

Ram Tracks

Summer Newsletter 2016
Volume 37 Issue 1



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In This Issue

- 3 **President's Message** by Brian Helm
- 4 **Fundraiser Chair Message**
by Mike Bouton
- 6 **2016 Auction Results**
- 8 **Scenes from 2016 Fundraiser**
- 10 **My Dream Come True** by John Coulter
- 12 **My Aching Back** by Sean Keck
- 18 **It Just Doesn't Get Any Better**
by Jack Smythe
- 19 **2017 Fundraiser Events**
- 20 **Alaska Goat and Grizzly** by Andy Otte
- 21 **New Life Members**
- 22 **2016 Funding**

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.

Check Out Our New Website:

www.midwestwildsheep.org

Facebook: Wild Sheep Foundation Midwest Chapter
Twitter: WFSMidwest

President's Message

WSF Midwest Members and Wild Sheep Enthusiasts;

One year ago, I wrote about changes. Changes to your organization that we (your Board of Directors) felt were steps to ensure the quality experience for you as a member as well as our commitment to the vision and mission of the Wild Sheep Foundation – to put and keep sheep on the mountain.

We welcomed new hard working members to the board. We made commitments to ensure the adherence to the Bylaws which state that administrative and operating costs will continue to be low. We pledged to work hard to accomplish our primary goals of raising the funds at our Annual Fundraiser that enable us to support our vision and mission statement.

During the past year we have accomplished many of those goals and followed through with our commitments. Most notably was the amount of revenue generated from the fundraiser. Our Gross Receipts increased 13% over 2015 which was attributable mainly to a very successful Live Auction. The Net After Funding (State Governor's Licenses) also increased by 8%. The takeaway from this improvement can be the quality of the Live Auction items and the generosity of you the members.

However, there is a lot of room for improvement – a lot of improvement. Key areas of the fundraiser did not do as well as we had planned for. First, we experienced a decline in overall attendance at the fundraiser of nearly 10%. That decline was reflective in the decline in revenues from Silent Auction revenue of 54% and revenues from Raffles of 42%. We realized that we fell short of expectations by not getting information about the Live Auction and Fundraiser schedule of events on a timely basis.

We also did not do a very good job with technology resulting in a very negative experience for our loyal and dedicated members. We attempted to implement changes in processes that were poorly executed. We accept full responsibility for these failures and pledge to make positive changes in process and technology that will result in smoother operations.

The overall takeaway during our annual review of the fundraiser was the need for better planning and execution. We've already begun that planning and feel we have a solid start that will yield better results.

We also determined that the continuous decline in attendance at the Annual Fundraiser and Banquet Event over the years could be attributable to what we have offered to you the members in the overall experience – too much of the same old thing and not enough new. During the summer of 2015 we conducted a phone survey of hundreds of our members to determine if a change of venue and a robust schedule of events would impact their decision to attend the event. The



feedback we received lead us to a decision to consider a change to host the event at a new location. The intent was to generate increased interest by utilizing a fresh new location and increasing the variety in the Schedule of Events.

We also heard from many of our loyal contributors, vendors and outfitters that it was very difficult to justify the effort of attending a one day event. Between the travel time and costs and the minimal time available to interact with our members several outfitters had decided to forgo our event. We also received feedback from our members about this and have made plans to accommodate both our members and loyal outfitters by enabling more opportunity to interact.

Since our last Fundraiser in March, we received even more feedback that the desire to stay with the Marriott was far greater than we anticipated. Your Board of Directors has been influenced by this feedback and has concluded that it would be more beneficial to reschedule the **38th Annual Spring Fundraiser & Banquet for March 17th – 18th at the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest.**

We are increasing the format to include two full days of activities that you don't want to miss. Friday will be our opportunity to get completely setup and prepared for your arrival and registration by 1:00 PM. This will enable us to be better prepared to provide attendees a more enjoyable and smoother running event.

We are sending out invitations to an increased number of outfitters and vendors. Some will be old friends and loyal partners to MN/WI FNAWS and WSF Midwest over the years and even more new and fresh partners to interact with. We also plan to send invitations to more taxidermists to display their beautiful work. We would also like to welcome member's trophies to display proudly around the Banquet hall. Plans are being discussed to include more activities for youth such as a raffle, an arcade and a Saturday afternoon event. The very successful Ladies Event will continue to be

President's Message continued

of great interest with wine tasting, special raffles and more to come.

For members that are interested, we will continue to invite the State Biologists to provide us with the updates from their respective states of Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. These are the destinations where the vast majority of our funding goes to support the wild sheep in our own "backyard".

In addition to the Live Auctions for both Friday and Saturday evenings there will be a Saturday morning event that will be sure to be of great interest to our Life Members. We are also considering a brief auction on Saturday afternoon in the interest of making the Saturday Evening Banquet program less of an endurance event. Current and tentative plans include a special keynote speaker for the Banquet program that you will truly enjoy. Our Fundraiser & Banquet Committee chairman (Mike Bouton) has many other great ideas that will truly make this a memorable event. Mike has proposed a theme that the Board is very excited about and we are confident you will be too.

A tremendous amount of time and effort goes into planning and conducting an event of this magnitude. We cannot complete this without the commitment and dedication of a solid core of volunteers that help us every year. We welcome anyone that is willing to roll up their sleeves and contribute. Mostly, we would welcome anyone wishing to sponsor an event with a generous donation to help offset the costs. A sponsorship enables your Board of Directors to increase the quality of the overall experience of the event and still minimize the financial impact to the budget. This translates directly to one of the primary goals for your organization – to keep operating costs and overhead minimal in order to maximize contributions to funding efforts directly associated with the mission and vision.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank all the loyal supporters of WSF Midwest. Without your attendance, participation and contributions we would not be able to fulfill the mission and vision of your organization – to put and keep sheep on the mountain. We invite you to join us at the 38th Annual Fundraiser & Banquet, March 24th and 25th at the Minneapolis Marriott Southwest, Minnetonka, MN. It will be a fun, entertaining event that will be memorable.

