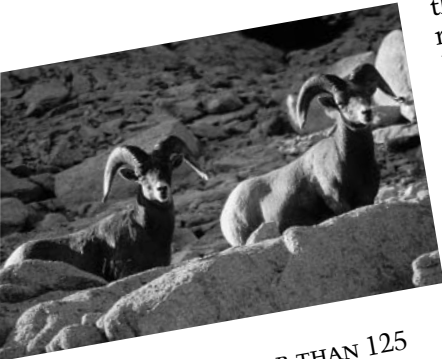


# Making a Difference for Wildlife

Hundreds of local conservation projects are undertaken annually by SCI Chapters. They are reinforced by many notable conservation initiatives funded by the SCI Foundation.



**Sierra Nevada Bighorn Projects**  
Central California, USA  
Total Funds: \$50,000



According to Dr. John Wehausen of the University of California, these magnificent animals began disappearing in the 1870s with the advent of Sierra Nevada ranching and gold mining. By the 1970s, the herds dropped to just 250 individuals. *SCI San Diego* has long supported Wehausen's research, and in 1986 funded transplants to re-establish the sheep's former range. The bighorn population subsequently rebounded to 310 by the late 1980s.

Then came Proposition 117.

Promoted by anti-hunting groups and passed in 1990, Prop 117 needlessly gave absolute protection to the common California mountain lions. State Fish and Game officials could no longer legally target lions preying on the handful of sheep. As a result, the bighorn population plummeted.

Partnering with Wehausen's Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation, *SCI San Diego* donated cash and equipment crucial to determining population status and recovery. The chapter also assisted in petitioning authorities to let Fish and Game supersede state law and protect the sheep from lions. In response, the California legislature appropriated \$1.2 million to support recovery efforts.

According to Chapter member Joe Busalacchi, "*The San Diego Chapter* was the first hunting/conservation group to contribute to a cooperative effort to save these animals from extinction. In all, we have contributed over \$50,000 and hundreds of volunteer hours, supplies and equipment to sheep projects in California."

Recently, *SCI California Central Valley* provided \$12,500 for a Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep captive breeding facility. Other donors include *SCI's Sacramento Chapter*.



**W**ITH FEWER THAN 125 individuals in existence, the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep subspecies has received Endangered Species Act protection. Major threats facing this subspecies are disease transmission from domestic sheep, as well as predation and access suppression to normal winter range and forage by mountain lions.