

Ram Tracks

Fall Newsletter 2015
Volume 36 Issue 2



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MISSION STATEMENT

To enhance, expand and preserve wild sheep populations; to educate the public about wild sheep and conservation efforts surrounding wildlife; to encourage lawful hunting and protecting hunters' rights; and to encourage youth participation in hunting.

Website: www.midwestwildsheep.org

Facebook: Wild Sheep Foundation Midwest Chapter

Twitter: WSFMidwest

President's Message

"Tis the season" of Thanksgiving and of giving to others. I'm reminded of this every time I walk into a retail store. It seems the retailers want us to be aware of this "giving" season earlier each year. I watched one store begin to prepare the spaces and stock their Christmas decorations weeks before Halloween had concluded. Is it any wonder that by the end of December many people are just burned out over the constant barrage of marketing and advertising campaigns? I hear many people complain that they simply can't wait for it all to be over.

Have we lost what the season truly means? Has the purpose and traditions of the holidays been overshadowed by the retail blitz where the objective is to get us all to buy and spend? To me the holiday seasons of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years have been about time spent with family and friends; to give thanks with our family for what we have been given by our creator, to celebrate the gifts of prosperity, life, health and fellowship, to ring in new opportunities and the hope for greater things to come.

As many of you know, the Wisconsin nine day deer coincides with the Thanksgiving holiday. It is a season of gathering and participation as a unit of family and/or friends. The introduction of new hunters builds the excitement and anticipation that precedes the event by several months or even years. The anticipation of that first deer or that big buck that everyone had been seeing and talking about around the deer camp adds to the richness of the overall experience. Before opening morning that anticipation, fueled by the stories of hunts past, builds to the point where sleep is difficult and excitement is felt deep in a hunter's soul. By Thanksgiving Day there is much to talk about and give thanks for. New stories have been generated and history made - sometimes even legends of the big one that got away. All contribute to the richness of the shared tradition around of season of Giving Thanks. Thanks for the sweetest influence of family, friends and the rich resources that we enjoy together.

As stewards of those resources it is up to us to ensure that those experiences continue to be enjoyed by generations that follow us. Those of us involved with conservation organizations such as the WSF-Midwest focus on what we as an organization can do to continue the legacy of those rich resources. We do that by contributing our time and personal resources in effort to "Put and Keep More Sheep on the Mountain".

The gift of giving this Christmas Season (Yes, I will say Christmas instead of Holiday) often includes several hunting related items. Give a membership in WSF-Midwest to a family member or to hunter you know, maybe to someone in your hunting party that you've known for years that is curious about Wild Sheep. The gift of a Life Membership will ensure a legacy of giving for both the new member and the organization. Also, consider a donation to either the Live Auction or a Silent Auction Item for our Annual Banquet and

Fundraiser. There are also Sponsorships available that enable the WSF-Midwest organization to conduct the fundraising event by enabling us to fund the purchase of items for auctions. Membership and Donor Forms are available on our website: www.midwestwildsheep.org. These are gifts that you will not need to leave your house to purchase and are considered tax deductible contributions towards a 501(c)3. And who couldn't use a tax deduction for 2015.

The hope for the New Year is first for the health and safety of family, friends, our country and our rights as free citizens. We also hope for the continuance of the rich resources we have enjoyed over the years and the opportunity to enjoy them into the future. You can help the WSF-Midwest Chapter by attending the Annual Banquet and Fundraiser scheduled for March 18-19, 2016 at the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest in Minnetonka, MN. I urge you to register early and invite your hunting friends. Get them involved in a conservation organization that has very low operating costs and contributes the vast majority of the proceeds directly back into projects that benefit wild sheep and many other wild life and game species. Your involvement and participation is essential to our conservation efforts.

Consider further involvement in your organization The Wild Sheep Foundation – Midwest Chapter. This is an all-volunteer organization that relies on the contributions and personal efforts of motivated individuals. Individuals made up of volunteers that are willing to work as a team to accomplish our goals and objectives. Please consider serving on the Board of Directors. Terms are a three year commitment with several committee chair positions open. Contact an existing board member for details. Nominations will be accepted by any existing board member up to the General Membership Meeting.

This year our intention is to conduct the General Membership Meeting on Friday evening. This will provide an opportunity for a more focused meeting format separate from the banquet format on Saturday evening. Please see the Schedule of Events for exact times and rooms.

