

Summer 2023

Volume 43, Issue 2



Darryn Epp
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Ram Tracks

Journal of the Midwest Wild Sheep Foundation



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Mission

The mission of the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation is to conserve and enhance indigenous wild sheep populations throughout North America through scientific wildlife management, and educate the public on sustainable use and the conservation benefits of hunting.

Committed to Putting and Keeping
Wild Sheep on the
Mountain since 1979

HISTORY

THE MIDWEST CHAPTER IS A FOUNDING CHAPTER OF THE WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION. THE CHAPTER IS THE FORESIGHT OF A HANDFUL OF MIDWESTERNERS’ CONCERN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO HAVE AND ENJOY THE SAME ACCESS TO WILD SHEEP AND THE SPECTACULAR LANDSCAPES THEY INHABIT. SINCE INCEPTION, THE CHAPTER HAS CONTRIBUTED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TOWARD WILD SHEEP CONSERVATION – TO PUT AND KEEP WILD SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTH AMERICA. THE MIDWEST CHAPTER HAS GROWN TO OVER 500 MEMBERS AND IS A LEADING CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION IN NORTH AMERICA.

Read about Joe
Perrella’s Dalls Sheep
Hunt in our next issue!



We want your stories and
photos. Please send to:
mikeboutonmidwestwsf@gmail.com

Magazine Editor: Dean DiJenno

Since 1979 3 Names – One Mission

Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain

Report from the Executive Director: Mike Bouton



It was February of 1979, when a handful of regional sheep hunters gathered in a room at the 2nd Annual Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) National Convention in Bloomington, MN. The gathering would become the first formalized meeting to what would become the Minnesota Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS). Four years later, due to strong leadership and membership from across the river in Wisconsin, the name was changed to MN-WI FNAWS. And over two decades later, we would become the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation. If you are thinking “FNAWS”? you are likely new to our organization or simply, lucky to be young! Those of you familiar with “FNAWS” likely, long for some of those days again. Past MN-WI FNAWS Director and former National FNAWS President, Phyllis Carlson, may have said it best, “In our hearts, FNAWS will always be remembered, FNAWS has given us our best friends”.

The founder’s vision for our chapter almost a half century ago was remarkable, instilling a mission and values that are more valuable today, than ever.

The founders, directors and membership of the late 70’s, 80’s and into the 90’s are to be commended for their sacrifices to continue placing the bedrock for our chapter’s future. Those sacrifices now afford our Midwest Chapter an opportunity to lead in wild sheep conservation with significant contributions being made throughout North America. This year, our chapter is on target to top the \$8,000,000 mark in grant in aid, since that Bloomington, MN meeting in 1979. We’ve come a long way since our chapter received its very first funding request. Back then the BoD’s “stretched the checkbook” to send \$1,000 to the Yukon for habitat improvement!

History repeated itself in June at the 15th Annual Chapters and Affiliates Summit in Rapid City, SD which our Midwest Chapter was honored to host. During the Saturday evening dinner, four and a half decades later, history repeated itself with a funding request for the Yukon. The due diligence and strategy was presented by WSF and in 10 minutes, \$274,000.00 was pledged for Dall Sheep in the Yukon. What an amazing position for our chapter to be in, to make a significant financial contribution of \$25,000.00 and not have to “stretch the checkbook” or sacrifice other critically needed wild

sheep funding. I believe our current financial position is a true reflection of the values instilled early on by our founders. And the commitment and belief in those values by the membership to honor the mission to “Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain.”

The board of directors would like to thank all of you who participated in the Midwest Chapter membership drive leading up to the banquet this past March. Through your support, membership increased by 74% and new life membership growth was 15%, both highs for our chapter. We would also like to say “Welcome to the Midwest Chapter WSF” to those of you that are new to our organization or renewed. Thank you to all Midwest Chapter members for your support and feel free to reach out to us at any time with questions or suggestions that you may have.

