

### ***Importance to Wildlife and Wildlife-related Recreation***

Over 55 percent of all vertebrate species in New Mexico rely wholly or in part upon wetland habitats, and nearly 25 percent of the threatened or endangered species in the state are restricted to wetlands. Examples of recreationally and economically important species that utilize the waters of terminal basins include pronghorn antelope, mule deer, elk in the Mimbres Basin, and black bear and mountain lion in the Tularosa and Mimbres Basins. Wild turkey, blue grouse, pheasant, and Gambel's, Montezuma and scaled quail also depend on these aquatic systems for food and other habitat components.

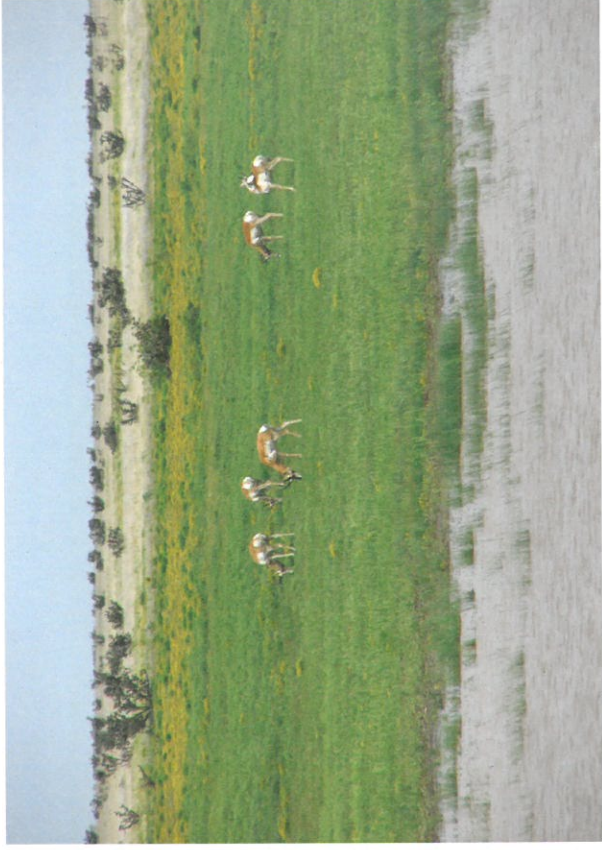
All of the waterfowl species of the Central Flyway use basins in eastern and central New Mexico. Wetlands found further west in the state serve the habitat needs of birds using the Intermountain migration routes. Wetlands in this area continue to provide important migration and wintering habitat for many species of waterfowl, for example, Canada geese, northern shovelers, mallards, northern pintail, cinnamon teal, green-winged teal, and blue-winged teal. In addition, over 400 bald eagles winter in New Mexico, mostly along the channel of the Rio Grande River, but they also utilize the terminal basins. The playas and other wetlands of New Mexico are also important migration habitat for shorebirds.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish 2003 letter also documented the significant interstate commerce link to these so-called "isolated" waters, stating that "[i]n the 2001-2002 hunting season 27,931 non-resident large and small game licenses were sold to out-of-state hunters, which provided \$5,739,050 dollars in revenue to the Department (NMGF statistics)." In its letter, the Department expressed concern about the potential impact to these important fish and game resources, saying that "[b]ecause New Mexico is an arid state, the loss of any of these waters to development or water pollution ... could adversely affect the persistence of wildlife populations in these arid areas. Waterfowl surveys in New Mexico have indicated a declining trend in waterfowl numbers wintering in the state, at least partially as a result of shrinking water supplies in lakes and rivers from the ongoing severe drought."

With regard to fisheries, rainbow trout and to a lesser degree brook and brown trout, could be adversely affected in the Mimbres and Tularosa Basins. Examples include the Tularosa Creek, Three Rivers in the Lincoln National Forest and Indian Creek on Mescalero Tribal land. Warmwater fisheries could also be affected.

### ***Economics of Wildlife-Related Recreation***

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "2006 Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation," 39 percent of New Mexico residents older than 16 participated in wildlife-associated recreation, with recreational expenditures in the state (including those made by out-of-state visitors) generating approximately \$808 million in 2006. Almost 1.1 million residents and non-residents fished, hunted or watched wildlife in New Mexico in 2006.



Pronghorn antelope feeding at one of many unnamed playa lakes in New Mexico (eastern plains).



Sinkholes provide habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts. They are at risk of losing federal water pollution protections.