



Larry D. Voyles

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The past year was marked by a number of significant events affecting wildlife conservation. Most notable was the worst wildfire season in Arizona's history, which scorched more than 1 million acres and impacted people, communities and ecosystems. Arizona Game and Fish was proud to have provided assistance to people and wildlife, assisting incident management teams in support of the firefighting efforts and actively engaging in wildlife salvage and burned area rehabilitation efforts in the fires' aftermath.

There were a number of very positive achievements this year. The Department launched HabiMap™ Arizona, an online GIS-based data viewer that gives a visual representation of more than 300 layers of wildlife and habitat-related data.

Available to the public, this non-regulatory tool will be an invaluable source of information to help planners take wildlife needs into consideration in the early stages of infrastructure and other development projects.

New legislation opened up hunter access to about a million acres of land on the outskirts of municipalities that had previously been off limits to hunting. These were primarily uninhabited annexed lands not slated for development for years, where hunting was still a compatible use of the land but not permitted through the unintended consequence of municipal firearm discharge ordinances and existing state laws. The new laws grant the authority to regulate the use of firearms for the take of wildlife within municipal boundaries to the Game and Fish Commission. The Commission and Department took a thoughtful, conservative approach in working with local authorities to implement the new laws in these areas, where safe and appropriate.

Arizonans celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Heritage Fund, which has been so successfully used in gaining critical parcels of land for wildlife habitat. In 2011, the Commission, with funds from Heritage, Fish and Wildlife Service grants, the Arizona Antelope Foundation, and other partners, purchased Horseshoe Ranch north of Black Canyon City. The approximately 200-acre ranch is located adjacent to the Agua Fria River and is surrounded by expansive desert grassland mesas transected by streams and riparian habitat. The ranch property and associated allotments are being managed for long-term sustainability of native wildlife populations and habitats, public access to open space, outdoor education, recreational opportunities, and the tradition of ranching in central Arizona.

There are many other accomplishments and activities of interest described in this annual report, including successful work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure continuation of our sport fish stocking program for Arizonans, continued progress on a shooting range for northern Arizona, new developments in Sonoran pronghorn conservation, and many more. I invite and encourage you to review them.

As we go forward, I would like to point out the value that wildlife and outdoor recreation bring to our state. Aside from the intrinsic value held by Arizonans who are passionate about wildlife, there are huge economic benefits to the state and to local communities. Hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing together account for more than \$2.1 billion in expenditures on these activities and help support jobs and provide tax revenues to the state.

Another important economic role provided by our agency, and one not well known by most people, is the value of the collaborative active management we undertake on behalf of wildlife. This encompasses research and collection of sound scientific wildlife data, as well as efforts to either help recover federally listed (endangered or threatened) species or proactive action to help prevent the need for them to be listed. Through activities ranging from native fish conservation to active management that has helped increase bald eagle numbers, our agency benefits wildlife and helps ensure multiple use of land and public access to outdoor recreation.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year toward the benefit of Arizona's wildlife and its citizens.

Larry D. Voyles
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry D. Voyles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.