

New survey shows 402 desert bighorns at AZ refuge

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YUMA, Ariz. (AP) - A new survey shows there are about 402 desert bighorn sheep on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Arizona.

That's down from the 2009 survey estimate of 410 sheep, but still is slightly above the low of 390 sheep in 2006.

Adjusting for margin of error and survey methodology, biologists say there has been no significant decline or improvement to the herd's population in the past five years.

Wildlife management agencies remain concerned about the low population levels on the refuge compared to the estimated 812 animals of the 2000 survey.

Experts attribute the decline to a variety of potential factors including drought, predators, water availability, disease and human disturbance.

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