

Scientists track pronghorn by satellite

April 12 2011



Twenty-one pronghorn -- like the one seen here -- were recently captured and fitted with GPS collars as part of a migration study so that scientists can track their movements. Credit: Dr. William Karesh

The pronghorn were captured in a helicopter netting operation on February 28, fitted with the collars, and released. The collars are scheduled to "drop off" of the animals at a future date through an automated release mechanism.

The GPS collars will provide scientists with tracking data collected during the migration of the animals between their summer ranges at the base of the Pioneer Mountains, Pahsimeroi Valley, Lemhi Valley of Idaho, Horse Prairie and the Medicine Lodge regions of MT and their winter range in the Upper Snake River Plain.

"In previous years, we found that pronghorn follow a difficult, often

perilous, 80-mile journey between summer and winter ranges by way of the Birch Creek and Little Lost River Valleys," said WCS Scientist Scott Bergen. "This [migration route](#) is extremely narrow in spots, and has them navigating between lava fields, rolling foothills, and highways."

The scientists will use the GPS data to determine whether the pronghorn are using other migration routes as well—such as that between the Upper Snake River Plain and southwestern Montana. Understanding the migration pathways of pronghorn is critical to planning their conservation and management—and ensures healthy pronghorn populations by informing decisions on maintaining appropriate harvest levels, protecting key habitats, and reducing the incidence of conflict with agriculture in the area.

WCS North American Program Director Jodi Hilty said, "WCS supports landscape-scale conservation—a key component of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative—that promotes and protects wildlife corridors used by wide-ranging species like pronghorn. We are pleased to see federal land management agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management (Idaho) working to promote landscape connectivity and expand wildlife corridors for pronghorn and other migratory species."

The data collected during this effort will also be used to inform other science-based solutions to the many potential threats pronghorn in the region face which include increased development pressures and loss or restriction of access to food sources and habitat.

Provided by Wildlife Conservation Society

Citation: Scientists track pronghorn by satellite (2011, April 12) retrieved 16 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-04-scientists-track-pronghorn-satellite.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.