



FRIENDS OF HART MOUNTAIN NEWSLETTER

Published bi-annually by Friends of Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge



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Fall 2005 Issue

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This newsletter is published bi-annually by the **Friends of Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge** for the benefit of its members. Copies are also made available to visitors and through various other outlets in Lake County.

Friends of Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge is an independent, non-profit, 501(c)(3), corporation dedicated to supporting the primary purposes for which the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge was established: to provide habitat and breeding ground for pronghorn antelope and other species of wildlife; for the protection of natural resources; and the development of incidental wildlife-oriented recreation where it does not interfere with the primary purposes of the Refuge.

President's Message

After a really wet spring, we had a beautiful hot dry summer at Hart Mountain. The dry weather was truly needed to take care of some of the problems that were caused by the wet spring. One of the major problems that the dry weather fixed was the mosquitoes. By mid July, it was real pleasant to enjoy the beauties of this wonderful place.

It was a good summer for volunteer work at Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. **Some** of the projects that volunteers worked on this year are: the sage grouse lek study, the antelope fawn capture program, the pygmy rabbit study, badger habitat study, various vegetation studies, antelope telemetry monitoring, big horn sheep telemetry monitoring, sage grouse telemetry monitoring, waterfowl count, boundary fence inspection/repair, campground maintenance, building/yard maintenance, road maintenance, fence removal, vegetation control, vehicle maintenance, GIS mapping, school & educational programs, national bird day, office/visitor center support, cutting fire wood for sale to campers, Friends Group support, making and installing road signs, and installed a guzzler on Poker Jim Ridge.



Approximately 6,000 hours were given by generous volunteers, people just like you. Many of these projects would not be possible without the support of volunteers. The Friends of Hart Mountain will continue to support these ongoing projects on the refuge with volunteer time and money. I want to thank all of the volunteers for your interest and support in Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. If you would like to take part in the volunteer work at Hart Mountain, please call Kelly Hogan, Refuge Manager, at the Refuge Headquarters. The phone number there is 541-947-4731.

I also want to thank all of the "Friends Members" for your donations and support for the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge and I hope you can make a trip back to the mountain soon to enjoy your Refuge.

Morrie Chappel, President

Letter to the Editor

Vesicular stomatitis, avian flu, West Nile virus - just to name a few - are diseases that are potential problems to the wildlife of Hart Mountain. As more people discover the beauty of Hart Mountain, so will come more exposure to these diseases. The monitoring of wildlife for signs and symptoms of these diseases and others, along with the continuation of the studies being conducted by the US Fish & Wildlife Service on Hart Mountain should receive our support not only in dollars but time as well. My time on Hart Mountain for the fawn capture and tagging last May really brought it home how important it is that we monitor and study the Hart Mountain wildlife so that it can be cared for in a way that our grandchildren can visit this special place and enjoy it as we do. I would like to urge all members to get involved and share of your treasure as well as your talent - and the treasure is tax deductible!

DEAN BAUMAN, DVM

Friends of Hart Mountain
Volunteer Veterinarian



Hart Mountain from Blizzard Ridge
Photo by Barbara Davis, May 2005

Friends Volunteers Remove Fence

Volunteers from the Friends of Hart Mountain at Hart Mountain NAR have been working on the continuing project of removing all unnecessary fencing from the refuge. Originally the fences were needed for the containment of the livestock on the refuge. Now, since the livestock has been removed from the refuge, we are working to remove the fences that are not needed. When the project began in 1994, there were approximately 212 miles of unnecessary fence on the refuge. During the past 11 years, volunteers and staff have removed about 198 miles of fence, which leaves about 14 miles to take out. Take note that the mileage figures have changed since we have found fences that were not previously inventoried. This year there were 4 volunteer service groups, including the Friends, that helped with fence removal. Together we removed a total of 8.19 miles of unnecessary fence which was hauled to the Lakeview landfill. We would like to thank all of the Friends of Hart Mountain volunteers for their help in June with the Friends work party on this worthwhile service project. If you would like to volunteer with another Friends work party in 2006, contact Morrie Chappel at 1-541-672-4181 for more details.

