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# SAN ANDRES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

## Las Cruces, New Mexico

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### STATION PROFILE:

*This 57,215 acre Refuge extends over 21 miles along the southern portion of the San Andres Mountains in southern New Mexico. It supports a population of State endangered desert bighorn sheep, as well as mule deer, mountain lions, and golden eagles. Thirty eight species of mammals and 142 species of birds have been documented on the Refuge. The Refuge is located within the White Sands Missile Range and is therefore closed to public entry due to their security protocols.*



### HISTORY:

*The San Andres National Wildlife Refuge was established by Executive Order 8646 on January 22, 1941, "for the conservation and development of natural wildlife resources."*

### LOCATION:

5686 Santa Gertrudis Dr., Las Cruces, New Mexico  
88012-Dona Ana County (575)382-5047, District 2,  
New Mexico



## VISION

The San Andres National Wildlife Refuge (SANWR), is located in the southern third of the San Andres Mountains in south central New Mexico, and lies within the northern most extension of the Chihuahuan Desert. This mountain range is one of the largest contiguous, relatively undisturbed Chihuahuan Desert land masses in the United States. The precipitous east escarpment of the range rises above the basin floor about 5,000 feet to an elevation of 8,900 feet above sea level. The land has virtually reverted to its pre-grazing vegetation stands due to the absence of grazing by domestic stock since 1952.

Since the Refuge's establishment in 1941, primary emphasis in resource management has been focused on restoring a remnant population of desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis mexicana*), a State-listed endangered species in New Mexico. However, desert bighorn sheep populations within the San Andres Mountains have recently decreased to near extinction due primarily to scabies mite infestation and further complicated by drought conditions, predation, and very poor reproduction. While the Refuge most likely will continue to play a role in the recovery and/or re-establishment of healthy populations of this species, the Refuge intends to continue broadening its focus to include all Refuge resources. With a better understanding of natural biodiversity, ecosystem approaches to wildlife and habitat management will continue to become a higher priority for the Refuge. Baseline inventories of various taxonomic groups of flora and fauna will continue to serve the Refuge well to improve understandings of natural regimes of succession, recruitment, and predator/prey relationships on the Refuge and surrounding lands.

There is much to be learned concerning the San Andres Mountain Range and the plant and wildlife resources within it. The Refuge has been and will continue to be an important factor in the overall effort to protect those unique resources. Because there is restricted access and the lands remain relatively undisturbed, the future will continue to provide the Refuge with opportunities to serve as a natural laboratory in support of research on southwestern flora and fauna, Chihuahuan Desert ecosystems, hydrological status, fire effects (prescribed and natural), and historical/cultural sites. These understandings will provide the Refuge and the Service with the tools necessary to make informed natural resource management decisions in support of the Refuge's purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

