

Name: _____

Bighorn Sheep

By Guy Belleranti

Have you ever watched the St. Louis Rams NFL football team play a game? Have you ever been for a ride in a Dodge Ram pick-up truck? Have you ever wondered what, exactly, a ram is? A ram is a male bighorn sheep, known for its long, curly horns!

These giant horns curl off the sides of the animal's head and weigh as much as 30 pounds.

Rams use their horns in amazing battles. Pairs of males will battle each other over females, called ewes. They run toward one another and ram each other in the head. The loud, sudden crack of horn against horn sometimes echoes a mile away. These battles can go on for hours. For most animals, a



A male bighorn sheep is called a ram.



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A pair of male bighorn sheep battle by ramming each other in the head.

found mainly in the western half of the United States. They are also in Southwestern Canada and Northwestern Mexico.

Bighorn sheep aren't only famous for their amazing horns. They're also famous for their amazing footing. They can climb steep slopes, rocky cliffs, and even mountains with

ease. They can escape to rough terrain where few predators can chase them. Bighorn sheep also protect themselves by gathering in large herds. Herds can protect themselves more easily because there are many eyes to keep watch for mountain lions, wolves, bears, and coyotes.

Bighorn sheep are herbivores. They eat grasses, flowers, leaves, and other vegetation. After eating they like to lie down and regurgitate their food to chew again, just like a cow.



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gallons of water in just a few minutes. It stores the water in its stomach so it lasts several days.

Bighorn sheep have become a threatened species. One reason for this is the loss of habitat to human development. However, in some places bighorn sheep are now getting better protection. They have even been reintroduced to places where they had disappeared. Hopefully, efforts at protecting these amazing animals will continue so that bighorn sheep will be able to wander the countryside for many generations to come.



About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences working with wild animals and teaching others.

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1. What are ewes?
- a. male bighorn sheep
 - b. battles between rams
 - c. horns on female bighorn sheep
 - d. female bighorn sheep

2. Explain what rams do when they battle each other.



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4. A male bighorn sheep's horns can weigh about as much as...

- a. a small car
- b. a bullfrog
- c. a bicycle
- d. a volleyball

5. In which state would you be most likely to see a wild bighorn sheep: Nevada, Maine, Ohio, or Georgia? Explain your answer.
- _____
- _____

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. _____ r m a
hint: male sheep

2. _____ e e w
hint: female sheep

3.  **PREVIEW**

4. Please log in or register to download the printable version of this worksheet.

5. _____ e t a t r i n g e g u
hint: to bring swallowed food back up to the mouth

6. _____ u s c a t c
hint: desert plant with spikes

7. _____ s l o n g a l
hint: units for measuring liquids

ANSWER KEY

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ANSWER KEY

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1. **ram**

r m a

hint: male sheep



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