



DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP

Ovis canadensis nelsoni

SPECIES QUICK FACTS

SIZE

The desert bighorn sheep averages between four to five feet in length and stands between three and a half and four feet in height at the shoulder.

WEIGHT

An adult desert bighorn sheep can range between 115 and 280 pounds.

FOOD HABITS

The desert bighorn sheep eats a variety of grasses and sedges.

HABITAT

The desert bighorn sheep is found throughout many dry mountain regions with alpine meadows and grassy slopes.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The desert bighorn sheep is found throughout California and Nevada to western Texas and south into Mexico.

FUN FACT

The desert bighorn sheep can gain a stable foothold on mountain ledges that are only two inches in width. They can jump from ledge to ledge for distances of close to 20 feet.



There are two subspecies of bighorn sheep, the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, *Ovis Canadensis Canadensis*, and the desert bighorn sheep, *Ovis canadensis nelsoni*. Bighorn sheep have double-layered skulls. This extra thickness helps protect them when they crash horns during battle. Male bighorn sheep usually stay in separate bachelor groups and do not come in contact with females except during the breeding season. Although coyotes, wolves, and mountain lions frequently prey upon bighorn sheep, the sheep can often escape if it can find a cliff that it can jump to.