If you were able to attend this year’s banquet and fundraiser, the directors would like to extend another “thank you.” Your presence and participation are very much appreciated. If you were unable to make this year’s banquet or are new and unfamiliar with our event, please consider

joining us on March 15 & 16, 2024 to help “Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain” and simply for A Great Time Among Friends! The 2024 Banquet season is still months away, but we’re focused on the 45th Midwest Chapter Annual Banquet & Fundraiser on March 15 & 16, 2024 at the Marriott Southwest Hotel in Minnetonka, MN. With our new focus, we are excited to announce Huntin Fool Advisors; Austin Atkinson and Robert Hanneman will be attending both days and presenting seminars on N.A. big game hunting, state applications & tags, gear, Q&A, etc. Their seminars are a wealth of knowledge and were a highlight at our 2022 banquet. We will once again have three excellent auctions featuring State Bighorn Sheep Tags, top quality big game hunts, world-class fishing throughout North America and around the world. Spectacular wing-shooting in North and South America, fine artwork, vacation packages, firearms and much more.... A large variety of raffles and drawings which will include hunts, fishing, firearms, archery, electronics, optics, ladies’ items and much more. Come visit with top quality outfitters and exhibitors from around the world, along with award winning taxidermists with their work on display.

Your Midwest Chapter Dollars are Making a Difference for North America’s Wild Sheep:

\$25,000 - Minam River Wildlife Area Acquisition

(Oregon): Bighorn Travel Corridor Wintering Grounds

\$34, 970 - Hells Canyon Bighorn Initiative: Capture/Test/Remove/Collars

\$25,000 - Conservation Visions: Wild Harvest Initiative

\$39,500 - Wild Sheep Society of BC: Capture/Test/Remove, BC Wild Sheep Summit, Disease Research

\$25,000 – WSF: East Harcuvar Mountains Bighorn Sheep Transplant and Water Development

\$15,000 – WSF: Feral Horse Removal from Bighorn Sheep Grazing Range

\$25,000 – WSF: Yukon Dall Sheep Capture/Collar/Monitor

\$165,000 - North Dakota Bighorn Tag Sale

\$157,100 – South Dakota Bighorn Tag Sale & Bighorn Ram Skull

\$135,000 – Wyoming Governor Bighorn Tag Sale

Wishing you a safe and successful time on the mountain or in the field this fall!

Committed to Putting and Keeping Wild Sheep on the Mountain since 1979



MISSION STATEMENT

VISION *Our desired future state*

To be the best managed, most respected, influential and relevant conservation organization benefitting wild sheep worldwide.

PURPOSE *Why we exist*

To Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain®

MISSION *What we do*

We enhance wild sheep populations, promote scientific wildlife management, and educate the public and youth on sustainable use and the conservation benefits of hunting while promoting the interests of the hunter.

VALUES *The principles that guide us*

Honesty	Teamwork	Accountability
Integrity	Positive Attitude	Stewardship
Respect for Others	Respect for Wildlife	Loyalty
Hunting Ethics		

Putting & Keeping Wild Sheep on the Mountain Since 1977

Reprinted with permission from WSF’s Wild Sheep® Summer 2023 issue.

IDAHO WSEF

ROLE IN IDFG BIGHORN SHEEP PROJECTS FOR 2022/2023

BY BILL LONDON



Idaho bighorn sheep management has a lot going on and you are a part of it. The Idaho Fish and Game commission and the Idaho Dept of Fish & Game are making a concerted effort to expand bighorn management in Idaho. With input from interested parties, including the ID WSEF, the IDFG has developed an Action Plan for addressing projects in multiple bighorn populations in Idaho.

Around the state some herds are increasing, some are stagnant, some are declining, and some we just don't know. The Hells Canyon herd is increasing. Where will it expand to? The South Beaverhead and the Jim Sage herds, appear stagnant but we don't have recent population estimates or health testing on these populations. Idaho's California bighorn populations are down and so naturally are the number of hunting permits. In 1998 there were 45 permits, 2009 had 22 permits, and 2022 had only 15 permits. The Bruneau/Jarbidge hunt was closed this year due to a lack of bighorn sheep in the unit.

THE PROJECTS included in the Action Plan are science driven, ambitious, and expensive, totaling over a half million dollars for this year alone. Funding these action plans is being shared by the following groups.

- \$195,000 Idaho Dept of Fish & Game (Not including biologist's time)
- \$190,480 Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation
- \$135,000 National Wild Sheep Foundation, Grant-In-Aid
- \$39,308 Midwest Wild Sheep Foundation

NOTE: The Hells Canyon Initiative research is not included in the funding above. It's part of long-term funding by IDFG, Oregon DFW, Washington DFW, WSEF national, ID WSEF, OR WSEF, WA WSEF, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and Nez Perce Tribes, BLM, USFS.