Your dedicated
president,

Brian L. Helm,
PMP



March 17-18, 2017

A Midwest Chapter Fundraiser You Won't Want To Miss

Hope this message finds all of you having a wonderful summer and with anticipation of the upcoming fall. Understandably so, our annual banquet really isn't on anyone's mind in July, but I would like to inform everyone that we are actively making plans for next March's banquet. This past year, with mixed views, we announced a venue move for our upcoming banquet. We received mixed reviews during and after this past year's event and with that said, we've listened and are taking the necessary steps to make this next year's banquet one of the best in many years. We have addressed our ongoing technology issues and look forward to everyone enjoying their experience this coming March.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform everyone that our upcoming Wild Sheep Foundation – Midwest Chapter banquet will be held at the **Marriott Southwest in Minnetonka on March 17-18, 2017.** This year our banquet will be a full two day event with many commitments already made to make this one of the best banquets we've had in years. Many of you are very familiar with the Marriott and have come to know it as our banquet home. With this stay at the Marriott, we're also able to pass along a \$50 room rate savings to you on Saturday night.

We're excited to be back, in fact, we will be "Roaring Back" to a two day event which will give everyone an opportunity to spend more time visiting with exhibitors and catching up with friends in our Wild Sheep Foundation family. These two days will also allow you an opportunity to attend our three different auctions on Friday evening, Saturday afternoon and Saturday evening.

Returning to a two day event will enable us to give exhibitors from around the world, as well as here locally, more opportunity to showcase their businesses and organizations to everyone in attendance. This format gives taxidermists the time necessary to setup and display their work. As many of you know, we have world-class taxidermists attend each year and this move will afford them to bring more opportunity. Again this year, we will have the taxidermy "People's Choice" award.

As stated earlier, we are excited to be offering three auctions to attend. We have always lead the way with the top auctions each year and you can expect the same quality this March. Top hunting and fishing with top-notch outfitters from around the world, along with world-class artwork, destination vacations, jewelry, outdoor gear, etc... and of course a beautiful top of the line Labrador puppy from Kathy Strong!

You will have an opportunity to hear from state biologists speak on behalf of their respective Bighorn Sheep herds within their states such as North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Nebraska, etc... Also, seminars on conservation, wildlife management, hunting gear, sheep hunting and hunting around the world will be available to attend.

We will also offer a great assortment of raffle items and large silent auction. A more detailed list will be available as we get closer to the banquet season. You can expect guns, archery equipment, fishing, camping, hiking, artwork, electronics, optics, men's and women's clothing, outdoor gear, etc...

The ladies event this year will be exciting once again and the planning is underway. We look forward to sharing more details with you in the next Ram Tracks. You can expect wine tasting along with nice assortment of gift baskets and prizes.

We do have something new for this year. Stop by our "Midwest Garage Sale" that will be open to everyone. Many of you have been donating for years and some of you when you can, we truly appreciate each and everyone's donation(s). Collectively they make a big impact! Many of you have quality items that have had minimal use or maybe you've upgraded or have never used. This is an opportunity to make a tax deductible donation on an item that you may not need and give another individual a chance to buy a quality item they're looking for. If you have an item please contact John Coulter at (507) 829-2304..

I don't recall a year, when we didn't have a pizza party! The pizza party this year will be held on Friday and will kick off our event. There is a lot of work to do on Thursday night and early Friday morning in preparation of the event. Our pizza party is our way of saying "Thank You" to those that help setup, travel far and near to exhibit and donate to our cause "putting and keeping sheep on the mountain". We appreciate and welcome everyone to attend and kick off our Midwest Chapter's event.

On Saturday morning this year we will be serving a brunch that you won't want to miss out on. This year we will have guest speakers give a history lesson on our chapter. Learn about the early days from when it was just an idea to today and over three million dollars raised for the purpose of "putting and keeping sheep on the mountain". We will

have individuals speak with personal knowledge of how all of this got started! We will be acknowledging all of our life members and past presidents in attendance. We want to welcome everyone and feel you will truly enjoy learning about our chapters early days to present.

We would also like to share with you that we will have world renowned bow hunter Tom Hoffman in attendance with us this year. Tom will be speaking about sheep hunting around the world. You won't find a more accomplished hunter around the world that is more approachable and supportive of our WSF family.

Many of you remember having our Wild Sheep Foundation President Gray Thornton attend our 2014 banquet. Gray will be attending again this March and no one is better on discussing and speaking on behalf of our Wild Sheep Foundation present and future. Gray is always a tremendous supporter to our chapter and will be great addition to our banquet.

I look forward to serving as your banquet chair and working with our board of directors team to put on a banquet this next March that our members can be proud of and truly enjoy attending. We plan to put the "FUN" back into fundraiser this year!

Safe travels,
Mike Bouton, Fundraiser Chairman - (208) 949-4510



Steve's Auction Corner

We are looking for new ideas for auction items. If you have any suggestions or think something would be fun and exciting at the auction, please send me an email and I will look into it! We are working hard to have another great auction for next March, so send those ideas in as soon as you can.

Thanks!

