

Outdoor Recreation *is* Outdoor Education

Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) are a unique plains species native to western and central North America. An icon of the American west, the song "Home on the Range" that speaks of a land "where the deer and the antelope play" was referring to this species. Its scientific name translates to "American goat-antelope," but it is neither a goat nor related to African antelope species, though its nicknames include "antelope" or even "speed goat."

And speedy they are! Pronghorn are the fastest animal on land in North America, capable of reaching speeds over 55 miles per hour. Cheetahs of Africa may reach bursts of speed over 60 miles per hour but can only sustain that speed for 700 yards or so. Pronghorn can maintain 30 miles per hour for over 20 miles!



Their name comes from the pair of horns (not antlers) that develop "prongs" or hooks on their terminal ends. The horns are made of a keratin casing (the same material that makes up our hair and fingernails) and, unlike all other animals with horns, are shed and regrown annually. Both sexes have horns, though male (buck) horns are typically much larger than in females (does). The key characteristic to telling the sexes apart is a black or dark brown cheek patch on the side of the face that only the males possess.



Bucks will gather a harem of does during breeding season and will fight other males to maintain possession of their breeding group. Does give birth to one or two fawns, which hide in vegetation for around 25 days, attended by their mother, before joining a nursery group of other fawns and does.

Pronghorn rely not only on their speed but on their eyesight to avoid predators. They require large tracts of grassland lacking much tall vegetation so they can see dangers from far away. Managing habitat to increase grassland and decrease woody plant succession is beneficial to this

species, as is replacing the bottom strand of barbed wire fencing with a smooth strand wire or removing it, as this species likes to duck under fencing to move between pastures.



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