

## **-ARIZONA-**

### **Black Mountain Herd Management**



#### **LOCATION**

The Black Mountain Herd Management Area is situated in extreme northwestern Arizona. Located 15 miles west of Kingman, the area parallels the eastern shoreline of the Colorado River for 80 miles from Hoover Dam south to the Needles Bridge to California. The historic gold mining town of Oatman, Arizona, lies in the center of the southern half of the HMA, along Historic Route 66.

#### **SIZE**

The largest HMA in Arizona, Black Mountain consists of about 1.1 million acres of Mohave Desert shrub and Grand Canyon Desert shrub vegetation communities.

#### **HABITAT**

Primarily volcanic in origin, the area is characterized by large mesas, steep cliffs, talus slopes, rocky foothills, alluvial fans and sandy washes. The climate of the region is generally hot, windy, and dry, with summertime highs exceeding 120 degrees and lows near 25 degrees. Precipitation ranges from three inches per year along the Colorado River, to 12 inches on the higher peaks. Containing three wilderness areas within its boundaries, the Black Mountain HMA features a rich, fragile desert plant community that in combination with unique topography, results in a high quality habitat for a wide variety of animals. These mountains are home to the largest herd of desert bighorn sheep on public lands in the nation.

#### **HISTORY**

Burros were first introduced to the Black Mountains by miners and prospectors when gold was discovered in the early 1860s. Troopers stationed at near by Fort Mohave, who made up the California Volunteers, came up Silver Creek and fanned out through the near by foothills in search of gold. With them came their trusty pack burros. After gold was discovered, several mining booms followed, but eventually the mines played out and the miners moved on. The burros proved to be well suited to the harsh, unforgiving climate and terrain of the Black Mountains. As they escaped or were left behind, the burros continued to thrive in this harsh environment.

#### **POPULATION**

Burros evolved in the deserts of North Africa and are exceptionally well adapted to hot, dry environments. With few natural predators, the wild burro population flourished, reaching levels of more than 2,000 animals by the mid 1970s. During those high population levels, the burros began to have a negative impact on this fragile desert habitat. The current population level is about 475 animals, with about two thirds of the population being managed in the southern half of the HMA.

#### **MANAGEMENT**

The Black Mountain Ecosystem Plan was signed in 1996, establishing an Appropriate Management Level of 478 wild burros, coexisting with livestock, desert bighorn sheep and desert mule deer. About 90 wild burros are removed each year to maintain a balance within this unique desert ecosystem. Wild burros removed from the Black Mountain HMA are offered to the public through the BLM's Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro Program.

**OFFICE CONTACT**

For more information on the Black Mountain Herd Management Area, contact the Kingman Field Office at 2755 Mission Boulevard, Kingman, AZ 86401-3629 or call (928) 718-3700.