

kit fox in some locations. The impact of wildfire and the annual grassland expansion or crested wheatgrass



seedings on kit fox is likely detrimental to the habitat of their prey. In other areas coyotes and feral or domestic dogs have been documented to be significant predators on kit fox.

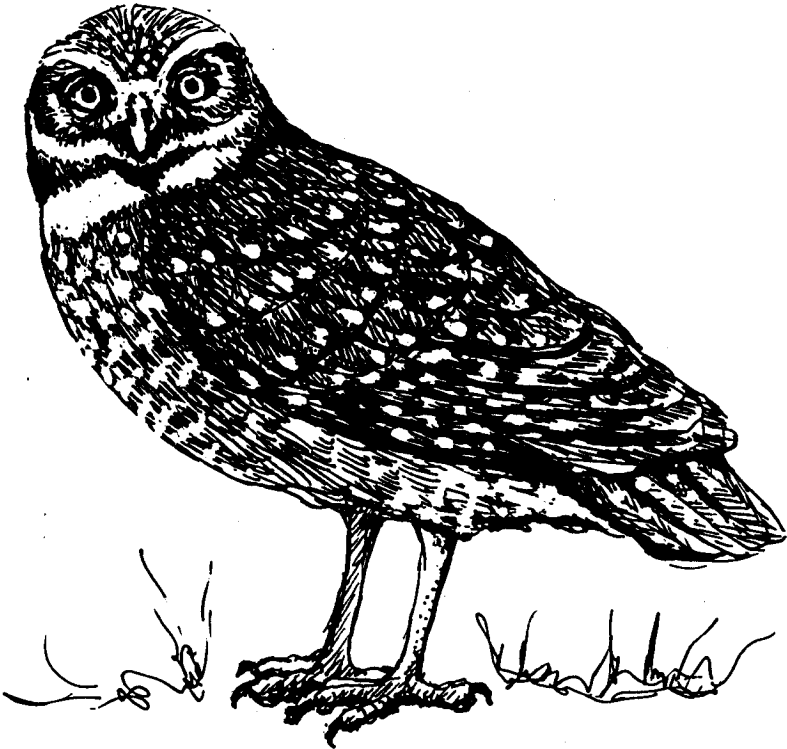
California Bighorn Sheep

California bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis californiana*) are one of four recognized subspecies of bighorn sheep (Lawson and Johnson 1982). They are generally light brown with a light gray to almost white nose, rump patch and undersides. Both sexes have horns, but the female's horns remain small, whereas, the male's horns are much thicker and grow into a curl. Breeding occurs in the fall (October to December) (Hanna 1990) and the young are born the following spring (April through June) according to Lawson and Johnson (1982). California bighorns usually give birth to a single lamb (Hanna 1990), however, twins are occasionally born. California bighorn sheep are diurnal, but they exhibit some limited nocturnal behavior. Lambing habitat has been described as precipitous terrain that provides escape cover (Lawson and Johnson 1982). California bighorn sheep are generally non-migratory and closely associated with steep river canyons in Idaho (Hanna 1990). Females, lambs and young rams usually form bands separate from the bands of mature males. Bighorn sheep are grazers primarily, but do eat some browse (Hobbs et al. 1983). Typical habitat for California bighorn would include bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, and bluegrass, with a mixture of shrubs including sagebrush in a fairly steep canyon with a series of benches, cliffs, and water sources.

Bighorn sheep were extirpated from the Bruneau and Jarbidge River Canyons by the 1930's. A number of bighorn sheep have been transplanted into the Bruneau and Jarbidge River Canyons by the Idaho Department of Fish & Game since 1978 (Hanna 1990). The last transplant of 19 bighorn sheep occurred in December 1993. The current population of California bighorn is estimated to be 150 to 175. The vast majority of the bighorn sheep in the Jarbidge Resource Area are located above the confluence of the Jarbidge and Bruneau Rivers. A California bighorn sheep was observed on one occasion near the confluence of Clover Creek (East Fork of the Bruneau River) and the Bruneau River. There are no known established populations for this species in this area of the Bruneau River (Idaho Dept. Fish & Game, unpublished data).

The Fish & Wildlife Service (1994a) had designated California bighorn sheep as a C2 species in Idaho. In the Jarbidge Resource Area the primary threat to bighorn sheep is the degradation of quality habitat due to the invasion of annual grasses and weeds following wildfires. Because of the topography, drill seeding burned areas is not possible, and air space restrictions by the military make aerial seeding difficult. In some regions it has been speculated that domestic sheep transmitted disease to bighorn sheep. However, bighorn sheep also appear to suffer population crashes from disease in the absence of domestic sheep grazing. In the Jarbidge Resource Area areas grazed by domestic sheep does not overlap areas used by California bighorn sheep. Maintaining lower populations of California bighorn sheep may be necessary to maintain a healthy population. A proposed expansion of the Saylor Creek Training Range may affect bighorn sheep by possibly causing shifts in habitat use,, increases

in wild fires, or more stress from low flying jet aircraft. Impacts may be just short term if the bighorn sheep become habituated to the jets.



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