LEFT: Big Horn Sheep on Hart Mountain. From the files of Hart Mt. NAR.



GEMS FROM JIM

James D. Yoakum
Wildlife Biologist

Pronghorn are small, delicate, “petite” big game. Now, a new book on the species is analogous - it is a little book but mighty handsome.

John A. Byers, wildlife professor at the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho, is the author of this new book. The title is “Built for speed: a year in the life of a Pronghorn” published by Harvard University Press.

The small book is a collection of biological findings and experiences of John Byers while researching Pronghorn for more than 20 years on the Palouse Prairie of the National Bison Range in northwestern Montana. It lacks laborious tables of statistics and technical illustrations, but contains a wonderful drawing of a spirited playful fawn by Edson Fichter. It is the only book on Pronghorn describing the experiences of a person working with one Pronghorn population each year for more than two decades.

Byers skillfully blends his scientific experiences with creative prose for delightful reading. Reading can be easy, fast and enjoyable.

In addition, “Built for Speed” provides a wealth of biological and managerial information. For example, wildlife managers have in recent years recognized the importance of sustaining abundant grass/forb/shrub communities to provide preferred, succulent and nutritious forage during the third trimester of pregnancy and lactation. This appears to be a major factor in maintaining Pronghorn population numbers. Byers now informs us that managers need to likewise strive for green succulent forage during autumn and winter, because when this quality forage is available—Pronghorn fawns are born larger in size and earlier during the birthing season—factors that apparently help trigger higher fawn recruitment and larger herd populations.

Byers readily recognizes a major liability facing future Pronghorn generations—a shrinking place to live. Each year, Pronghorn witness less and less acres of native rangelands to give birth, raise fawns and run freely with the wind. There is a strong message here—we humans need to consider managing more large natural rangelands for the perpetuity of Pronghorn and other wildlife. The alternative is to see less wildlife and that can translate to a decrease in quality of life for wildlife and humans.

For those interested in learning more about the life and times of Pronghorn, plus prairie companion bison, elk, snipe and hawks—here is an enlightening book to enjoy.

Editors note: Having read this book when it first came out, I would also recommend this informative little book for reading, especially for the non-biologists among us! I got my copy thru Amazon.com

From the Quarterly Narratives USFW Hart mountain NAR

NARRATIVE REPORT: Period - March 1st, to April 30th, 1938.

General Notes.

The weather conditions at Camp Hart Mountain during the month of March was very severe. From the first to fifteenth was light snows and very high winds with temperature daily range from 20 degree up to 40 degree F. From the 18th to April 1st we had the heaviest snows of the year. Cold weather, snow, sleet and rain was an every day occurrence from April 1st to April 20th. The last part of April was fair with several rains and snows.

The thaw started early in April and the water started flowing north into the dry lakes that have not had water for 12 years. April 21st the water came through under the new bridge and Flagstaff Lake was filled in 10 days. The maximum flow under the 140 foot span bridge was approximately 90 sec. Feet of water.

The flow has reached North Campbell Lake and will be flowing into the large lake at the north end of Warner Valley within two weeks.

Though water conditions have caused ten days work raising the grade in five places across the nine miles of road across the valley, this road has been graveled the full distance which has proved its worth. The road would not be passable now if it was not well graveled. The soil across this valley dissolves when in contact with water. Water is all along the side of this road for a distance of four miles.

The emergency work in handling the flood waters and the shortage of men has and is holding up the work on the Hart Mountain grade and the general clean up over at the Lyon Ranch, area. Considerable amount of work will have to be did on the road from the top of the present mountain road to the Lyon Ranch, especially the Building area. Only an average of 45 men have been available for work during April due to company strength. We have no date as to when we will receive recruits. The scheduled recruits for Hart Mountain are under quarantine (some place east of the Mississippi River) for measles.

Transcription by Friends member Howard Ottman during cold Wisconsin winter! Thanks Howard.