Steve Powelson,
Auction Chair
(507) 334-7413
powie_s@yahoo.com



2016 Live Auction Results

Wild Sheep Foundation – Midwest

Chapter Life Membership

Donor: WSF-Midwest

Buyer: Ed Schabert

Buyer: David Jaeger

Sitka Gear

Donor: WSF-Midwest

Buyer: David Jaeger

Buyer: Matt Mitchell

Ixtapa Mexico Sport Fishing Trip

Donor: Lad Shunneson Adventures

Buyer: Loretta Zacharias

Buyer: Mike Jones

Taxidermy Gift Certificate

Donor: Wildlife Taxidermy

Buyer: Andy Otte

Lawrence Bay Fishing Trip

Donor: Lawrence Bay Lodge

Buyer: Matt Meyer

Rio Turkey Hunt

Donor: Flint Hills Adventures

Buyer: Jeff Lindgren

Endowment Rifle

Donor: Roger Van Raden

Buyer: Oscar Carlson

Buyer: Buddy Duvall

Buyer: Lisa Bennett

Buyer: Douglas Brown

Wings North Membership

Donor: Wings North

Buyer: Nathaniel Wobig

Black Bear & Walleye Combo

Donor: Harvest Lodge

Buyer: Sean Keck

WSF 2017 Sheep Show

Couples Registration

Donor: Wild Sheep Foundation

Buyer: Terry Mick

Buyer: Scott Massmann

WI Rut Archery Whitetail Hunt

Donor: Superior Guides & Outfitters

Buyer: Matt Carlander

Trophy Room Credit

Donor: Wild Images in Motion

Buyer: Scott Olson

Saskatchewan Waterfowl Hunt

Donor: Pacific Wings Prairie Outfitters

Buyer: Rick Zvirovski

Taxidermy Certificate

Donor: Buck's Taxidermy

Buyer: Jeff Strong

Buyer: Steve Tibble

"The Warrior" Giclee

Donor: Joshua Spies

Buyer: Jeff Lindgren

Buyer: Bill Rands

Warthog, Impala and Blue Wildebeest Hunt in South Africa

Donor: Bosveld Jacobs Safaris

Buyer: Chuck Nosie

Woodland Codger

Donor: Millie Locke

Buyer: Jeff Grandner

Buyer: John Babler

Rafting Package

Donor: Action Whitewater Adventure

Buyer: Craig Haukaas

Taxidermy Certificate

Donor: Leland Ledford Taxidermy

Buyer: Shane Schmidt

Colorado Cabin Rental

Donor: Wild Skies Cabin Rental

Buyer: Jeff Geiger

Hog/Bobcat/Coyote/Fox Hunt

Donor: Mesquite Thorn Outfitters

Buyer: Mike Bergeron

Table for 10 at 2017 Midwest WSF Banquet

Donor: WSF-Midwest

Buyer: Loretta Zacharias

Buyer: Terry Hauer

Pheasant Hunt

Donor: Wings North

Buyer: Mike Stilwell

Mead Lake Fishing Trip

Donor: Arizona Wildlife Outfitter

Buyer: Larry Meyer

Warthog, Impala and Kudu Hunt in South Africa

Donor: Bosveld Jacobs Safaris

Buyer: David Carlson

Arizona Javelina Hunt

Donor: Arizona Wildlife Outfitters

Buyer: Brook Knotts

Idaho Mountain Lion Hunt

Donor: Mike Popp's Nature

Adventures

Buyer: Doug Magnus

Buyer: David Jaeger

Wolf Hunt Trap Line Experience

Donor: Castle Rock Outfitters

Buyer: Roger Van Raden

Mule Deer Bronze

Donor: Doug Eck

Buyer: Stewart Shaft

Columbia Back Tail Deer Hunt

Donor: Spoon Creek Outfitters

Buyer: John Kautzman

Taxidermy Certificate

Donor: Wild Images in Motion

Buyer: Steve Bruggeman

Archery Deer Hunt-Kansas

Donor: Hickory Creek Outfitters

Buyer: Tom McConnell

Argentina Dove Hunt

Donor: Link Safaris

Buyer: Buddy Duvall

Sportfishing Trip in BC

Donor: Nootka Island Lodge

Buyer: Matt Mitchell

Alberta Spring Bear/Wolf/ Coyote Hunt

Donor: Sherwood Outfitters

Buyer: Tom McConnell

Russell Moccasin Boots

Donor: Russell Moccasin

Buyer: John Kautzman

Chamois Hunt

Donor: Point Blank Hunts

Buyer: Carl Anderson

Dall Sheep and Mountain Caribou Hunt - Yukon

Donor: Widrig Outfitters

Buyer: Dave Embry

Hacienda Cerritos Get-Away

Donor: Cerritos Beach Resorts

Buyer: Kyle Shoman

Buyer: Andy Sahlberg

Colorado Cabin Rental During Elk Season

Donor: Wild Skies Cabin Rental

Buyer: Jimmy Flemmons

Nebraska Combination License Deer & 2 Turkeys

Donor: Nebraska Game & Parks

Buyer: Doug Sayer

Original Pencil Sketch

Donor: Joshua Spies

Buyer: Bill Thompson

Osceola Turkey Hunt

Donor: Deep South Outfitter

Buyer: George Smith Jr.

Reindeer Lake Fishing Trip

Donor: Lawrence Bay Lodge

Buyer: Roger Van Raden

National WSF Life Membership

Donor: National WSF

Buyer: Scott Massmann

Private Cabin Use – Ontario

Donor: Don Dusick

Buyer: Bill Rands

Buyer: Jeffrey Hollenbeck

Jerry Johnson Custom Knife

Donor: Jerry Johnson

Buyer: Michael Keith

Alberta Waterfowl Hunt

Donor: Bouton Brothers Whitetails and Waterfowl

Buyer: Richard Kanan

South Dakota**Bighorn Sheep Skull**

Donor: SD Game, Fish & Parks

Buyer: David Zacharias

South Dakota Bighorn Sheep Tag

Donor: SD Game, Fish & Parks

Buyer: Steve Scott

Huskeman Scope

Donor: Midwest WSF

Buyer: Bill Rands

Alaska Arctic Caribou & Grizzly Hunt

Donor: Alaska Outfitters Unlimited

Buyer: Wade Johnson

Custom Gun Safe

Donor: Reed Custom Gun Safes

Buyer: Chris Moen

Northfork Rams Print

Donor: Oscar Carlson

Buyer: Jeff Lindgren

Mountain Lion Hunt

Donor: Hightop Outfitters

Buyer: Chris Jahnke

Taxidermy Certificate

Donor: Barr Taxidermy

Buyer: Terry Mick

North Dakota Governor's Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep License