I'm looking forward to the Hope for a New Year and the upcoming Banquet and Fundraiser. With your help and participation we'll achieve greater goals and "Put and keep more Sheep on the Mountain"!

Respectfully,

Brian L. Helm, PMP



Desert Mule Sheep Hunt

by Oscar, Carlson, Forest Lake, MN



On December 13, 2014, I and a friend of mine from college, Gary Schmidt, went on a desert mule deer hunt in Mexico with Nayo Baiderrama, from Amigos Outfitters. We flew into Phoenix and then on to Hermosillo, Mexico where we were met by Nayo's wife, Silvia. She brought us to a ranch about two hours from the airport. December 13th is a little bit before the rut, however, they did say they were seeing a few nice bucks.

We stayed at a ranch house on top of a high hill overlooking the flat desert all around us. The facilities were fantastic as well as the food, service, and overall hospitality.

Gary was fortunate to get an excellent buck two days into the hunt. It took me five days to get mine. My guide had sighted a specific buck that he wanted me to hunt and we finally spotted it on the way back to the ranch, on the fifth day, after we had basically given up for the day. The photos show the buck that I took and one of Gary's bucks. On the last day our guides pulled out the predator calls and we shot three coyotes and two bobcats. I also grabbed one of their shotguns and flushed some Gambles and Douglas quail. This added a lot of variety and fun to the overall hunt.

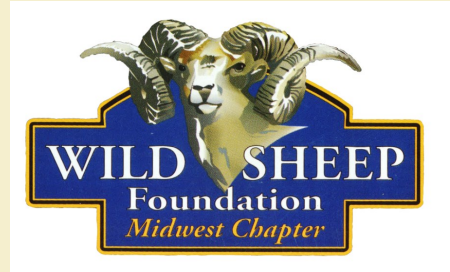


We also had a chance to visit with the ranch owner whose family has had that land for around 150 years. We toured the original hacienda where they had set up a defense tower and rock barricades to fight the Yaqui Indians.

Needless to say, we both had a great time!



Hunt Reports



Larry Willard and Dan Scharmer had an adventure of all adventures in August when they booked their hunt with Link's Wild Safaris. They took a 60 mile float trip on the North Slope of Alaska, north of the Brooks Range. This was a 10 day hunt and they both got good caribou and a beautiful grizzly. Their guide was Dave Leonard of Alaska and their packer was Jordon Wallace.



**The readers of RamTracks want
to hear your hunting stories!**

**Please email your pictures and hunting stories or captions to
patti.murry@gmail.com to be published in the next issue!**

Hunt Reports

After applying for elk for 19 years, Al Holland finally drew the Arizona tag and took this 8x7 bull. He found the bull on the Thursday before the September 25th opener for muzzle loader. He was able to get a shot after two unsuccessful stalks. They started stalking him at 9:30 am and finally took him at 6:10 pm. The main beams were 57½ inches. They saw 30 to 35 bulls in the week of pre-scouting. Arizona is a must apply state.



Joe Perrella had the pleasure of hunting mountain goat in British Columbia with Fehr Game Outfitters in August 2015. What a trip! The picture shows the first goat they saw on the first afternoon of hunting. 10" horns with 5¾" bases. They had a base camp set up with a kitchen tent, a few different sleeping tents, outhouse and shower. They had about an hour ride on horses and then they climbed.



They saw this goat on top of an adjacent mountain and had a three hour hike to get him. He had moved by the time they got there and he was making his way back to the top of the mountain when they spotted him. Joe took about a 75 yard shot.

After flying into Smithers, BC, they hopped on a float plane to a remote lake. Fehr Game Outfitters also hunts grizzly and moose.

Joe plans to go back next year to hunt either or both. It is a smaller family run operation with great accommodations, great food and knowledgeable guides. It was a great hunt and Joe can't wait to go back!

Project Summary

Montana State University

Thanks to the support of the Wild Sheep Foundation-Midwest Chapter, a research team based at Montana State University (MSU) is starting to work on a pilot study to examine bighorn sheep genetics. The group plans to analyze DNA from herds with diverse histories, to learn more about how genetic information can potentially assist bighorn sheep management decisions.