VOLUNTEERS. There will be opportunities for ID WSEF members to volunteer on some of these projects. For volunteer opportunities the ID WSEF simply sends an

email to all current members asking for volunteers. If your membership lapsed with the new year or your email address has changed, you won't get the notification.

There will also be hundreds of collar kits to assemble and organize at the IDFG offices prior to field captures. After sheep are net gunned from a helicopter, they are either processed at the capture site or slung under a helicopter to a processing site. When processing sites are used volunteers can usually assist. During late summer lamb surveys volunteers would assist in locating collared ewes to see if their lambs survived the summer. You can also watch for any signs of coughing or sick sheep. There will be volunteer opportunities for collar kit assembly then capture and collar efforts from the fall of 2022 through March of 2023. Most of the capture-collar will be happening in January and March of 2023. Ground surveys for lambs will be around August of 2023.

It should be noted that anytime a helicopter is involved, scheduling is difficult. Wildlife helicopter crews are specially trained and very in demand during winter months. They are booked solid. For safety reasons they do not fly in bad weather. So, a storm in Wyoming can cause an Idaho capture to be rescheduled. It may be clear at the capture site but fogged in where the helicopter is parked. Project dates are often in a state of flux and volunteers will often need to adjust their plans.

To better understand the herd specific projects included in the Bighorn Sheep Action Plan, here's a little background.

Movi. *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi) causes pneumonia and high mortalities in bighorn sheep, particularly lambs. When herds are initially infected with Movi, there is usually an all-age die off where, on average, about half the population dies. When a bighorn is infected with Movi it either dies, is sick and recovers, or appears to recover but in fact is still sick and spreading the disease. The chronically sick bighorn sheep continue to infect other bighorn sheep causing high lamb mortalities and low herd recruitment. Some populations can

experience decades of low lamb recruitment with continued population declines or limited or no population increases.

TEST AND REMOVE. Test and Remove (T&R) is a process where sheep are captured, tested for Movi, collared, and released. Those that test positive for Movi are recaptured and retested. If they are again Movi positive, then they are considered chronically infected and are removed from the population. They are either taken live to research facilities or euthanized and necropsied to gather additional data. The goal of removing individuals that are chronically infected with Movi is to increase populations by removing a major source of lamb mortality in the herd.

The success of Test and Remove Movi clearance in the Hells Canyon bighorn herds created an opportunity to expand what was learned there to improve bighorn populations in other areas. During the Hells Canyon research the goal was to test every adult female in free-ranging bighorn sheep populations. In other areas this goal would be unreasonable due to remoteness, terrain, wilderness restrictions on helicopter use, and funding. Exploring the ability to manage Movi on a large landscape without capturing every single animal could lead to better herd health and increasing populations in other bighorn ranges.

GPS/VHF COLLARS: Most of the collars used in these Action Plans have both Global Position Satellite (GPS) and Very High Frequency (VHF) transmitters.

Global Position Satellite (GPS) collars use satellite triangulation to determine the bighorn's location. GPS transmitters download locations which IDFG can access every few days allowing remote monitoring of research animals. This allows study of habitat use, travel corridors, tracking social dynamics, and identifying lambing and wintering areas. GPS collars are more expensive, and their batteries don't last as long as VHF, they also are subject to a monthly fee for satellite services. It's like paying your InReach bill each month. The



additional costs are balanced out because GPS collars require less personnel time to gather more data points of animal locations and can provide quicker mortality notifications than when animals are monitored by field personnel every few days or weeks.

VERY HIGH FREQUENCY (VHF) transmitters send out a signal that when picked up by the receiver makes a 'beep' sound indicating the direction of the collar. VHF transmitters send a signal that in the field provides real time direction of the collar. The handheld four-pronged antennas attached to receivers are the ones you see in field pictures. VHF collars cannot be monitored remotely and require personnel using a receiver to be within a couple of miles of the collar. This work is done from the ground or using a plane.

Together a GPS/VHF collar allows for remote monitoring, quicker more accurate mortality necropsies, and field location of moving live animals. When conducting a lamb survey, the GPS information will tell where a collared ewe was yesterday. Once at that site the VHF signal will (hopefully) lead you to where the ewe and her lamb are now. VHF signals are subject to significant bounce in mountainous terrain which can make locating sheep a challenge.