Donor: ND Game & Fish

Buyer: Jeff Furstenau

Wyoming Antelope Hunt

Donor: Western Gateway Outfitters

Buyer: Harry Johnson

Cast and Blast Package

Donor: Young's Wilderness Lodge

Buyer: Jeff Anderson

Wyoming Governor's Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep License

Donor: Wyoming Game & Fish

Buyer: Mark Mann

Long Range Shooting School

Donor: Mike Colpo & Scott Olson

Buyer: Bill Rands

Greenland Musk Ox Hunt

Donor: Point Blank Hunts

Buyer: Jeffrey Strong

Muskrat Man

Donor: Millie Lock

Buyer: Gladys Kautzman

Wolf Rug

Donor: Oscar Carlson

Buyer: Bill Rands

Lab Puppy

Donor: Piddle Creek Kennels

Buyer: Paul Duerst

Sponsors

Loren Kohnen

Tom's Taxidermy

J & K Taxidermy

Riverland Taxidermy



**THANK YOU TO
ALL WHO
ATTENDED,
DONATED,
AND/OR
PURCHASED
ITEMS AT OUR
FUNDRAISING
EVENT!**

Scenes from the Fundraiser





My Dream Come True

by John Coulter, Tracy, MN

My passion for hunting started like a lot of other boys living in southwestern Minnesota in the 1950's. Growing up on a small farm I was surrounded by family, chores, farm animals and wildlife. I was encouraged to hunt and trap from a very early age by my parents and my many relatives who lived in the same general rural area north of Lamberton, Minnesota. My mother was a teacher who not only encouraged me to hunt, but instilled in me a love for learning that led me to a wonderful 35 year career as a high school teacher.



By the time I was in my mid-20s my love of hunting and trapping had evolved from pheasants and waterfowl into deer and antelope. Sadly, with the schedule that high school teachers have, it was impossible for me to take long big game hunting trips. I was so frustrated I was ready to leave teaching when I discovered that wild sheep, although expensive to hunt, could be hunted in August in many places. In 1977 Muriel and I headed north to Alaska on my very first sheep hunt and I was completely hooked.

Over the next forty years I worked at every part time job I could to raise the money I would need to both take care of my growing family and to fuel my passion for wild sheep hunting. Although I continue to run a trapline, my primary source of extra income was refereeing high school, small college and amateur sporting events. I officiated basketball, football and baseball for 30 years. With the encouragement and support of my beloved Muriel, I quit drinking and smoking on the same day in 1981, not only to enjoy a



This picture was taken by Andy Coulter through my spotting scope long before I got him!

healthier life, but to have more money to spend on sheep hunting!

When you are crazy about something as I was about wild sheep and sheep hunting it became necessary to share my passion with others. I found that wonderful opportunity with Minnesota-Wisconsin FNAWS. In 1978 I was welcomed to my first ever fundraiser and I have not missed an event since. I found the people I met at these fundraisers not only share my passion for hunting, but were the most welcoming and kind people I've ever met. The friendships I made at our then twice a year events are the reason why I have served as a director for 23 years.

My love of big game hunting has led me to attend at least 2 or 3 national hunting/conservation conventions each year for over 30 years. This past January 29th, just one week after attending the National Wild Sheep Foundation Convention in Reno, I attended the Grand Slam/Ovis Convention in Las Vegas. Around midnight on Friday, I was stunned to have my name called as the winner of the GSCO three quarter Slam drawing. As I



Mexican Desert Ram with my son Andy at my side. I am not embarrassed to tell you that both Andy and I cried like babies when my gorgeous ram was on the ground.

I want to thank everyone who made finishing my Grand Slam possible. First I want to thank my soulmate Muriel for sharing her life with me while encouraging me in my passion for big game hunting. Secondly, I want to thank the leadership and members of Grand Slam/Ovis for putting on their 2016 3/4 Slam drawing and making this 67 year old man's dream come true. Third, I want to thank everyone connected to the Wild Sheep Foundation and Grand Slam/Ovis for their encouragement, friendships and for being such an important part of this farm boy's life.



Left to right after my hunt: Nayo Balderrama, John Coulter, Nayo's son Bernardo and my son Andy.

stumbled in disbelief to the stage I could not help but think of fellow MN-WI FNAWS members Jerry Mariska and Dan Scharmer who had won this very special drawing before me. Once on the stage I was told by my friend Dennis Campbell that I would be heading to Mexico within 3 weeks to try and finish my Grand Slam with another longtime friend, Nayo Balderrama the owner of Amigos Outfitters.

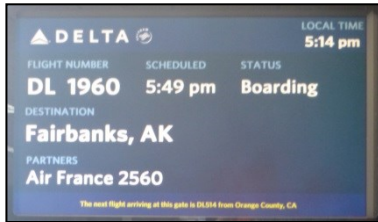
On February 28th, 40 years after I had taken my first ram in Alaska, my quest for my Grand Slam ended in the San Francisco Mts. of Northern Sonora. This mountain range was where Jack O'Connor had often hunted in the thirties. Jack's book, "Sheep and Sheep Hunting" had helped fuel my passion for wild sheep and sheep hunting. On the second morning of my hunt I took a beautiful



My Aching Back

by Sean Keck, Cadott, WI

The previous year's planning became reality on August 19th, 2015. My good friend and hunting partner, Jon (not John) Kleist, and I were flying from Minnesota to the Brooks Range of Alaska to go on a Dall's sheep hunt. The journey took two full days of travel to get to the remote town in the interior of Alaska. Once there, it was obvious that everything ran at a much slower pace. With poor flying conditions upon us, hours passed before we were told that the weather had cleared enough for the DeHavilland Beaver to fly. Taking off from a large pond at the outskirts of town, Jon and I were airborne and had an hour and a half bush flight into camp. We saw sheep as we flew through the mountains, which was a good sign of the things to come.



