



Bi-annual Newsletter

May 2021

Welcome to the 10th Annual Meeting and Auction of the Nebraska Big Game Society. Although the annual event was not able to be held last year, the Elk and Combo permits were offered on Proxibid.

2020 Auction Winner – Mark Heck from The Given Right hunting television series on the Sportsman Channel. The elk was shot on Sept. 22, 2020 in the Bordeaux Management Unit. The show will air in mid-July.



Chadron State Scholarships – NBGS has donated \$3,000 to Chadron State Foundation for Scholarships. The scholarship this year was awarded to Grant Edgcombe of Minden, Nebraska, a senior majoring in Rangeland Management. The Scholarship Committee currently is reviewing applications for the next academic year.

NET Grant – NBGS is fulfilling its commitment of \$20,000 to match grant funding by the Nebraska Environmental Trust and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Projects completed in 2020 included new solar wells at Williams Gap and Ponderosa WMA. Also, a new well at Metcalf WMA and water catchment at Charcoal Creek. NBGS provided funds to upgrade galvanized water tanks to rubber tires.

NBGS also donated \$10,000 in 2020 to support the purchase of the Kreman Ranch with the Nebraska Land Trust.

The 2021 Officers, Board of Directors and Members are the following: President, Justin Hertzell; Secretary, Jim King; Treasurer, Craig Hundt. Board of Directors: Aaron Baumann, Rick Brandt, Seth Harms, Randy Johnson, Tom King, Jason Muhle, Jim Nachreiner and Michael Westhoff.

NBGS Officers and Board of Directors welcome the following new members for this year and appreciate their support of big game in Nebraska: Dick Block, Scott Cassels, Brandon Dirkschneider, Tom Ferry, Matt Firestone, Dan Kreitman, Dave and Mary Jo Livingston.

Even though the board did not meet as a group in person, it continued to hold call-in meetings to carry on the business of NBGS. Below is a summary of funds raised and donated in 2020.

NBGS 2020 - Funds Raised & Donated

Funds raised

Memberships	
15 @ \$1,000	\$15,000
Auction	
Elk Permit	\$39,000
Combo Permit	\$5,500
Total raised.....	\$59,500

Funds donated

NGPC - Elk permit	\$39,000
NGPC - Combo tag	\$4,675
NLT - Kreman Ranch	\$10,000
Chadron State Foundation.....	\$3,000
1 @ \$1,500 for 2021	
1 @ \$1,500 for 2022	
Wild Sheep Foundation	\$2,000
NGPC/NET grant	
Projects - September	\$8,810
Projects - October.....	\$4,312
Total donated	\$71,797

The NBGS Board also approved assisting Nebraska Game and Parks Commission with the purchase of elk collars in the coming year. The focus of NBGS this year will be improvements for elk in Nebraska.

If you wish to become a member, please contact us at nebiggame.org and click on "Contact Us."

The email address is: nbgs_11@gmail.com

New Elk Research Coming to Nebraska

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, in collaboration with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is about to begin a large-scale, multiyear elk research project to better understand the ecology of this species in Nebraska.

As elk populations have increased across their inhabited range in western Nebraska, many herds have exceeded cultural carrying capacities. Herds continue to colonize new areas eastward in Nebraska, and it is more important than ever now to understand elk population ecology for effectively managing this expanding population.

The research is anticipated to start in late 2021 or early 2022. The plan is to collar approximately 120 elk, evenly distributed among four of our elk management units initially, and then expand to the three remaining units after the first two years of the project.

Overall goals of this project are to understand basic elk ecology, such as survival, movements, and habitat preference, while also creating an appropriate methodology to track and understand elk population dynamics. We anticipate this research will give us a better grasp of our elk populations across the state, allowing us to more effectively manage this resource.

Pronghorn Research in the Panhandle

In February 2021, Dr. Andrew Little at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Dr. Ranglack at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and biologists with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission began a two-year study designed to identify critical ranges, temporal and spatial distribution, habitat use, migration corridors and survival of pronghorn in western Nebraska. This project is a collaborative effort among those universities, Game and Parks, and more than 300 private landowners.

This research is being conducted across three hunting units of the Panhandle — Banner South, Box Butte East and Garden — that were recommended by Game and Parks biologists who have relationships with landowners and knowledge of management issues there. Researchers captured 80 male and female pronghorn and fitted them with GPS collars. Additionally, researchers collected data on pronghorn age and genetics.

Drs. Little and Ranglack co-advise, Katie Piecora, a graduate student in UNL's School of Natural Resources. During the next two years, Katie will analyze the GPS data collected from the collars. This data will be used to answer the major aims of this study and help Game and Parks manage a unique species in the Great Plains. Our long-term goal is to establish effective management strategies for pronghorn in the Panhandle.

New Bill to Help with Big Game Management

LB395 was introduced by Sen. Tim Gragert and heard in the Natural Resource Committee. It was included in the Committee priority bill LB507. This would provide three new tools for managing big game with hunting.

The first would expand special depredation seasons and season extensions, currently only for deer, to include elk and antelope; which will help the Commission to deal with depredation issues in a more targeted manner instead of unit wide. The second would allow a higher percentage of elk and antelope permits to go to landowners; getting more permits in the hands of the landowners that want to be part of the solution in population management, without reducing the permits available to general hunters. The third would create an incentive for landowners who allow access for hunters to harvest antlerless elk on their property. After landowners have recorded a certain number of harvests on their property, they will be eligible for a free landowner tag (that is limited to their own property). The Commission sees all of these elements as important steps to help manage a quality big game population.

NBGS Nebraska Environmental Trust Grant:

The Commission is grateful for the assistance of the NBGS for the upgrades and new water sources on our Panhandle wildlife management areas. Below are some photos to show examples of the projects completed.



Figure 1 Upgraded galvanized tanks to rubber tires. Fifteen of these were completed.



Figure 2 Ground level waterers were installed to provide better water to serve fawns, calves and birds.



Figure 3 Windmill to solar upgrades were accomplished to provide a more reliable water source.



Figure 4 Water catchments were installed to provide natural water sources for wildlife.



Figure 5 Two new wells were installed to help with grazing management on wildlife management areas.