

## Pair of bighorn sheep spotted in Saguaro West are first since 1950s



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Two bighorn sheep rams have been spotted and photographed in the Wasson Peak area of Saguaro National Park west of Tucson — the first confirmed observations of bighorns in the park since the 1950s, park biologists said.

The two sheep are believed to be animals from a herd in the Ironwood Forest National Monument

area northwest of the park.

The bighorns, which weren't wearing GPS collars, apparently are not part of a herd being re-established in the Catalina Mountains north of Tucson.

"It's so exciting. There was a herd of bighorns in the Tucson Mountains (area of the park) in the 1930s, but we couldn't find reports of sightings in the park since the 1950s," said **Don Swann**, a biologist at Saguaro Park. "We got a report Tuesday morning (March 15) from a visitor who had seen two young sheep on Wasson Peak.

"And we have a photo of both of them on one of our (remote) wildlife cameras — cameras that were set up by students helping us learn about wildlife in the park."

**Natasha Kline**, another biologist with the park, said tracks and other factors indicate that the sheep are likely animals from Ironwood Forest National Monument.

"It's such a cool thing that they're coming over here," Kline said.

The biologists said it's not certain what brought the bighorns into the park after such a long absence.

"Young animals move around, looking for new areas," Swann said, noting that the rams appear to be relatively young.

Swann and Kline emphasized that people who see the bighorns should not approach them.

"We don't want people to molest the animals," Swann said. "If someone is lucky enough to see them at a distance, let them roam freely and not be harassed.

"People should be sensitive."