Getting ready to leave Wright's Air Service Fairbanks, AK



Stepping off the float plane, the first person we met was a smiling 13 year old from Florida. This young man had successfully harvested his first Dall's sheep with his father; a huge accomplishment for any hunter. Congratulations ensued and the focus came back to unloading the plane and saying farewell to the successful hunters that were leaving. After the uphill hike of supplies to base camp, we settled in.



Successful hunters leaving camp.



Hunter Sean Keck & Guide Cabot Pitts

Base camp was in the main river valley with mountains rising from 4,500 feet to 6,500 feet tall all around us, it was breath taking. Being funny, I asked the question, "Are we going to swim across the river and shoot our sheep on the other side of the valley?".

The guides, Cabot Pitts and Bob Horne, laughed; they hadn't thought of ever doing such a thing because they had never seen rams, hunted or harvested sheep on the opposing side of the valley from camp. We had a steak dinner that evening and discussed what to expect during the hunt. We went to bed in anticipation of leaving for the mountains the next morning.

With close to 20 hours of daylight this time of year and coming from three hours ahead of Alaska Time, my internal clock was ticking and I was the first to wake in the morning. During breakfast and coffee we discussed the game plan for the day. While packing my gear to head out, I felt a sharp pain in my back. I triggered an old injury and seriously threw out my lower back. I knew I wasn't just going to be sore. It was very serious and in just a few short seconds my last year's anticipation for this hunt was crushed.

Back at the cook tent I informed the guides that I couldn't go. My guide and I would be stuck in camp until my back improved. From previous back events, 'improved' usually meant 2 weeks and that was the entire length of the hunt. I was frustrated

to say the least. The rest of the morning was spent packing up as if I was heading out (something to keep my mind off my back), and helping my Jon get ready to go. Jon and Bob left late morning and headed into sheep country west of base camp.

Sean staying busy, trying to keep his mind off of his back.



Jon (not John) and Bob packed up and ready to head out.

Cabot and I hung out discussing various topics and solving the world's issues. In the afternoon clouds moved in and it started to rain. As the storm moved through, a rainbow shined across the valley on an opposing mountain from camp. We joked about wanting sheep at the end of the rainbow to help ease the situation we were in. As the hours passed, we noticed two different bands of sheep crossing the peak of the mountain east of where the rainbow had shined earlier. One band was all rams and the other a mix of rams, ewes and lambs. Of course we had to get out the spotting scope and take a look. Cabot didn't want to stop looking, and would talk about what an exceptional ram there was in one of the groups. Cabot kept telling me "He is a real cranker. Sean, your back needs to get better so we can go after that sheep".

My back was getting stiff and painful from sitting; so, Cabot and I would go on walks in the morning and afternoon, trying to keep my back loose. For two days we watched the sheep across the valley and talked about the large ram in the group. We also found a spot to cross the river, joked, and talked about how lucky we would be if we actually got across the river and were successful at getting the 'Cranker'. It wasn't painless getting out of the sleeping bag on the third morning, but going on the walks, thinking about heading back home without hunting, the money spent on the trip; I told Cabot, "If he didn't mind picking my pack up for me, helping me get it on my shoulders, I could support the load". Cabot agreed and we were going hunting.

Spirits were high packing up that morning. I was anxious about leaving base camp to hunt; not knowing if my back would hold up on the hike after the rams. Since we only had seven days of hunting left in the trip, we didn't have to take the heavy load of eleven days of food with us. Dropping four days of food didn't seem like a lot of weight until I picked up the box we were leaving behind and I appreciated it not being in my pack.

Sean packing for real this time.



Much time was spent behind the scope.



Getting ready to wade across a creek prior to wading the "could be warmer" river.

We took it slow leaving camp, allowing my back to test the waters and see if we were going to make it. The bog below camp was dry enough to cut across which saved us from having to go around it. The dry ground gave us hope that the main river would be shallow enough to cross. After getting down to the river, Cabot stripped down to his skivvies and started testing different spots to cross that looked promising. Cabot found a belly deep spot to cross on the third or fourth attempt. I told him that he could have found a spot with warmer water as I crossed the river, rifle in one hand and a walking stick in the other. So far my back was holding up! Cabot did all the real work carrying the packs across. On the other side we put on dry clothes as it started to rain.

As we headed up toward the sheep, we stopped periodically to glass and make sure the 'Cranker' and his band of rams were still in the neighborhood. The plan was working, as we made our way up a draw to the north of where the sheep were feeding. We stayed downwind and kept plenty of distance not to spook them. The draw had a good amount of water flowing down it and drained from the upper part of the mountain so we didn't have to carry a full load up the mountain to drink. The drinkability of the water was questionable as everything 20 feet on either side of it was dead. Not paying too much attention to it we hiked further up the mountain. As we made our way halfway up the draw we came to the backside of a knob that provided enough flat ground to pitch our spike camp and keep us hidden from the group of rams that were 1,000 yards away. The rain wasn't letting up and we could see the river had risen in the three hours since we had crossed. After setting camp, the rest of the evening was spent watching the 'Cranker' and his follies until they bedded down for the evening.

After wading across the river, we glassed the sheep prior to making our way to spike camp.