Bio-Notes

by Rachelle Huddleston-Lorton, Refuge Biologist

And so another summer season has passed on Hart Mountain. The aspen are turning gold and red in the high canyons on the mountain, mornings are chilly, and winter is around the corner. We had a busy season and accomplished much on this 415-square mile National Wildlife Refuge. We captured and put radios on pygmy rabbits, continued the bighorn sheep study, worked with the U.S. Geological Survey on a sage grouse West Nile virus study, and conducted the usual summer surveys for bighorn sheep and pronghorn. Eight and a half inches of rain fell between the last week of April and the end of May bringing wildflowers, lush grass, and filled waterholes throughout the Refuge. Now it is November and already we have snow on the ground. Another season passed and a new one upon us.

Bighorn Sheep Study

The cooperative bighorn sheep mortality study with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep has continued since our last report. We had two mortalities since May both due to mountain lions. One radio collared ewe and her lamb were killed near the top of Hart Canyon in April and the second radio collared ewe was killed on the south end of Hart Mountain above Hart Lake in September. This brings the total mortality of radio collared bighorn to 10 since the study began in January 2004. Of these, 5 are confirmed cougar kills. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is working on a draft cougar management plan which contains recommendations for managing cougars in bighorn sheep habitat. In order to maintain our sample size of radio collared bighorn, we will be capturing 7 sheep in December to put radio collars on them that have been retrieved from mortalities. This redistribution of radio collars will enable us to continue monitoring bighorn on Hart Mountain for mortality as well as assess movement and habitat use patterns throughout the year.

Winter Raptor Survey

The Oregon statewide winter raptor surveys are a joint venture between Jeff Fleischer and the East Cascades Birds Conservancy. Beginning in November we will once again participate in this project. Survey routes include the Lakeview area and Plush-Adel and the Refuge. We have several volunteers who have expressed an interest in conducting these auto route surveys this year. We will survey each route during November - March to assess wintering raptor populations in this part of Oregon.

Christmas Bird Count

Each year Refuge staff participates in the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) on Hart Mountain and in the Adel area. We will conduct the Hart Mountain CBC on December 17 and the Adel Circle CBC on December 18. Please contact me if you would like to join us on this count. Christmas Bird Counts are conducted throughout the world each year and provide important information about wintering songbirds, raptors, and owls.

Pygmy Rabbits

We continue to survey for pygmy rabbits in the Wyoming big sagebrush project areas on the northeast portion of the Refuge. We have captured and radio collared 21 rabbits and are monitoring those radios at least 2 times each week to assess mortality and movements. These radios are being used to monitor the effects of habitat treatments on pygmy rabbits. Since we started capturing pygmy rabbits in August 4 rabbits have died and 1 is missing in action (no signal detected since collaring). The most common cause of death is predation by weasels. The weasels travel underground through burrow systems used by pygmy rabbits and often we have to dig out a burrow to retrieve the radio and what is left of the rabbit. We continue to capture rabbits and place radios retrieved from mortalities on them to maintain our

sample size.

Sage Grouse West Nile Virus Study

Teaming up with the National Wildlife Health Laboratory, U.S.G.S., and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, we are studying West Nile Virus in sage grouse on Hart Mountain. In April, we captured and radio-collared 8 male grouse and 5 female grouse. We had hoped to radio an additional 12 grouse during the spring or summer but were unsuccessful in our capture attempts. We monitored the 13 radioed grouse at least three times a week during the mosquito season (July, August, and September) for mortalities. We had no mortalities during the monitoring period which is good news with respect to West Nile Virus on Hart Mountain. The U.S. Geological Survey has funding for additional West Nile virus research next year and would like to continue this project on Hart Mountain next summer.

