



BERNIE MCILVOY/SPECIAL TO THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

The U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Society for Conservation of Bighorn Sheep will conduct an annual survey of bighorn sheep in the San Gabriel Mountains Feb. 26 and 27. Volunteers are sought for training.

# Help count bighorn sheep, but it's no walk in a park

**ANNUAL SURVEY:** The participants will be in rugged mountain terrain for the 2-day event.

SPECIAL TO THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Volunteers are needed to assist in the annual bighorn sheep survey in the San Gabriel Mountains the weekend of Feb. 26-27.

Those interested will attend an orientation class Feb. 26, and rise early on Sunday to hike into the mountains, spending the day counting and recording bighorn sheep.

No previous experience is required; however, volunteers must be at least 16 years old and be prepared to hike at least one mile in steep rocky terrain.

"It is a great way to get out, enjoy your national forest

and have the chance to view wildlife that most in Southern California have not seen before," said Kathie Meyer, district biologist for the San Bernardino National Forest.

## STEEP SLOPES, MORE

In general, hikes will not be along trails and accessing survey points will involve scrambling over boulders, climbing up steep slopes, and/or bush-whacking through chaparral.

Mountain weather can be unpredictable and participants need to be prepared for an early start Sunday and spending several hours hiking and additional time making observations in possibly cold and windy weather.

**Where to meet:** Volunteers must attend a mandatory orientation at 6 p.m. Feb. 26 at Day Creek Inter-

mediate School in Rancho Cucamonga.

**What to wear:** Sturdy hiking footwear is necessary, since the terrain is often steep, rocky and uneven. Dress in layers, since weather conditions may change with little warning.

**What to Bring:** Observers should bring binoculars or spotting scopes in addition to hiking gear. Bring water and a lunch for the all-day count on Feb. 27.

**Overnight Camping:** Complementary campsites will be available to volunteers on a first-come, first-served basis. Camping will be at the Applewhite Campground in Lytle Creek on the night of Feb. 26.

A representative from one of the participating partners will lead groups during the count.

Call 909-382-2870 by Feb. 17 to sign up and receive a volunteer packet.

The US Forest Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Society for Conservation of Bighorn Sheep have conducted surveys for bighorn sheep in the San Gabriel range annually since 1979.

The mountain range once held an estimated 740 bighorn sheep, which made the San Gabriel population the largest population of desert bighorn sheep in California.

The bighorn declined more than 80 percent through the 1980s but appears to be on the increase, with recent estimates at approximately 350 animals.

For additional information about the San Bernardino National Forest, visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/sbnf>