The pilot study will involve analysis of genetic material from multiple bighorn sheep populations, including individual samples from Wyoming and Montana. An Ovine array containing single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) will be employed, which is a new technique originally developed for domestic sheep genomic research. The Ovine array can serve as a significant advancement for improving understanding of population genetics in bighorn sheep. Comparing genetics of different bighorn sheep herds will potentially provide information to describe genetic connectivity and diversity of examined herds, as well as discover links between herd demography and genetics.

The goals of the project also include informing evaluation of genetic diversity in current or previously small populations, aiding in selection of potential source populations for augmentation or reestablishment projects, determining what populations have low genetic diversity and might benefit from augmentation, discovering what populations are genetically unique, and examining potential links between genetics and population history of respiratory diseases. In addition, ancient DNA will be extracted from bighorn sheep samples collected from ice patches to serve as baseline information for modern bighorn sheep genomes. The team plans to share insights gained from this project to help inform management and restoration efforts, as well as continue the study on a larger scale.

The contemporary bighorn sheep genetics research is being conducted through collaboration of the following individuals and agencies: Elizabeth Flesch (Ph.D. student in Ecology and Environmental Sciences, MSU), Dr. Jennifer Thomson (Genetics professor, MSU), Dr. Robert Garrott (Ecology professor, MSU), Yellowstone National Park, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Ancient DNA research is being conducted by Dr. Craig Lee (Ice patch archeologist, University of Colorado – Boulder) and Dr. Beth Shapiro (Paleogenomics Lab, University of California – Santa Cruz).

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Exceptional Pheasant Hunt

by Jack Smythe, Park Rapids, MN

When you combine good dogs, exceptional people and wild pheasants with record book tail feathers, everything seemed to fall in place for the perfect pheasant hunt.

We hunted with Disciple Guide Service in early November out of Mitchell, South Dakota, where wild pheasants are educated pheasants --- hunter smart with Pheasant Phd's.

An exceptional pheasant hunt it was. Exceptional in every way possible. I would give Disciple Guide Service very high marks on all fronts. They might possibly be the "best of the best." God willing, KoKo and I will return in 2016 for more of the same.

KoKo pictured, is one of Kathy Strong's pick of the litter pups from two years ago. KoKo learned fast and loves to please – the perfect hunters pal!



2016 Youth Waterhole Experience

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Once again your chapter, the Wild Sheep Foundation – Midwest Chapter, will choose 14 young people to participate in a waterhole project. It is now time for you to get that youth to send in a one-page essay on why they would like to participate in a 3 day youth waterhole experience in Arizona! Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society has selected **MARCH 3-6, 2016** as the dates for this years' experience for youth to roll up their sleeves and get dirty in the desert! What better way to teach our youth about "giving back" than having them participate in a waterhole event! We especially want to encourage you to select a youth that ordinarily would not be able to take part in a project like this. Our Chapter will provide air transportation from Mpls-St Paul International Airport to Arizona, ground transportation to the waterhole site, food, lodging, and a return flight from Arizona to Minneapolis. Mail essays to: Wild Sheep Foundation-Midwest Chapter, 1806 Aspen Court, Northfield, MN 55057 or email to patti.murry@gmail.com.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS EVENT

Deadline for entries is **DECEMBER 25, 2015**

All Entries must be sent to the WSF-Midwest Chapter Office

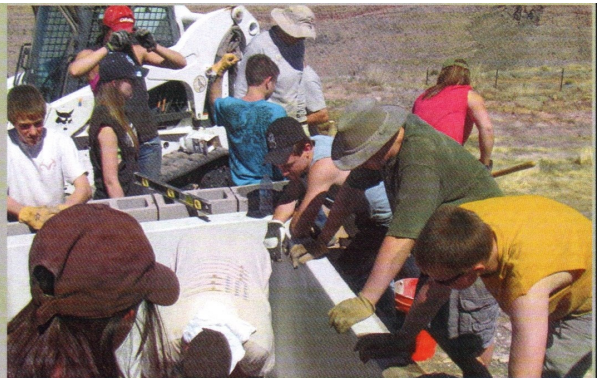
Youth must be in Grades 8-12 in the 2015-2016 school year

Boys and Girls may participate

Both the selected youth and parent(s) will be required to sign a release for WSF-Midwest and Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, releasing them of any liability in case of an accident during any part of the project, or while traveling to and from the project destination.

Youth must be able to provide sleeping bag, personal gear and clothing.