Wyoming Big Sagebrush Project

Data collection continued this summer to assess pre-treatment vegetation conditions in the Wyoming big sagebrush project area. Information on plant species richness, density, and canopy cover was collected. We applied Spike (Tebuthiuron) to about 440 acres of sagebrush in October at a rate of 0.75 lbs active ingredient per acre. Spike is best applied to sagebrush in the fall before the winter precipitation arrives. It is a pellet form of herbicide that disintegrates during the winter and begins to kill sagebrush. We will be revisiting the monitoring plots and transects next spring/summer to assess cheatgrass invasion, decreases in the sagebrush canopy cover, and emergence of native grasses and forbs. We will also be mowing about 440 acres of sagebrush this fall and repeat the plot and transect work to assess the same issues: cheatgrass, sagebrush canopy cover, and native grasses and forbs. We had initially planned to burn 640 acres of sagebrush as part of this project but decided that the risk of cheatgrass invasion was too high. The pygmy rabbit radio collaring study is a component of this project, intended to provide information about the effects of habitat treatments on pygmy rabbit survival and habitat use.

Outreach and Education

The Plush School had a field trip to Hart Mountain in October. These students (kindergarten through 3rd grade) came to Refuge headquarters for a short presentation about Refuge programs and then we went into the field looking for pygmy rabbits. Unfortunately, we did not catch any rabbits that morning but they did help me find a rabbit in a burrow that had been killed by a weasel. We dug up the rabbit and looked at the evidence of weasel predation; tiny bite marks on the collar and location of the rabbit were the main indicators that a weasel had killed the rabbit. Also during the summer, we had a group of summer students from the Oregon Museum of Science and Information (OMSI) in Portland. These students came from all over the world (one student was from South Africa) and I spent a day in the field with them discussing Refuge programs and looking for bighorn sheep. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offered a bighorn sheep viewing trip for auction at the annual Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) banquet. Four people spent a weekend in October on Hart Mountain with ODFW district biologist Craig Foster observing bighorn sheep. This is the second year that we have participated in this fundraiser for FNAWS. The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of wild sheep. They have helped to fund the current bighorn project on Hart Mountain and have been instrumental in re-establishing bighorn sheep populations all over the west.

Pronghorn Fawn Mortality Monitoring

Once again, in May we captured and fitted 21 pronghorn fawns with ear-tag mounted radios to monitor mortality rates and causes during the first 6 weeks of their lives. Eleven (52.3%) fawns died during the project period: 4 (36.4%) were killed by bobcats, 3 (27.3%) by coyotes and 4 (36.4%) of unknown causes. There were more fawns killed by bobcats this year than any other year of this project. All bobcat mortalities occurred on Blizzard Ridge. Because of the high rainfall in May the grass grew very tall all over the Refuge. This provided ample cover for bobcats to stalk and kill pronghorn fawns. As usual, we could not have accomplished this project without the many volunteers who assisted us in this endeavor. Special thanks to Dr. Dean Bauman, veterinarian extraordinaire who assisted us with blood draws on the fawns and to Lori Chappel who did the "blood run" to town every day, delivering the fawn blood to the Lake District Hospital where it is analyzed.

Effects of Fire and Fire Surrogate Treatments on Sage Grouse

We intended to monitor the effects of habitat treatments on sage grouse and radio collared several from the Wyoming big sagebrush project area with that in mind. However, the grouse have not been cooperative and did not remain within or adjacent to the project area. We monitored these radios throughout the summer months however as part of the West Nile Virus study with USGS so not all was in vain. These radios will be monitored next year for WNV as well.

Fire Monitoring

Working with a volunteer we were able to complete vegetation transects in the 1994 Blizzard North burn area during the summer of 2005. I have not had a chance to analyze the data yet but will hopefully have that for you in the Spring 2006 newsletter.

Weed Mapping

We received grant money to initiate mapping of invasive species on Hart Mountain this year; however, the money did not arrive in time for us to begin during this growing season. We were able to purchase equipment this year including two Trimble GPS units, a plotter (large format printer for printing maps), and a laptop to run GIS software. We also partnered with the Warner Basin Weed Group and were able to secure funds to buy herbicide for the local ranchers to continue the fight against invasive species in the Warner Valley.