CAUSE-SPECIFIC MORTALITY-PREDATION. Why did this animal die or what killed it? A field necropsy can establish the health of the animal, fat reserves, possible diseases, and if it died from predation then which

predator killed it. There can also be combinations, it was weak from Movi when it was killed by a lion. It's best when a field necropsy is completed within 48 hours otherwise scavenging and decomposition can make accurate analysis difficult. To accomplish this the more expensive collars with both GPS and VHF transmitters are used. When the collar does not move for more than 9 hours it sends a 'mortality' signal. Then an email to be sent to the IDFG saying that the collar is in mortality mode and its location with GPS coordinates. It's usually a Wildlife Technician who does the field necropsy and retrieves the collar. That's why 'Tech Time' is budgeted in for some projects in the Action Plan. Documented causes of big game mortality have been winter kill, malnutrition, accidents, lions, coyotes, wolves, bears, bobcat, and eagles.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT UNITS. In Idaho's hunting regulations, the state is divided into Game Management Units (GMUs). Bighorn populations are managed by herd or meta-populations in Population Management Units (PMUs).

IDAHO STATE FISCAL YEAR. The Idaho state fiscal year runs from July 1-June 30, so these plans are for fiscal year 2022/23.

REPRODUCTION = how many are born.

RECRUITMENT = how many live to sexual maturity (yearlings for bighorn sheep)

“From the President”

By Gregg Boeke – President,
Midwest Chapter - Wild Sheep Foundation

Greetings WSF Family and Friends,

As we are quickly heading to the Fall season, it is time to reach out to everyone with some updates on your chapter news.

After taking some time off from the many years serving the Midwest Chapter I have reengaged and am back on the Board of Directors. This time around as your President and along with my good friend John Coulter as Vice President.

Our plan is to continue to work on creating the first-class organization we have come to expect, building on the years of so many dedicated individuals.

After over 40 years in the hunting and conservation organizations the WSF is truly a special group of people. You represent what it means to be truly a conservation organization, with past legacies successes and state of the art practices being implemented currently to keep “Sheep on the Mountain”.

This what drew me to the organization and the love of hunting adventures. There are

not many opportunities where you can share this passion at an elite level.

Whether you are an old timer or new to the world of hunting I would like to invite you to join us.

We are already planning our annual banquet; this is your chance to engage with some of the most knowledgeable hunters in the country. Not just in sheep hunting but all hunting, including clothing, equipment, rifles, shotguns, bows and dogs (my favorite).

Hunting is real investment in time, money, and effort, engage with us and share our experience and stories.

I look forward to the challenges that lie ahead and the joy of being with a group of people I am honored to call my family.



Reprinted Courtesy of Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation



Endowment Fund Midwest Making A Difference

By Mike Bouton, Midwest Chapter WSF Executive Director

Since inception, the purpose and mission of the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation has not waived; To Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain. Ironical as it may be, the chapter's founding members did not reside in the wild sheep states of the west. They were Midwesterners, who were inspired and passionate about wild sheep and the spectacular landscapes that they inhabit. They also, felt passionate about future generations having the same opportunities and experiences through hunting and as wild sheep enthusiasts.

The Midwest Chapter is proud to be a leader and a founding chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation. Through the years, the chapter has contributed millions of dollars towards critical habitat improvement, protection and acquisitions, along with essential disease research and monitoring programs.

The Midwest Chapter's endowment fund has not only enhanced the chapter's contributions to wild sheep conservation, it has established the chapter's ability to impact wild sheep conservation in perpetuity! Meaning, your contributions to the chapter's endowment fund will be invested and through profit or interest income, you will personally impact the chapter's ability to: Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain. Seldom, do organizations reach a point to which they can

control their future and security of their mission.

The endowment fund is administered by a board of trustees separate from the officers of the chapter; however, some trustees may be chapter directors. The endowment is a financial foundation that gives the chapter stability and will impact wild sheep conservation in perpetuity.

Forms of Gifting:

Gifting can be:

- * Cash
- * Direct gift
- * IRA's & 401Ks
- * Insurance beneficiary
- * Life Insurance
- * Bequests
- * Real Estate
- * Stocks & Bonds
- * Trusts

Please consider contributing to the Midwest Chapter WSF Endowment Fund and be part of a Legacy in North American Wild Sheep Conservation. Giving to an endowment can have significant tax advantages.

"The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value." Theodore Roosevelt in Osawatimie, Kansas, August 31, 1910.

