

Opinion: Bighorn sheep in N. Nevada a welcome return

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Return of bighorn sheep to Northern Nevada is a reason to celebrate a wildlife milestone.

For the first time in more than a century, bighorn sheep are back in the Virginia Range of Northern Nevada.

Just days ago, eight of them were released into Virginia mountains east of Reno in the Reno Tahoe Industrial Center.

This marks the first step in an effort to re-establish a population of Nevada's state animal there for the first time since the 1880s. Nevada is home to nearly 10,000 bighorns, the most of any state in the lower 48.

"It's exciting to think that they're going to be this close to Reno," Steve Field, president of the conservation group Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, told *RGJ* reporter Guy Clifton. "We'll be able to go out with a pair of binoculars and see sheep on the mountains."

The release of the desert bighorns on the sprawling grounds of the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center 10 miles east of Reno marks the first time the agency has reintroduced the animals on private property, Nevada Department of Wildlife spokesman Chris Healy told the *Associated Press*.

The department is conducting the effort with the help of industrial center principal and exclusive broker Lance Gilman, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited and the Wild Sheep Foundation.

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