Bighorn Sheep Population Survey

Each summer, we survey bighorn sheep on Hart Mountain using a helicopter with two observers. We fly sheep habitat from the north boundary to the south boundary on the west side of the Refuge. This information allows us to work with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in setting harvest limits and bighorn sheep transplant operations. These data are also important to hunters and casual visitors alike to the Refuge. We flew the bighorn sheep survey on 18 July 2005 using a Bell B3 helicopter piloted by Jeff Lindscott of JLA Aviation, Portland, OR. We started at 06:45 and ended the survey at 11:20. Weather conditions were clear with no wind at the beginning and 64 degrees F. At about 10:00 the wind picked up and classifying sheep became more difficult. There were two observers in the helicopter, Craig Foster, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Rachelle Huddleston-Lorton, Hart Mountain Refuge biologist spotting sheep with the pilot also helping to spot groups of sheep. We recorded data (numbers of sheep, classification, and the number of collars seen) on standardized data sheets (HMNAR files 6004.2). We observed 286 bighorn sheep from the north Refuge boundary on Poker Jim Ridge to Riffle Canyon on the south end. There were 99 rams, 124 ewes, and 63 lambs. We saw 28 sheep with radio collars; thus we calculated a 77.8% observability rate. Based on this observability, we estimate the bighorn population on Hart Mountain to be 350.

Pronghorn Population Survey

Each year we fly pronghorn surveys to count and classify pronghorn on Hart Mountain NAR. Annual surveys allow refuge managers and biologists to track population trends and to coordinate hunting tag allocations with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Observers included Rachelle Huddleston-Lorton, (USFWS) Refuge Biologist, Craig Foster (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), District Biologist, and Jeff Lindscott (JLA AVIATION), owner/pilot. We started the survey at 06:00 and completed it at 11:30. Weather conditions were ideal for flying, no wind, 68 degrees F, and clear. We flew the Refuge west to east in mile-wide transects starting on North Mountain, continuing across South Mountain, and then on to the desert section. The intermediate hills, north-east flats, and Poker Jim Ridge were the final segments of the survey. We counted pronghorn groups and then classified them according to age (yearling male, fawn) and gender. During 5.5 hours of surveying, we observed and classified 2372 pronghorn. We observed more pronghorn in the southern sections of the Refuge than in the northern areas and ratios of males to females and fawns to females were higher than in the previous five years (61 bucks per 100 does and 59 fawns per 100 does).

Volunteers

As always, much of the work discussed above would not have been possible without our volunteers. Hart Mountain volunteers generously give of their time on various projects including sage grouse lek surveys, pronghorn fawn captures, bighorn sheep radio telemetry monitoring, fence removal projects, and even office work! Many thanks to all of you who help us do good things for wildlife. I will be looking for volunteers again during 2006 so keep us in mind when you are thinking about vacation spots. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities on Hart Mountain please contact Rachelle Huddleston-Lorton at (541) 947-2731 or Rachelle.Huddleston-Lorton@fws.gov



**Pronghorn buck on Hart Mt. NAR
Photo by Barbara Davis, May 2005**

The Pronghorn Store

Sales at our Friends store has continued to do well since our last newsletter under the nurturing of our Treasurer Nadine Reynolds with help from Lori Chapel. Our items are artfully displayed in the large showcase in the Visitor area at the Refuge Headquarters. The items listed here are available for mail order. All proceeds from the sale of these items go to support the activities sponsored by Friends of Hart Mountain.

T-shirts with our logo contest winner's design screen printed on it. These shirts are \$11.00 plus \$4.00 shipping



words National Antelope Refuge. Caps are blue with a khaki tan brim. Cost is \$15.00 + \$3.00 shipping.

Color Topo Maps of the Refuge are approximately 19.5" x 26.5". They are \$7.00 + \$1.00 shipping.

Set of 6 Note Cards with photos of various wildlife on Hart Mountain and one of the Hot Springs Bridge. Cost is \$12.50 + \$1.00 shipping. Other single note cards are available at Refuge Headquarters.