5 A.M. the next morning we awoke to fog and rain. The rain hadn't stopped falling all night. We cached most of our gear, except for a few days of food and our sleeping bags, before heading up the mountain. For the last few days the weather was like this and normally cleared by mid-afternoon. Despite all the water draining from the mountains into the river making our return crossing a question, it was actually a blessing. We used the clouds to hide our ascent and the rain to cover our sounds. Once up on the ridgeline there was time to pause for lunch and to start making our way over and up to the peak where we could get a birds-eye view above the sheep.



Above the sheep and the clouds.





At the peak, one could tell the sheep liked to frequent the area. There was a lot sheep sign, tracks and bones strewn about. One doesn't think of wolves or bears climbing the mountains, but they go to where the food is. In between rainfalls, the clouds opened up to reveal the 'Cranker' was still below us. Not clear enough to start our stalk, we napped on the peak of the mountain. The sun woke us up saying "Here is your opportunity. Take advantage before the next set of clouds blow in". As we started our final stalk, a pair of golden eagles did a fly by and missed us by only a few feet. What a site that was.

We walked on the backside of a finger leading down to where the sheep were feeding. We planned to get to a position within a few hundred yards of the sheep as they continued to feed in our direction. Three stalks later, with the sheep never settling on one direction, we went back up to the peak to work down a different finger. Doing so would get us within the effective range of my Hill Country Rifles .280 Ackley and Nosler E-Tip combination. In our shooting position, we used our rain gear as a rest. The 'Cranker', 450 yards away, was unaware of us as he licked the minerals off the side of the rock face. As he moved broadside, I confirmed the distance and lack of wind one more time with Cabot. I squeezed the trigger and fired, hitting the mark.



Cabot viewing thru his spotting scope confirmed the shot was well placed. The ram lifted his head up one last time and the mass of his horns pulled him down the mountain coming to rest on a large quartz boulder.

After a minute of silence to myself, I thanked God my back held out for this accomplishment. A little in disbelief that I actually accomplished taking a Dall's sheep, I looked back and said, "Cabot, you're getting a hug whether you wanted one or not". We stayed back and watched the younger rams reorganize their hierarchy and follow the new leader up and over the mountain. We noticed at this time, 4,000 feet below us a motor boat was traveling down river. Cabot said, "Wouldn't it be funny if that boat was heading back up river when we need to cross". It was a good thing that he said that because it seemed like everything we mentioned sitting in camp for the last few days was coming true.



Sean Keck and Cabot Pitts.

We climbed up the mountain to gather our packs and followed the sheep trails around the ridgeline and down to where the ‘Cranker’ lay. Not ever being close to a wild sheep before, I did not have an animal in mind to compare it to and this definitely wasn't the size of a whitetail from Wisconsin. After more congratulations, pictures, and Cabot asking repeatedly if I was planning on a life-size mount, we dressed out our sheep for a shoulder mount.

A couple hours later, under the Northern Lights, we headed for spike camp. I think I fell 2 or 3 times and was simply drained. My back and I were shutting down, Cabot made the executive decision to side-wash (sleep on the side of the mountain in just your sleeping bag) for the night. I fell asleep a few minutes after entering my bag. After a deserved rest, we hiked back to spike camp. The rest of the day was spent taking care of the hide/skull, resting, eating sheep, and celebrating with a few shots of fine whiskey. There were a few conversations about how we were going to cross back over the river. Cabot, being a collegiate swimmer, mentioned volunteering to swim to the other side, using barrels from base camp as a raft to get me and the gear across, a last resort. Calling in a plane to drop a raft or meet us at the nearest lake on our side of the river sounded much safer. As the day progressed, my back was becoming stiffer and more painful, making it hard to even stand upright. The previous two days abused my already hurt lower back, and I wasn't sure my back was going to make it across the river. I was willing to pay for a plane to come and get us. I told Cabot that calling in a plane sounded much safer.

The next morning we awoke to a dull noise echoing up the mountain. I wasn't really sure if I was hearing something until Cabot said, "That sounds like a boat motor". We both came out of our tents and headed to a knob where we could overlook the valley below. It was a good thing Cabot mentioned the boat coming back up stream the other day, as the same boat was now doing just that. The 20hp motor struggled to push the boat upstream. Cabot ran down the mountain to catch the boat before it made it up river passed us. Being halfway up the mountain at spike camp, I didn't know if Cabot had reached the river in time to catch the boat. I was slowed down from my back injury and not able to race anywhere. I started packing up gear, figuring that we were leaving today one way or another. After all my gear was packed and ready, I started pulling the first stake of Cabot's tent from the ground and he appeared in camp with a smile. The boat was being piloted by another guide Cabot knew from town. He agreed to wait for us to come off the mountain and ferry us

Cabot Pitts and Sean Keck back in spike camp with their trophy.



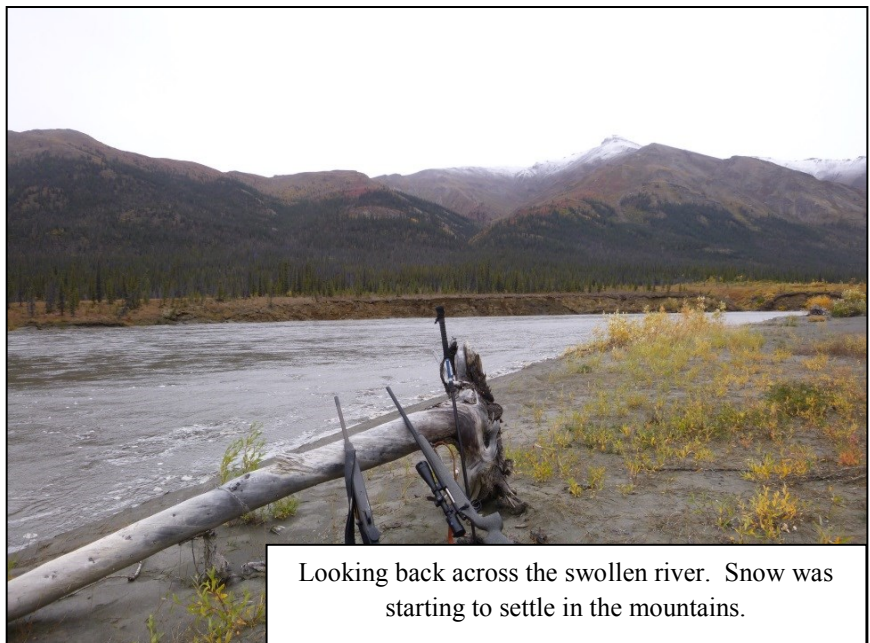
Cabot letting people know we made it back across safely.



