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From: Elton Greeley, Fran Moses-Ahern, Debbie Yahtin, Lyle Rhoan, Sr., Austin Greene, Carol Allison, Lucinda Green, Andy Leonard. Wanda Charley and Rosanna Sanders

## Study determines animal preferences, behavior patterns

by Lenora Starr

A growing concern among the Indian people and the employees of the Natural Resources department prompted them to begin a study of elk and deer, to determine their habitat preferences and behavior. The results of their findings will help form a long term Wildlife Management Plan, a plan which will allow the Natural Resources Department to help protect the habitats of the deer and elk, and, in time, may increase the population of those animals.

The study is a Radio-Telemetry

Project which was introduced during the winter of 1984. The project has been successful thus far and through the efforts of the tribe and BIA, and has encountered only minor problems. The study has already shown some patterns of what type of habitats the deer and elk have a preference for. According to Marissa Stradley, who is working with the project, "The Wildlife Management Plan is something that we don't have now and I think that it will be helpful."

Dennis Starr has been working diligently with the project and because of the animals past move-

ment, can predict where the animals will be moving. According to Starr, poachers, rural developments and timber harvesting are a continuous threat to the populations of the animals. Dennis Starr a tribal member and Natural Resources personnel expresses his concern.

"A long time ago during our nomadic times, conservation was natural because we never over used a particular area. We took whatever we needed and moved on. Everything had a chance to replenish itself. Animals bred, berries went through a cycle etc. etc. Barring natural disaster fire, bad win-

ter, over predation and Indian could expect good hunting, fishing berry picking, root digging year after year.

"Today, on a small reservation we find it necessary to protect our natural resource. Being a progressive tribe we asked B.I.A. for monies to employ a biologist who would help enhance and preserve our fish and wildlife. A difficult task to say the least. Our tribes now have two biologists Terry Luther and Mark Fritsch. They have encouraged young tribal members to enter this field.

"Through cooperative efforts between tribes, B.I.A. and state radio telemetry has become a reality on our reservation. Although very expensive, radio collaring of deer and elk and placing transmitters in fish can produce important data which will help our leaders make responsible decisions concerning natural resources.

The concept and idea for the project developed here in Warm Springs when it was discovered that other wildlife biologists were using radio collars and radio receiving equipment with success. The collars are placed around the neck of the animal which will then emit radio signals, enabling natural resources personnel to track the animals. Bait and traps are set up for the animals and tranquilizers are not necessary. Natural Resources try to pick an area in which they feel the animals are comfortable and where it is remote enough not to be accessed by anyone tempted to poach the animals.

According to Eugene Greene, director in Natural Resources, there are other methods of tracking the deer and elk to study their migration patterns, but this method



Marissa Stradley attempts to locate a collared animal through a receiver.



Natural Resources has been radio-collaring deer and elk for two years. The bull elk above has been collared and is released by natural resources personnel. This bull is one of four elk that is currently collared on the reservation.

proved to be more successful than others and the animals only have to be handled once. Also, because each animal's collar operate on different frequencies, they can tell which particular animal it is and follow its migrating patterns and determine their home range, whether it is five or 20 square miles.

Greene also said that the study would be more successful if law enforcement agencies would contribute by putting strict enforcement on poachers. Sometimes collared animals are killed by hunters

and are left behind leaving the carcass unsalvageable for food. Natural Resources would like to be notified so that they can use the collar on another animal as soon as possible and study its migrating pattern. It also makes it difficult to complete the study successfully if they are not notified of a dead collared animal.

The study will be completed once the radio transmitters run out of batteries, in two to three years time.