Refrigerator Magnets are white with a black ink drawing of pronghorn and Hart Mountain Antelope Refuge printed on them. Cost is \$1.00 + \$0.50 shipping.



Water Bottles are white and have our antelope head logo and Hart Mountain Antelope Refuge printed on them in black ink. Cost is \$2.00 + \$1.00 shipping.

Travel Mugs are tan and have our antelope head logo and Hart Mountain Antelope Refuge printed on them in black ink. Cost is \$4.00 + \$1.00 shipping.



Can Coolers are green and have our antelope head logo and Hart Mountain Antelope Refuge printed on them in black ink. Cost is \$2.00 + \$1.00 shipping.

The Friends are also selling firewood at the Hot Springs campground for \$3.00 a bundle. We will also try to stock mosquito repellent during the spring and summer for visitors that need it.

Our treasurer, Nadine Reynolds, is hosting the mail order store from her home in Lakeview. You can order your items directly from her at PO Box 128, Lakeview, OR 97630. If you have questions or are ordering multiple items you will need to contact Nadine at 541-947-4929.

DO YOU HAVE A PICTURE TO SHARE?

Do you have a photograph of Hart Mountain you would like to share with the Friends of Hart Mountain Newsletter? All submissions become the property of Friends of Hart Mountain and may be used in the newsletter and other promotional materials. Send electronically to Editor at bhdavis@glidecable.com in jpg format or mail photo to Barbara at PO Box 77, Glide, OR 97443.

DONATIONS

Some of our ***Friends*** members donate beyond their annual dues or life membership dues. Your donations can be directed to support specific Refuge projects listed below or to just support general activities of the ***Friends***. We appreciate any amount you are willing to donate. Please remember that since you receive no goods in exchange all donations are tax deductible. We wish to thank the members for all that they have generously donated in the past year. Your generosity helps the ***Friends*** pursue the activities in support of the Refuge in fulfilling its mission.

- ☐ Antelope studies in 2006. Our dollars are especially needed to help defray the cost of ear tags and radio collars (\$180 apiece/\$3200 total for 2004)
- ☐ Sage grouse studies for 2006. Similar expenses.
- ☐ Bighorn sheep studies for 2006. Similar expenses.
- ☐ Educational and School program expenses.
- ☐ Newsletter expenses.

Make your check out to ***Friends of Hart Mountain*** and if you are making a specific project donation be sure to tell us this when you send the donation! Send donations to:

Treasurer
Friends of Hart Mountain
PO Box 21, Plush OR 97637



Post Meadows, May 2005
Photo by Barbara Davis

**FRIENDS OF HART
MOUNTAIN
BOARD MEETING
MAY 20, 2006
2:00 PM
HART MT. REFUGE
HEADQUARTERS**

ALL MEMBERS OF FRIENDS ARE WELCOME

A special thanks to Jim Chapman and Lassen Addressing from Susanville, California for his help in printing and mailing this newsletter. Jim provided his services at cost for the Friends fall issue last year and this fall issue. Our Spring issues are printed on our printer located at Hart Mountain Refuge Headquarters .

**A GREAT BIG THANKS
TO OUR WONDERFUL DONORS!
Fall 2005**

Richard Musser
Rachelle Huddleston-Lorton
Kelly Hogan
Jim Yoakum
Ned & Barbara Davis
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**Friends of Hart Mountain
National Antelope Refuge**
PO Box 21
Plush, OR 97637

FIRST CLASS MAIL

MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ **New Membership**

☐ **Renewal**

Invite a friend to be a member!

*Make checks payable to: **Friends of Hart Mountain***

*Send to: Friends of Hart Mountain
PO Box 21 • Plush, OR 97637*

Name: _____

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☐ \$5 Family Annual Membership

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Phone: _____

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☐ **Yes, I would like my newsletter sent to my E-mail address**

Volunteer Interests:

☐ Education

☐ Membership Recruitment

☐ Fund Raising

☐ Wildlife Monitoring

☐ Habitat restoration

☐ Public Relations

☐ Board Membership

☐ Newsletter

☐ Volunteer