across. What a relief, in the middle of the Brooks Range it was incredible to run into someone familiar and have them provide the much needed ride that would enable us to make it safely back to base camp. Once across we called Brooks Range Aviation and family to let them know we made it across the river safely. We knew we were on the home stretch now. Within an hour we would be back in base camp.

The final days were spent continuing our walks from base camp to keep my back limbered up. We were also hoping our luck would continue and find a grizzly bear to fill the tag I had. We did see a dandy bear about 3 miles off, estimated to be 8'+. That was an exceptional ursus arctos for being above the Arctic Circle. It was too far for my back; so, we watched him thru the spotting scope for a while grazing on the ripe blueberries in the tundra. A close encounter with a black wolf helped wrap up my trip to the Interior of Alaska.

I would like to thank Cabot Pitts, for carrying more than his share of the weight (I wouldn't have been able to physically do this without Cabot); my friend Jon (not John) Kleist, for planting the seed of taking this trip; my family, especially my bride Donna, for letting me go on this life changing trip.



Looking back across the swollen river. Snow was starting to settle in the mountains.

It Just Doesn't Get Any Better

by Jack Smythe, Park Rapids, MN

After a lifetime of hunting big game, I was truly blessed this past February to have completed my Grand Slam of North American Wild Sheep in Mexico with Bart Lancaster and the Seri Indians on Sonora Mainland across from Tiburon Island. My base camp was in a valley surrounded on 3 sides by the Sonora Coastal Mountains. My view to the west from my camp was Tiburon Island and the Gulf of California, the narrow straight between the mainland and Tiburon. It was an extremely remote and very difficult to get to. It was a really nice camp staffed with wonderful people who really took good care of me.



Hunting conditions were very difficult, because of unseasonably hot weather during the middle of the day. For two weeks mid-day temperatures ranged from 95 to 110. It cooled nicely at night, but the middle of the day was brutal with no cloud cover. Heat stroke and dehydration were always a real concern. I had never ever hunted in weather like this.

Thanks to the Bart Lancaster, his team and the Seri Indians I was able to harvest the Desert Ram I had always dreamed about. He was a very old monarch, with lots of mass and 16 inch bases. He was everything I wanted and finished my quest for a Grand Slam which had started over 25 years ago. For this old hunter, it just doesn't get any better!

Midwest Garage Sale

LOOKING FOR YOUR 15 MINUTES OF FAME?
Show off your Hunting Videos or Pictures

LIFE MEMBER BREAKFAST

We are tentatively scheduling a
WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION MIDWEST CHAPTER
Life Member Breakfast

Watch for more information on our website or in the next issue of Ram Tracks.

Alaska Goat and Grizzly

by Andy Otte, Randolph, MN

In January 2015, while attending the WSF Show in Reno, I met up with Lance Kroneberger. He and his wife, Nikki, operate "Freelance Outdoor Adventures" in Alaska. I visited with Lance a couple of times during the show. I was particularly interested in hunting grizzlies with him and planned a hunt for the spring of 2016.

I was also looking for a mountain goat hunt and when an auction hunt in the Chugach Mountains with Lance stalled below value, I raised my hand one time, winning the goat hunt. This hunt was for September 2015 and my wife, Cris, was able to go along.

We had wonderful weather during this hunt. We camped on the side of a mountain in goat country. From camp we could view several glaciers and mountains faces. I was fortunate to harvest a nice goat and we saw several more. We also watched a black bear stalk a goat unsuccessfully. My guide was John Rydeen.

Fast forward to late May 2016. I flew to Anchorage and then on to Unalakleet, where I met up with John Rydeen who would again be my guide. John is a Minnesota native and we revisited events at home. I also had the pleasure of meeting Jim Tweeto of "Flying Wild Alaska" TV show fame. Jim is a great down to earth kind of guy. I had the privilege of flying four flights with him in his Cessna.

John and I hunted the first six days about 40 miles southeast of Unalakleet. We saw about everything except for a big

bear. I enjoyed glassing the area species, including moose, caribou, musk ox, lynx, foxes and a couple small grizzlies. Jim picked us up and after a quick stop in town for supplies, we were headed 40 miles northeast of Unalakleet. We arrived there late in the afternoon and hiked to our campsite. After getting camp situated, we glassed into the evening. We watched a small grizzly. You are not allowed to hunt after flying until 3 a.m. the following day.

The daylight hours seemed crazy to me. The sun would dip below the horizon around 12:30 a.m. and be back above it near 3 a.m. I never needed a flashlight or headlamp.