Below is a partial listing of chapter financial conservation contributions

for 2022/23 demonstrating how the Midwest Chapter is Making a Difference in Wild Sheep Conservation:

- * \$31,786.90 - Idaho/Oregon/Washington Bighorn Sheep Capture/Test/Removal
- * \$25,000.00 - Minam River Wildlife Area Acquisition: Critical Bighorn Sheep travel corridor and wintering grounds.
- * \$25,000.00 - Arizona E. Harcuvar Mountain Bighorn Sheep Transplant & Water Development
- * \$15,000.00 - Wyoming Feral Horse Removal on Bighorn Sheep Range
- * \$30,000.00 - British Columbia Frasier River Bighorn Sheep Capture/Test/Removal
- * \$25,000.00 - Conservation Visions, Wild Harvest Initiative
- * \$25,000.00 - Yukon Dall Sheep Capture/Test/Monitor
- * \$25,300.00 - Alberta Professional Outfitters Society - Tag Sales
- * \$10,000.00 - WSSBC Sponsorship/Partnership
- * \$9,000.00 - WSF Sponsoring/Partnership
- * \$7,575.00 - Regional High School Trap Teams
- * \$7,400.00 - Nebraska Tag/Appeal
- * \$2,000.00 - Wounded Warriors

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WSF MIDWEST ENDOWMENT FUND UPDATE

By Oscar Carlson, Endowment Fund Chairman

Our Mission, as a wild sheep foundation chapter, is as follows:

“We are dedicated to enhancing wild sheep populations, promoting professional wildlife management, educating the public and youth on sustainable use and the conservation benefits of hunting while promoting the interests of the hunter and all stakeholders.”

One of the greatest ways to insure that our mission will continue is through your donations to our Endowment Fund. At the end of March 2023, your Endowment Fund had a total market value of \$971,817. Your Endowment Trustees are charged with the task of first, protecting the base funds which we call Corpus; second they are charged with protecting the CPI or consumer price index on these funds so they will never lose value; and third they are charged with producing earnings enough to fund projects selected by your Board of Directors.

As all of you know, market conditions were very tough in 2022 with the rapid rise in Fed Funds during the year. Even with that challenge we have been able to protect the Corpus

and cover the CPI index, and have made substantial funds available for needed wildlife conservation projects. These projects include things like disease study and control, helping develop water catchments when needed, and assisting in Sheep transplants into areas where they existed years ago, etc.

We need your help to keep this Endowment Fund growing and funding important conservation projects. The WSF Midwest Foundation would appreciate if you would give us strong consideration as you plan your donations. The easiest way is a straight cash donation, but we could also accept stocks. Stock that has appreciated is a great way to donate, this way you can avoid the tax gain, yet get the full value for your donation on your tax return. Other ways would be to leave a

percentage of your will or as a beneficiary in your life insurance policy. If you have other ideas please contact Oscar Carlson at 651-464-8303 or Jeff Geiger our investment manager from Merrill Lynch at 614-880-4826

In closing, we need to Keep Sheep and other wildlife on the Mountains for future generations, so please consider a donation.

*A. Oscar Carlson
Endowment Trustee
Chairman*

Current Trustees
Oscar Carlson, Chairman
John Babler
Steve Bruggeman
Al Holland

Sophia Roskowski from MN., attended the Wyoming Winter meeting with her entire family and assisted with this ewe capture.



CHAPTERS & AFFILIATES



NOTE: bold/italics font denotes a joint WSF membership Chapter/Affiliate. Membership in these chapters and affiliates include membership in Wild Sheep Foundation. FOR COMPLETE CONTACT INFORMATION GO TO: www.wildsheepfoundation.org/memberships/chapters-and-affiliates

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WSF & C&A'S RAISE \$274,000 FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA & YUKON DALL'S SHEEP!

Rapid City, SD. June 21, 2023. The Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) and its Chapters and Affiliates flash-raised \$274,000 to fund a multi-jurisdictional Dall's sheep project as part of the Carcross Cross-Border Sheep Project initiative. The appeal came during the final evening of a two-day WSF Chapter & Affiliate (C&A) Summit held in Rapid City, South Dakota, hosted by the Midwest Chapter of WSF.

