

- Hayne, D. W. 1949. Two methods for estimating animal populations. *Journal of Mammalogy* 30: 399-411.
- Kale, H. W. 1965. Ecology and bioenergetics of the long-billed marsh wren *Telmatoedys palustris griseus* (Brewster) in Georgia salt marshes. *Occasional Publications of the Nuttall Ornithological Club* 5: 1-142.
- McNicholl, M. K. 1982. Factors affecting reproductive success of Forster's Terns at Delta Marsh, Manitoba. *Colonial Waterbirds* 5: 32-38.
- Post, W. 1981. The influence of rice rats *Oryzomys palustris* on the habitat use of the seaside sparrow *Ammospiza maritima*. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology* 9: 35-40.
- Sharp, H. F., Jr. 1967. Food ecology of the rice rat, *Oryzomys palustris* (Harlan), in a Georgia salt marsh. *Journal of Mammalogy* 48: 557-563.
- Webster, W. D., J. F. Parnell, and W. C. Biggs, Jr. 1985. *Mammals of the Carolinas, Virginia, and Maryland*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. 255 pages.

Received 24 October 2001

Accepted 17 May 2004

Documenting Pronghorn Antelope, *Antilocapra americana*, in the Peace River Grasslands, Alberta

THERESA A. FERGUSON

Anthropology, Athabasca University, 1 University Drive, Athabasca, Alberta T9S 3A3 Canada
Present address: 10733 150 St. NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5P 1R4 Canada

Ferguson, Theresa A. 2003. Documenting Pronghorn Antelope, *Antilocapra americana*, in the Peace River grasslands, Alberta. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 117(4): 657-658.

Fur trade records of the 1800-1855 period document the harvest of antelope in the central Peace River area of northern Alberta.

Key Words: Pronghorn Antelope, *Antilocapra americana*, fur trade, northern Alberta.

Although descriptions of the early historic distribution of Pronghorn Antelope, *Antilocapra americana* Ord, in Alberta restrict them to the south and east portion of the province extending only as far north as 53°N latitude (Mitchell 1980; Soper 1964), fur trade records from the central Peace (56-57°) make sporadic reference to antelope in the 1800-1850 period. See Documents Cited section).

The fur trade posts under consideration here are located in relative proximity.¹ Fort Dunvegan was the longest lived establishment (1805-1918), with several locations, all in the same area as the present day Dunvegan, Alberta (HBCA, PAM, B.56). Fort St. Mary was situated 1818-1820 at the confluence of the Smoky and Peace rivers (HBCA, PAM, B.190). The Hudson's Bay Company post at [Fort Waterloo] Lesser Slave Lake (HBCA, PAM, B.115/a) was located 1815-1933 at the west end of Lesser Slave Lake and its hunting territory extended into the tributaries of the Peace River. The Ile de Campement of Harmon's 1816 diary was situated farther north on the Peace, possibly at the confluence of the Notikewin River (Lamb 1957: 117). Fur trade records do not support the distribution of antelope as far north as Fort Vermilion [Alberta] (HBCA, PAM, B.224); and so few of the Fort St. John [British Columbia] post records have survived, that no particular conclusion can be drawn from the absence

of references to antelope in those documents (HBCA, PAM, B. 189).

Antilocapra americana are referred to in these records by different terms: "antelope", "cabri"/"cabrit" and possibly "jumping deer". "Antelope" appeared only in the post-1850 records of Fort Dunvegan. Richardson (1829: 262) speculated that the term, "cabri/cabrit," as used in the Canadian fur trade for antelope, originated from a corruption of the Spanish, *cabra*, or goat. This usage is still found in older English dictionaries (e.g., Webster's 1957). This term appears in the Fort Dunvegan and Lesser Slave Lake post journals and in Harmon's 1816 diary from Ile de Campement. The term, "jumping deer," is found in the Fort St. Mary records of 1819/20 and in the Lesser Slave Lake records of 1819-1821. Whether this use refers to Pronghorn Antelope is not entirely clear. While the term, "jumping deer," was used historically for antelope (e.g., Coues 1965: 634), it is also used for other species, for instance, Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), a species which may also have been present in the area of the Peace River under discussion.