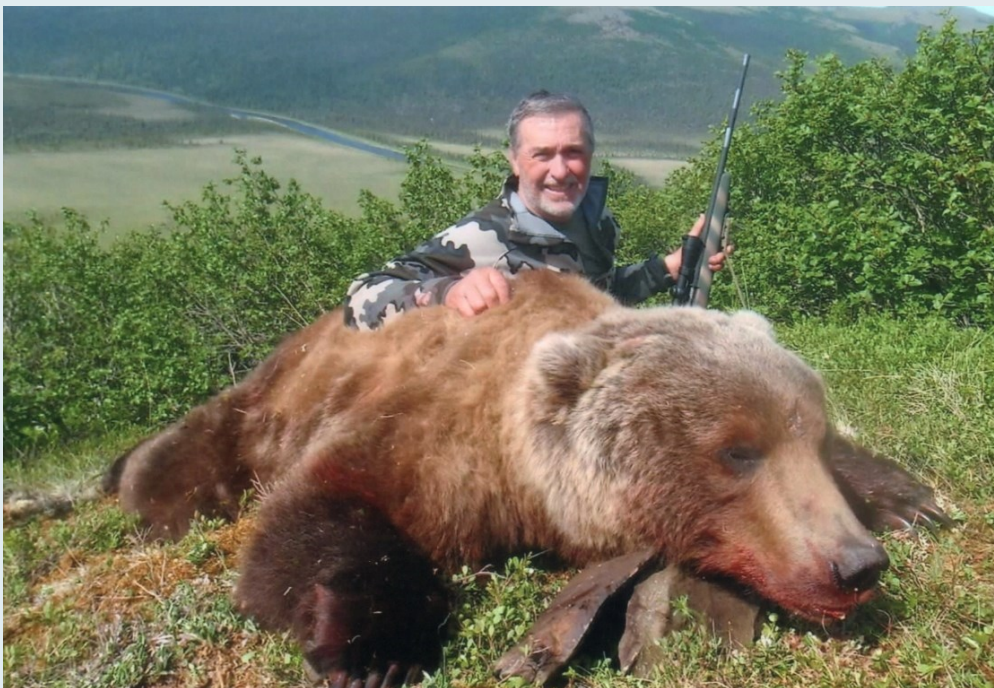
The next morning after a bite to eat, John spotted a good size Grizzly bear with a female, about 2 miles away. We set out after them and they played a game of cat and mouse among the tree patches and openings. We got to within 300 yards and then 250. We finally got to within 208 yards and let me tell you, that bear looked huge! I had a good rest when the bear gave us a broadside shot. I fired when John said take him. At the shot, the bear bawled and took off out of sight. He only went about 25 yards and expired before getting to the alders. Both John and I were glad he didn't get into them.

He was even bigger close up. It was all we could do to roll him one and one half times to an opening for pictures and skinning. A few hours later we were headed back to our high mountain camp with heavy packs. We arrived there about three hours later, tired from the heavy packs but that is easy to get over when successful.

My grizzly went over eight feet with a skull measuring just over 25 inches, surpassing the Boone and Crockett minimum.

I would like to thank Lance and Nikki Kroneberger for another great adventure! Once again, everything went as smooth as possible. Thanks to John Rydeen, WSF 2016 "Guide of the Year." I appreciate your knowledge and skills. And, it was fun naming the Twins World Series players and reliving the highlights.

And thank you to my wife, Cris, for your understanding and support. I am truly blessed!



A BIG WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST LIFE MEMBERS!

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Fairbanks, AK

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Thank you for your support!

WE WANT YOUR STORIES!

We often hear many of you say, "I'd love to help out, but I really don't have a lot of time". We have an answer for you and it doesn't require a lot of time! Share an experience you've had with the membership (brag a little!). It's important to us to put out an informative, interesting and entertaining Ram Tracks newsletter. We need stories of your adventures (hunting, fishing, travels, an outdoor experience, awarded with an honor, etc..) even a brief description with a nice picture. Whether you've hunted the Nile for crocodiles or caught a nice pike this summer at the cabin or on vacation, we want to hear about it! If you see an article or information that would be a good addition to our newsletter, let us know or send it to Patti at our office. We all have a past experience or adventure worth sharing. Let us share yours!

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

Social Media

Facebook

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) 269-6013 or email: blhelm@visi.com.

WSF- MIDWEST 2016 FUNDING

South Dakota	
Game Fish and Parks and Others	\$127,218.12
North Dakota	
Game and Fish and Others	109,012.50
Wyoming Wildlife Foundation	65,250.00
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation	10,000.00
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	960.00
Waterhole Project in Arizona	9,672.47
Erich J Kanne Memorial Foundation	2,000.00
Pete McMahon Fund	1,850.00
Wild Sheep Foundation	<u>1,000.00</u>
	\$326,963.09

This is a total of \$326,963.09
that your Midwest Chapter of
the Wild Sheep Foundation has
funded so far in 2016!
You should be proud!

Official Announcement

In accordance with the Bylaws for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Chapter, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, d.b.a. Wild Sheep Foundation-Midwest Chapter;

The Wild Sheep Foundation – Midwest Chapter is a non-profit corporation established under the laws of the State of Minnesota. It is an affiliate of, and chartered by the Wild Sheep Foundation (hereinafter referred to as “the Foundation”), which is a non-profit corporation established under the Non-Profit Corporation Act of the State of Iowa.

The purpose of the Chapter shall be to assist the Foundation in carrying out the objectives of the Foundation, namely, to promote the management of, and to safeguard against the extinction of all species of wild sheep native to the continent of North America, according to the principles, policies, standards and procedures as set forth by the Foundation from time to time.

In accordance with the Policy Manual for the Wild Sheep Foundation-Midwest Chapter; At least once a year, the Chapter newsletter will contain the announcement that the Chapter is organized to promote the benefit of North American Wild Sheep by generation of funds through the auction of items donated by individuals for sale to buyers, but that the Chapter is not able to guarantee the quality of such items or the satisfaction of either the buyer or the donor.

Hunter-Outfitter Relations – The Chapter shall not intervene in hunter-outfitter relations or problems.

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