

Masters of Mountain Habitat



Bighorn Facts: Did You Know?

- Bighorn prefer desert mountains and open areas with steep slopes, cliffs and canyons. They often look for food and water along the bases of the hills and in sand washes.
- Both rams (males) and ewes (females) have permanent horns. Rams have horns that are considerably larger and more curled than ewes.
- They use their acute eyesight to avoid predators, and can move over level ground at 30 mph and up mountain slopes at 15 mph.
- Their split hooves are sharp-edged, elastic, and convex to help them scramble up steep slopes in their rocky habitat.
- They eat many types of desert plants including shrubs, grasses and cacti to maintain a healthy diet.
- They get most of their water from the plants they eat. In warmer weather, they will also visit springs, tenajas (ten-ah-haas) and oases. (A tenaja is a rock "bowl" or water hole).

Peninsular bighorn sheep (Ovis canadensis nelsoni) are native to the California desert. Our bighorn sheep were listed in 1998 as an endangered species when their numbers dwindled to less than 334 from Mount San Jacinto south to the Mexican border. Today their numbers are increasing. Help us protect these majestic creatures and other desert wildlife who call this area home.

Bighorn sheep are an iconic symbol of the desert mountains and are part of our rich natural heritage. You can support the recovery of this species by practicing these simple tips.....

1. Be a good guest:

You are visitors to their home. Please clean up after yourself and respect their space.

2. Please leave your dog at home:

Dogs are seen as predators and can be threatening to bighorn and other animals.

3. Observe from afar:

Please stay on the trail. Do not approach or scare the bighorn. If you see them, remain quiet, enjoy watching them and then pass slowly.



SPRING LAMBS: Most ewes will give birth to one lamb per year. Lambs are born any time from January through May.



LIVING ON THE EDGE: Within a few hours of birth, lambs are very mobile. Lamb survival varies greatly, depending on availability of food and water.