The sporadic nature of the historical references to antelope in this area is related to their lack of significance as a provisioning resource in an area where Bison (*Bison bison*) were abundant. Thus, although Harmon described the area around Ile de Campement as rich

¹Editor's Note: see map in *The National Atlas of Canada*, Fourth Edition (Revised) 1974. Pages 79-80, Posts of the Canadian Fur Trade. MacMillan Company, Toronto.

in "Buffaloe, Moose, Red Deer & Cabri etc.," he did not identify cabri among the species actually hunted to provision the post (Lamb 1957: 117). Other general descriptions of the resources available to the Peace River posts do not mention antelope at all (Lamb 1970; Rich, 1938).

In the Upper Peace, antelope harvests were documented in daily post journals in two periods: pre-1822; and from 1840-1855. In both of these periods, meat provisioning was uncertain and harvesting more opportunistic, but for different reasons. During the early period of competition between the trading companies, posts experienced difficulty in retaining committed Fort Hunters. After 1840, the availability of committed hunters was not a problem, but the depletion of bison and other large game forced the posts to expand their harvest to small game (Ferguson 1993).

Usually only fresh meat was identified by species in the fur trade journals. The main fresh meat hunt occurred over the October-March period. Typical are the following two entries from Fort Dunvegan:

"arrived with 180 lbs of meat of the two cabri killed by Sistey, nearly the half of one was wanting." (HBCA, PAM, B.56/a/10, entry of 14 March 1842)

"hunters after antelope at Bear River" (PAA 74.1, item 122, entry of 16 February 1854).

The last extant Fort Dunvegan journal of the mid-1800s (PAA 74.1, item 122) records the harvest of antelope in 1855, so the population was present until at least that time. The next available source, the District Report of 1885 (HBCA, B56e/1), contains no reference to antelope, nor is there any reference in subsequent materials. It seems likely that hunting pressure after the depletion of the Bison contributed to the extirpation of the antelope in the Upper Peace, but one cannot exclude the possibility that populations persisted beyond the 1850s in areas distant from the posts.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and the Provincial Archives of Alberta, for permission to quote from the

Fort Dunvegan journals. Thanks to three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

Documents Cited

Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba

| | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|
| B. 56 | Fort Dunvegan Post records |
| B. 56/a/10 | Fort Dunvegan Post Journal, 1841-2 |
| B. 56/a/11 | Fort Dunvegan Post Journal, 1842-3 |
| B. 56/e/1 | Fort Dunvegan District Report, 1885 |
| B. 115/a | Lesser Slave Lake Post records |
| B. 189 | Fort St. John Post records |
| B. 190 | Fort St. Mary Post records |
| B. 224 | Fort Vermilion Post records |

Provincial Archives of Alberta

74.1, item 122. Fort Dunvegan Post Journal, 1853-5

Literature Cited

- Coues, E.** 1965. The manuscript journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson, 1719-1844, Volume 2. Francis P. Harper, New York. 469 pages.
- Ferguson, T. A.** 1993. Wood Bison and the early fur trade. *In* The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies. Edited by Patricia A. McCormack and R. Geoffrey Ironside. Circumpolar Research Series Number 3, Canadian Circumpolar Institute, Edmonton. 186 pages.
- Lamb, W. K., Editor.** 1957. Sixteen Years in Indian Country: the Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800-1816. MacMillan Company of Canada, Toronto. 277 pages.
- Lamb, W. K., Editor.** 1970. The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander MacKenzie. MacMillan of Canada, Toronto. 551 pages.
- Mitchell, G. J.** 1980. The pronghorn antelope in Alberta. G. J. Mitchell, Regina, Saskatchewan.
- Rich, E. E., Editor.** 1938. Journal of Occurrences in the Athabasca Department, by George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report. Champlain Society, Toronto, Ontario. 498 pages.
- Richardson, J.** 1829. Fauna Boreali-americana; or the zoology of the northern parts of British America. J. Murray, London, England. 2 volumes.
- Soper, J. D.,** 1964. The mammals of Alberta. Hamly Press, Edmonton. 402 pages.
- Webster New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language.** 1957. Second edition. The World Publishing Company, New York. 2129 pages.

Received 17 January 2003

Accepted 6 November 2003