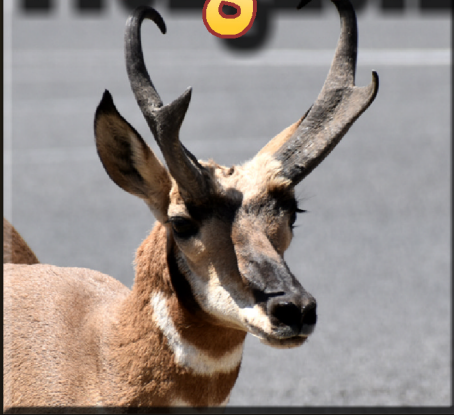


ARTIODACTYLA

(Even-Toed Ungulates)

Pronghorn



Cattle



Sheep



Deer



Swine

(not native to the Mojave Desert)



Peccaries

(not native to the Mojave Desert)



Family ANTILOCAPRIDAE (Pronghorn)

Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)



Measurements:

Ave. Length: 53" Ht: 38" Wt: (m) 115 lbs (f) 90 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

deer-like; tan to reddish brown; cheeks, necklace, belly, and rump white; cloven hooves; (m) lyre-shaped black horns with single prong about half way from base; (f) horns usually 3-4 inches long

Notes:

uncommon; ranges throughout interior w NA from s Canada to n Mexico, west to se OR/NV, east to w ND/c TX; active day and night; grazes on grasses, forbs, cacti, sagebrush, etc.; (m) buck, (f) doe; fastest land animal in Western Hemisphere (recorded at 70 mph for several minutes, 30-mph cruise for over 15 miles)

Mojave presence: rare; Mohave Co., AZ



Comments

Pronghorn are often mistakenly called "antelope," but are not closely related to their African cousins. They are the only extant member of *Antilocapridae*. I have only seen these beautiful animals up close on the Colorado Plateau and along the roads leading up to the canyon (in the Mojave Desert) near the *Grand Wash Cliffs*. Here they are alert, but not skittish, as they are more accustomed to seeing people on tours to the Grand Canyon who stop to take photos.



Family **BOVIDAE** (Cattle) **Cattle** (*Bos taurus*)



Clark Range; Mtn Pass, CA

Measurements:

Ave. Length: ~72" Ht: ~60" Wt: (m) 1000+ lbs (f) 600+ lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

variable coat colors (brown, black, white) and patterns (spotted, mixed colors); pale below; cloven hooves (2-toed); unbranched and unshed horns; males larger than females



Clark Range; Mtn Pass, CA

Notes:

common; range throughout NA grazing on whatever grasses, sages, etc., are available one season to another; domesticated over 10,000 ago; numerous breeds; (m) bull, (f) cow; these are big animals...do not take them for granted just because they are so familiar and friendly on your neighbor's farm...they can be dangerous, especially a mother with her calf!

Mojave presence: year-round; feral/free-ranging



Dolan Springs, Arizona



Clark Range; Mtn Pass, CA

Comments:

Cattle? One hardly considers bovine as being wildlife, but in the West cattle are not just found on farms and ranches. Many are free ranging/feral. Thus, they are likely to be encountered in remote areas. Plus, since I'm including other feral animals in my Life Lists (such as Pekin ducks, burros and mustangs, red-eared sliders, etc.), then cattle count. Besides, I need a representative for the family bovidae besides the Bighorn Sheep!



Virgin Mtns; Mesquite, NV



Virgin Mtns; Mesquite, NV

Family BOVIDAE (Sheep)

Desert Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 62" Ht: 38" Wt: (m) 167 lbs (f) 136 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

brown coat in northern mountains, tan in desert environments; white belly, rump, muzzle, eye patch; short brown tail; cloven hooves; (m) massive c-shaped horns, (f) short slender horns

Notes:

common locally in western NA from sw Canada south to extreme n Mexico, otherwise spreadout in small, remote groups seldom encountered; almost always found on or near rocky, mountainous terrain; generally diurnal, feeding on a variety of grasses, sedges, forbs, holly, cactus, etc.; (m) ram, (f) ewe; rams famous for their head-butting contests during the rut

Mojave presence: year-round



male

Valley of Fire SP; NV



female

Valley of Fire SP; NV



learning the land

Valley of Fire SP; NV



white rump

Valley of Fire SP; NV



rare white specimen

photo: John Holmes

Willow Spgs; Red Rock NCA



park maintenance crew hard at work near Lake Mead NRA

Boulder City, NV



mom and lamb enjoying the greens

Boulder City, NV



young bachelor group

Willow Spgs; Red Rock NCA

Comments:

At left, a ram is demonstrating his best flehman technique (head high, lips curled), used to enhance his sense of smell during the rut. In the photo at right, a fearless and sure-footed female negotiates a treacherous cliff in Grand Canyon NP with seeming ease...an amazing feat for such a large animal! The Boulder City herd is a rare example of a habituated group that has learned to trade off tolerating people in exchange for succulent grazing at a city recreation park.



love is in the air

Boulder City, NV



sure footed daredevil

South Rim; Grand Cyn NP

Family CERVIDAE (Deer)

Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 72" Ht: 40" Wt: (m) 290 lbs (f) 115 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

medium size; large **mule-like ears**; gray to reddish brown coat; **white rump**, throat and inside of ears and legs; white tail with black tip

Notes:

common, but declining in many areas; found in forest and sagebrush habitats throughout w NA; (m) buck, (f) doe; active day and night grazing on herbaceous plants and various berries in summer, evergreen twigs, juniper, sage, etc., in winter; antlers on male double branched and forked into two tines

Mojave presence: year-round

Comments

Most people are quite familiar with the seemingly ubiquitous **White-Tailed Deer** found throughout most of the US, but their absence from the Mojave Desert region is replaced by the Mule Deer. Note the very large mule-like ears, conspicuous white rump, and the black tip on the white tail.

I encountered this family on the Hualapai Reservation at the west rim of the Grand Canyon in November of 2022. I certainly had their attention!



Willow Spgs; Red Rock NCA



Yellowstone National Park



South Rim; Grand Canyon NP



Lee Cyn; Spring Mtns; NV



Family **CERVIDAE** (Elk) **Wapiti** (*Cervus canadensis*)

male



Yellowstone National Park

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 84" Ht: 52" Wt: (m) 800 lbs (f) 550 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

large size; brown or tan coat with darker belly, mane (shaggy on male), and head; rump and short tail, buff

Notes:

common; ranges from western Canada south through Rocky Mtn states, with isolated populations in CA, NV, AZ, NM, OK, PA; 10 subspecies; mainly nocturnal, crepuscular; herbivorous, mainly grasses; (m) buck, (f) doe; the most polygamous deer in the world (bucks collect a harem of up to 60 females); male's antlers are very large with 6 tines on each beam

Mojave presence: rare; restricted to se NV, sw UT

female



Yellowstone National Park

huge rack



Yellowstone National Park

buffy rump patch



Yellowstone National Park

just checking things out!



typical social unit of young with females



juvenile spotted to 3 months old



cruisin' the road



Mom

Mini Mom

showing off a new rack



July

shedding her winter coat



May

Comments

These bottom photos were taken at the **Grand Canyon NP**. All the elk I've met generally have a calm disposition, especially those habituated to people. However, these are big animals and can do real damage if threatened, especially cows with young, and rutting bulls. You should be all right if you don't approach too closely, and move slow and easy. Of course, it's always polite to say nice things to them in a calm, soothing voice!

Family TAYASSUIDAE (Peccary)

Collard Peccary (*Tayassu tajacu*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 3.5' Ht: 2.5" Wt: 60 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

medium size; **pig-like** body, face, and snout; gray to brownish coat with coarse, bristly fur; inconspicuous **pale collar** around neck and across shoulders; small, inconspicuous tail; strong scent; genders similar, though males larger



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM

Notes:

common locally; nocturnal and crepuscular in hot months, diurnal in winter; found in desert scrub and grassland habitats from AZ east to sw TX, south through CA to Argentina; aka **Javelina**, **Skunk Pig**; (m) boar, (f) sow; omnivorous; group called a squadron

Mojave presence: rare; eastern transition zones



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM

Comments

The peccary, better known in the southwest as a **javelina**, is not generally a resident of the Mojave Desert. However, I have seen them along the **Grand Wash Cliffs** in the transition zone between the Mojave and the Colorado Plateau Province, thus qualifying them to be included here. There is still confusion as to which genus--*Tayassu* or

Dicotyles--the collared peccary belongs in; it seems that most references prefer *Tayassu*, which is used here.

After years of anticipation, I finally encountered my first specimen grazing in a field (left) on the **Hualapai Reservation** at the West Rim of the Grand Canyon in January of 2019. Since then, I have occasionally seen them, almost always in small family groups (right), elsewhere in the region and adjacent lands.



A more promising area where one has a better opportunity to see these elusive animals is at the **Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge** near Socorro, New Mexico.

Despite their very pig-like appearance, javelinas possess a couple of immediately recognizable differences that are easily distinguishable in the field. First, and most obvious, is the lack of a distinctive tail. Secondly, javelinas have coarse, bristly fur (pigs are naked). Another characteristic can only be determined in a more up close and personal encounter: pigs possess long, curved canines and 44 teeth, while javelinas have short, straight canines and 38 teeth.