Send in you essays for an experience you will remember for years to come!!





North Dakota Game & Fish

by Brett Wiedmann

Results from this summer's bighorn sheep survey indicate North Dakota's bighorn population has increased from last year, despite the ongoing presence of pneumonia. The July-August survey showed a minimum of 304 bighorn sheep, an increase of 6 percent from 2014. Results revealed 87 rams, 159 ewes and 58 lambs. The survey does not include approximately 30 bighorn sheep that live in the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

This year's slight increase can be attributed to better-than-expected lamb recruitment amid the disease outbreak in 2014.

Despite no documented pneumonia-related mortalities since last January, the disease reoccurred during late summer. Similar to last year, we were pleased with the initial results of the survey as high lamb numbers were recorded, coupled with no signs of clinical disease among the adult segment of the population. However, significant signs of disease began to reoccur in mid-August as the survey was nearing its completion.

Bighorns showing evidence of disease during summer were from the same herds that were most affected last year. Unfortunately, these are three of our core herds in the northern badlands, so we'll have to once again closely monitor the impacts of pneumonia, as many adults and lambs showing signs of disease in August may not survive the winter. Those herds in the northern badlands that were not affected by last summer's die-off appeared healthy again this summer, and achieved very high female-to-lamb ratios.

It is too early to tell the severity of the outbreak. Since summer 2014, mortalities have not yet been catastrophic; however, the outbreak is ongoing, and we detected a virulent strain of bacteria last year that was collected from both dead and live-sampled bighorns. Consequently, the recurrence of pneumonia this summer may be more apparent when females and lambs are recounted during March 2016. Fortunately, only one collared bighorn has died from pneumonia through November 2015.

The Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation pledged \$20,000 to North Dakota Game and Fish Department to help monitor effects of the die-off.

Based upon a significant drop in pneumonia-related mortalities, and a higher than expected number of mature rams observed during the summer survey, the Department is in the process of determining whether to re-open the bighorn hunting season in 2016. A final decision will be made in January 2016.





South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks

by John Kanta

Bighorn sheep were translocated from the outside Hinton, Alberta, Canada to Deadwood, South Dakota in February 2015 have made it through their first summer as well as their first Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. The bighorns have established well in their new home and aside from a few pioneering individuals, haven't moved far from the original release location. It's a fairly common sight for the residents of Deadwood, SD to see bighorns on surrounding hillsides



as they drive through town. Since the last update, there have been three mortality events of adult sheep. Two ewes were hit by vehicles and an adult ram was euthanized. This ram traveled north out of the Black Hills, across Interstate 90 and was spotted very near a large herd of domestic sheep. The decision was made by the Department to euthanize the ram and maintain the health of the rest of the bighorn herd. Samples were collected from the ram and submitted to a lab for disease testing. The results came back negative.

The graduate student, Ty Werdel, continues to monitor the herd and spent the summer collecting additional vegetation data for his Master's Thesis. This, along with the data from the GPS collars the adult sheep are wearing will help determine what food sources the bighorn sheep prefer in the area. Ty also spent a good portion of his summer counting sheep and obtaining a total lamb count from the spring lambing efforts. The total count to date is 17 lambs making the total population of the Deadwood herd 36 bighorn sheep.

The Hell Canyon bighorn herd that was translocated from the Rocky Boy Reservation, MT in January of 2014 is doing well. Recent survey efforts have placed the herd count at a minimum of 40 individuals with 20 ewes, 12 lambs and 8 rams. All of these lambs were a result of breeding efforts last year in Hell Canyon following the translocation. The herd is doing very well and lamb to ewe ratios look excellent. The original herd consisted of 20 individuals so the fact that the herd at least doubled during their first year is very encouraging.



37th Annual Spring Fundraiser, Banquet & Auction!

