

Bighorn Sheep in Joshua Tree National Park

Information

Date/ Time: Saturday, September 21, 9 am – 4 pm

Meet at: [Black Rock Nature Center](#)

9800 Black Rock Canyon Road, Yucca Valley, CA

Instructor: Mark C. Jorgensen, Author of *Desert Bighorn Sheep, Wilderness Icon*, and Retired Superintendent of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

Overview

Desert bighorn sheep is the largest native animal in the desert southwest. Mark Jorgensen will discuss the natural history of desert bighorn sheep in the Southwest US and northern Mexico. We will discuss the bighorn's amazing adaptations to the desert environment, including their physical characteristics, distribution, behavior, predator relationships and diseases in this class. Participants will also learn about how the Park's current preservation efforts for the bighorn sheep corresponds with the unique physiological characteristics of these animals and the Park's management plan to preserve this magnificent animal, as a part of California's heritage. During the session, the class will hike into bighorn habitat and learn the key elements important for bighorn sheep survival. The field trip will highlight the importance of vast wilderness habitats, steep terrain, diverse plant communities, protection from human encroachment, and the threat of domestic livestock diseases on the native bighorn sheep.

Itinerary

Saturday, September 21, 2017 9 am – 4 pm

Black Rock Nature Center

- Lecture
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- Field Class

What to Bring to the Course

Optional Class Materials

- Binoculars
- Camera
- Book, *Desert Bighorn Sheep, Wilderness Icon*. Available in the Visitor Center.

The 10 Essentials: Everyday in the Desert

- Day pack
- 4 quarts of water
- Closed toe hiking shoes
- Lunch and snacks
- Clothing layers
- Hat
- Sun glasses
- Sunscreen
- Notebook and pencil/pen
- Whistle

Fitness Requirements

Participants must be in good physical condition for courses/activities in a desert that may be hot, dry, windy, and sometimes surprisingly cold.

Hike Level

Moderate

Guidelines

- You are responsible for your safety.
- Park your car in designated areas only. Parking along the side of the road is dangerous to you and the environment.
- Rattlesnakes are present in the desert. Avoid contact with wildlife. Put your hands and feet only where you can see them.
- Only you know your limits, please let the instructor or Desert Institute Representative know if you do not want to continue.
- Stay with the group. If you get lost, stay put.
- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative.
- Before leaving the class, check out with Desert Institute Representative.

Instructor Biography

Mark C. Jorgensen has been studying the California deserts for most of life and has worked on desert bighorn sheep for fifty years. He began a 36 year career at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in 1972 as a seasonal aide studying bighorn sheep. He became a State Park Ranger, and went on to be California's last State Park Naturalist, then Resource Ecologist, Environmental Scientist and spent his last nine years of service as the Superintendent of California's largest State Park. In 2014 he wrote the book, ***Desert Bighorn Sheep, Wilderness Icon*** with photographer Jeff Young. He continues to volunteer at Anza-Borrego assisting the Anza-Borrego Foundation in land acquisition and educational programs and works at Anza-Borrego's Sister Park in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia, Ikh Nartin Chuluu Nature Reserve.

* The Desert Institute staff/instructors will attempt to accommodate participant's needs; however we reserve the right to deny a student participation in the course due to concerns regarding health and safety issues.