

Javelina

Natural History

The javelina, or collared peccary, is of tropical origin and only recently arrived in the Southwest. Peccary bones are not found in Arizona archaeological sites, and early settlers made infrequent references to the occurrence of javelina. Perhaps the javelina spread northward as scrub and cactus replaced Arizona's native grasslands. For whatever reason, the range of javelina is still expanding, primarily northwestward. The species occurs in the United States only in Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico, and currently occupies approximately 34 percent of Arizona with an estimated population of 38,000 post-hunt adults.

Adult javelina usually weigh between 35 and 60 pounds, the males being slightly heavier than the females. Newborn javelina only weigh about one pound. These "piglets" are tan or brown in color with a reddish dorsal stripe. They acquire the salt and pepper appearance of the adults in about three months. The whitish-banded black hairs are up to six inches long, with the hairs on the mane being the darkest and longest. In the winter, when the javelina's coat is dense and dark, a distinct, lighter-colored "collar" is visible. In summer, when the hair is shorter and lighter, this "collar" is less distinct.

Javelina continue to grow until they reach adult height in about 10 months. At this age both sexes are mature. Peccaries breed throughout the year, which, when combined with their early maturity and ability to have two litters per year, gives them the greatest reproductive potential of any North American big-game mammal. The gestation period is 145 days, with most births occurring in June, July, and August. A smaller birth peak occurs in spring, corresponding with Arizona's biseasonal rainfall seasons. Unlike other animals, javelina do not lick their offspring at birth, but roll or tumble their young. The usual litter size is two, and the precocial piglets closely follow their mothers from shortly after birth until they are weaned at about six weeks of age.

Although javelina have lived as long as 24 years in captivity, the average life span in the wild is closer to seven or eight years. Coyotes and golden eagles are effective predators of juvenile javelina, and the adults are preyed upon by mountain lions, bobcats, and bears.

Javelina are opportunistic feeders, eating the flowers, fruits, nuts, and berries of a great variety of plants. Prickly pear cactus makes up the major portion of their diet, however, along with agaves, yucca roots, and other desert succulents.

Javelina are social animals with herd sizes averaging eight to nine animals. Territories are marked by droppings and by an oily secretion produced by the animal's scent gland positioned on its back. Any intruding javelina will be met by an aggressive display, which will evolve into a fight unless the interloper withdraws. The size of a herd's territory varies with the productivity of the habitat, but averages about 750 acres.

Hunt History

Javelina were not legally designated as big game until 1929, when a season from November 1 through January 31 was authorized and a bag limit of one javelina a year was imposed. Hunter interest gradually increased, particularly among non-residents, and the javelina became an

important game animal in Arizona after World War II. By 1950, hunters were purchasing nearly 10,000 javelina tags and taking more than 1,000 animals a year. In 1959, an archery javelina season was initiated, and by 1971 more than 30,000 hunters were harvesting more than 6,000 javelina a year. This pressure was deemed excessive in some game management units, and permit-only firearm hunting was instituted in 1972. To further curtail hunt pressure and better distribute hunters, permit-only HAM (handgun, archery, and muzzleloader) hunts were initiated in 1974, and archery hunting was limited to permit-only hunting in 1992. In 1992, juniors only permits were authorized. Between 2003 and 2005, the average harvest for general firearms was 2,157, 131 for juniors-only, 873 for HAM, and 2,224 for archery.

Management Needs

Research Needs

Javelina Operational Approaches

Below are approaches for guiding the management of Arizona Game Species. In all the approaches listed below, annual harvest objectives were derived from past harvest estimates and recent habitat conditions. In all cases, these harvest objectives are well within the range of sustainable harvest.

1. Maintain annual harvest of 4,500 or greater (1.B.1-1.B.3, 1.B.6-1.B.7).
2. Provide recreational opportunity for 27,500 or more hunters per year (1.B.1-1.B.3).
3. Provide 80,000 hunter days or greater each year (1.B.1-1.B.3).
4. Maintain existing occupied habitat, with emphasis on retention of medium and high quality habitat and maintain linkages between habitats (1.A.1-6).
5. Manage for herd size specified within the hunt guidelines (1.A.1-1.A.6).
6. Human-wildlife conflicts will be managed according to Department Policy (DOM II.10) (2.A.1-2.A.6); hunter opportunity will be the preferred method to mitigate conflicts.
7. Issue permits in consideration of demand rates for various weapon types (1.B.1-1.B.3, 2.A.1).
8. Manage and enhance habitats through partnerships with public agencies, property owners and lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations; manage from a landscape perspective (1.A.1-1.A.6, 2.D.1-2.D.4).
9. Provide hunt structure that emphasizes junior's hunt opportunity (1.B.1-1.B.3).