Join the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation for a weekend of Fantastic Fun, Food, and Fellowship as we raise funds for wildlife habitat, education and sportsmans rights - and to

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www.midwestwildsheep.org



Tentative Schedule of Events

2016 Spring Fundraiser, Banquet & Auction

Friday – March 18, 2016

Registration Opens for Friday night	5:00 pm
Social Hour	5:00 pm
Buffet Dinner	6:00 pm
Friday Night Live Auction	7:00 pm

Saturday – March 19, 2016

Registration Opens	9:00 am
Taxidermy Display, Exhibitor Booths & Raffles Open	10:00 am
Pizza Party	12:00 pm
Ladies Wine Tasting	2:00 pm
Silent Auction Opens	2:00 pm
Happy Hour	4:00 pm
Banquet Dinner	5:30 pm
Saturday Night Live Auction	7:00 pm
Visit with Outfitters and Donors	8:30 pm

Be sure to book your room at the Marriott early — There are a lot of events going on and you don't want to miss out on getting a room! Call the Marriott at (952) 935-5500.

Preliminary Live Auction List

1. 2016 South Dakota Bighorn Sheep Tag
2. Pheasant Hunt & Sporting Clays – Wings North
3. Alberta Bear Hunt – Tyler McMahon
4. Argentina Dove Hunt – Link Wild Safaris
5. Bear or Lion Hunt – Mike Popp
6. Caribou or Bear Hunt – Alaska Outfitter Unlimited
7. One Week Stay at Hacienda Cerritos, Mexico
8. Nebraska Combo Hunt
9. Reeds Custom Gun Safe
10. Master Piece Investment Bronze
11. Millie Lockes Creations
12. African Hunt
13. Custom Guns – Roger Van Raden
14. 10 day Dall Sheep & Mountain Caribou Hunt, Yukon
15. Wilderness Cabin – Don Dusik
16. Custom Knives – Jerry Johnson
17. Nootka Island Lodge Fishing Package
18. Antelope Hunt – Western Gateway Outfitters
19. Archery Deer Hunt, Kansas – Hickory Creek Outfitters
20. Yellow Lab – Piddle Creek Kennels, Kathy Strong

Ladies Wine Tasting Fundraiser

Saturday, March 19, 2016

Lake of the Isles Room

Minneapolis Marriott Southwest

2:00 pm—4:00 pm

Silent Auction & Other Events

\$25 Registration Fee

(Register in advance and receive a free gift) at tasting)





Protecting Wildlife for our children's future



July 9, 2015

MN-WI Chapter FNAWS
Dba Wild Sheep Foundation-Midwest Chapter
1806 Aspen Ct.
Northfield, MN 55057

Dear Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation:

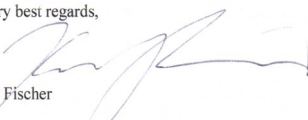
On behalf of all of us at the National Wildlife Federation Northern Rockies, Prairies and Pacific Regional Office, our sincere thanks for the \$2,000 grant awarded by the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation towards the retirement of the Deadman domestic sheep grazing allotment in central Idaho. We thank you not only for the generous funding you provide, but for your confidence in the work that we do.

Your support is a testament to the support from local, regional and national sportsmen's organizations fighting to restoring imperiled populations of bighorn sheep in the west. Through these efforts we are able to restore key wildlife habitats throughout the rocky mountain west and to create win-win-win initiatives that benefit wildlife, people and the land management agencies. As we eliminate conflicts between wildlife and livestock, we have opened up new opportunities, and in 2015 we have seen a surge of interest with sheep producers in Wyoming and Idaho to retire allotments that have faced chronic conflicts with large carnivores and have put bighorn sheep herds in jeopardy with the risk of disease transmission.

We strive to build strong coalitions, find innovative solutions and promote collaborative problem solving on behalf of wildlife across a broad spectrum of stakeholders. With your support we will be able to continue this work going forward. We are optimistic that we will continue to achieve success on behalf of people and wildlife and your grant helps make this work possible.

Again, thank you and please feel free to get in touch at any time if you need information about our bighorn sheep restoration efforts

Very best regards,



Kit Fischer
Manager, Wildlife Conflict Resolution Program

Northern Rockies, Prairies & Pacific Regional Office
www.nwf.org/Northern-Rockies-and-Pacific-Region

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Missoula, MT 59802 - 406-721-6705 [phone]

SEATTLE, WA OFFICE
2100 Westlake Avenue North, Suite 104
Seattle, WA 98109 - 206-285-8707 [phone]

Our **Midwest Chapter**
is looking for
a few good members
to help with:

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Website

**Newsletter
Production**

**Excel and
Powerpoint**

POS System

If you have an interest in
helping us out with any of
these areas, please contact

Brian Helm at
(651) 631-9273 or
email: blhelm@visi.com.



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