs.com) or cell phone at 520-465-0238.

June 26, 2004

*5:00 PM*

#### **2nd Annual National Wild Turkey Federation Wildlife Banquet & Auction**

Fine art, bronzes and jewelry. Fun for the entire family! Location is Gila County Fairgrounds, Globe, AZ. For more information contact Anna or Chris Bejarano at 928-425-5336 or e-mail [dfblanco@cybertrails.com](mailto:dfblanco@cybertrails.com)

July

July 3, 2004

9 am - noon

**Outdoor Survival Skills Classes**

Location: Colossal Cave Mountain Park. July 3 - Animal Tracking. August 7 - Primitive Firebuilding. Contact J.J. Lamb at 647-7121 or [jerrie@colossalcave.com](mailto:jerrie@colossalcave.com)

July 3, 2004

6:00 p.m.

**Summer Wildlife Speaker Series - "Arizona Raptors"**

Sandy Cate, supervisor of the department's Adobe Mountain Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, will give an educational program on Arizona's wide variety of birds of prey. A special highlight will be several live hawks and an eagle. The Pinetop office conference room is located at 2878 E. White Mountain Blvd. in Pinetop. Admission is free, but seating is limited.

July 10, 2004

6:00 p.m.

**Summer Wildlife Speaker Series - "Arizona Reptiles"**

Randy Babb will discuss those creepy, slithery critters you just love to hate, dispelling plenty of myths in the process. Randy is a renowned expert on snakes and lizards, and he'll have several on display. You won't want to miss this quality program nor the free rattlesnake and Gila monster posters. The Pinetop office conference room is located at 2878 E. White Mountain Blvd. in Pinetop. Admission is free, but seating is limited.

July 11, 2004

Sunrise

**Desert Archers 3-D archery shoot**

Desert Archers is hosting a 3-D archery shoot at the Tucson Mountain Park archery range. Sharpen your archery skills by shooting at 30 3-D targets at unmarked distances. Registration fee is \$20.00 and registration. The Tucson Mountain Park archery range is located one mile north of Old Tucson on Kinney Road. From I-10 and Speedway, go east on Speedway over Gates Pass to Kinney road. Turn right and look for signs. For more information, contact Rick Holder via e-mail at [desertarchers@cs.com](mailto:desertarchers@cs.com) or cell phone at 520-465-0238.

July 16

7 p.m.

**Summer Night Walks at Saguaro National Park East**

The cooler summer evenings are the perfect time to explore Saguaro National Park. Join a park naturalist at Saguaro's Rincon Mountain District East for a guided discovery of the desert nightlife. The leisurely 2-hour walk will seek out the sights and sounds of the Sonoran Desert night. Advance registration is required, and space is limited to 15 people per walk. Children are welcome, but must be accompanied by an adult. For more information, or to register, call the visitor center at (520) 733-5153.

Arizona Game and Fish  
Department  
2221 W. Greenway Rd  
Phoenix, AZ 85023  
(602) 942-3000  
www.azgfd.com

Tony Guiles, Legislative Liaison  
(602) 789-3280  
aguiles@gf.state.az.us

Julie Rosen  
(60) 789-3353  
jrosen@gf.state.az.us

*July 23-25, 2004*

*All day*

**The 25th Annual "Bowhunter Happening"**

Final leg of the Western States Triple Crown 3-D Archery Tournament. Nine 20 target courses of 3-D animals. Six fun courses for the entire family to shoot. Over 70 archery, hunting and food vendors present. Williams, AZ-Rodeo Grounds.

*July 24, 2004*

*6:00 p.m.*

**Friends of the NRA Fund Raising Event**

\$20.00 per person gets one a steak dinner and lots of chances to win Firearms, Sporting goods, art, etc. Live and silent auctions throughout the evening. Lots of fun for all. Advance ticket sales only. Gila County Fair Exhibit Hall/ Highway 60/Globe, AZ. Contact John or Mary Stemm at 928-425-3372.

*July 24, 2004*

*5:00 PM*

**14th Annual Northern Arizona National Wild Turkey Federation Chapter Wildlife Banquet & Auction**

Location: Miss Kitty's Steakhouse in Williams, AZ. Fine art, bronzes & jewelry. Fun for the entire family. This event is being held in conjunction with the ABA's "Bowhunter Happening"!!! For more information contact Byron Browning at 928-526-4582 or e-mail bbrowning@co.coconino.az.us

*July 30-31*

*Day 1 6-8 p.m., Day 2 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.*

**Bighorn Sheep Workshop**

Day 1 involves mandatory classroom education on the bighorn sheep at the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Kingman regional office, 5325 N. Stockton Hill Rd.

Day 2 is a four-hour field trip from Willow Beach to the Hoover Dam to see bighorn sheep in their native environment. Bring sunglasses, a hat, water, and sunscreen ... it will be toasty.

To register: Send \$20 refundable deposit per person payable to Wildlife for Tomorrow Foundation to: Sheep Workshop, Arizona Game and Fish Dept., 5325 N. Stockton Hill Rd., Kingman, AZ 86401. Include names of participants, address, phone number, and desired workshop dates.

Participation is limited to 40 people per workshop. Nobody under 14 will be allowed to register.