"Regulated hunting has proven its worth in driving the funding necessary to ensure a sustainable harvest that enhances and never threatens the game being hunted," said Gray N. Thornton, President and CEO of the Wild Sheep Foundation. "In this case, our chapters and affiliates united to fund a critical project that will provide decision makers the data they need to make informed management and harvest decisions."

The Carcross area is home to a cross-border population of Dall's sheep, with management responsibilities shared between British Columbia (BC) and the Yukon Territory (YT). This population also overlaps the Carcross-Tagish First Nation's (CTFN's) territory, for whom wild sheep resources have played an important traditional and cultural role.

"Proactive reductions in harvest opportunities were implemented in BC after severe winters in 2010-2014 and 2018-2020," explained Kevin

Hurley, WSF's VP of Conservation and Thinhorn Program Lead. "Recent information provided by the Nation suggests an apparent increase in the non-licensed harvest may be occurring. Bottom-line, as stewards of this resource, all stakeholders need to know more about this population."

Because of these collective interests, generating a better understanding of the range use of Dall's sheep in the area southwest of Carcross will help wild sheep managers from all three governments



(YT, BC, CTFN) have meaningful conversations concerning the future management and harvest allocations of these cross-border sheep."

"Carcross is a three-year project beginning this fall and winter with getting GPS tracking collars on thirty sheep," Thornton added. "WSF got the ball rolling with a commitment of \$50,000 seed money, and in ten minutes, our chapters, affiliates, and individuals in the room collectively and amazingly pledged another \$224,000."

\$120,000 is needed in Year 1 to purchase GPS collars, fund helicopter netgun capturing of the sheep, and collect and process health samples

from each animal. Years 2 and 3 will require an additional \$130,000 to maintain surveillance. The goal of the project is to collect vital information on current seasonal habitat use, range delineation, health, and factors that can affect population trends in this cross-border herd is of high importance and will help inform sound management.

"What an honor it was for our Midwest Chapter to host the annual Wild Sheep Foundation Chapters & Affiliates Summit," added Mike Bouton, Midwest Chapter Executive Director. "Wild Sheep Foundation delegates throughout North America with the same dedication, passion, and goals convening under one roof is powerful. All the incredible pledges truly demonstrated that during this year's Summit. WSF and its members continue to step up to the

daunting challenges of wild sheep conservation. The Midwest Chapter couldn't be prouder to be part of this great organization's team that continues to *Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain®*."

Representatives from 19 C&As attended from across the US, Canada, and Mexico. Prompted by WSF's \$50,000 seed grant and an appeal by WSF Chairman of the Board, Glen Landrus, the pledges started rolling in:

\$50,000 – Wild Sheep Society of BC
\$25,000 – Midwest Chapter of WSF, Alaska WSF
\$15,000 – Iowa FNAWS

\$10,000 – Idaho WSF, Texas Bighorn Society, Washington WSF, Alberta WSF, Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn

\$5,000 – Montana WSF, Utah WSF, Oregon WSF, Wyoming WSF, California WSF, Eastern Chapter WSF, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Society

\$1,000 – National Bighorn Sheep Center (WY), Eventgroove, Gray

& Renée Thornton, Kevin Hurley, Clint Bentley & Cindy Alexander, Jeff and Jann Demaske & Family, Drs. Glen & Carolyn Pyne, Kyle & Melanie Stelter, Jim & Shaina Warner & Family, Jacobo Artee, Julie Chapman, Cory Jackson Family, Midnight Sun Outfitting, & Rocky Mountain Goat Alliance.

"Raising nearly a third of a million dollars of dedicated conservation funding in minutes was a magical

thing to witness—but that is what the WSF family and our mantra of One Tent – One Campfire is all about," Thornton concluded. "Without the passion for wild sheep from sheep hunters, this Yukon/ British Columbia cross-border sheep project, and other projects like it, would simply not happen. Throwing darts at a dartboard is not how WSF does things. That's not management by science." **WS**

BIGHORN SHEEP CURRICULUM KIT

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The Wild Sheep Foundation has put together an educational kit that includes a variety of information and hands-on items that teaches about bighorn sheep and their conservation. The kit can be checked out for week-long segments for free and shipping is paid for.

Kit includes a ram skull, GPS collar, hide sample, curriculum book with over 20 lessons, Ovisopoly game, consumables to hand out to the students, a curriculum book and a USB drive with PowerPoints and movies for lessons with an optional "talk to a sheep expert" through Skype or Zoom class meeting.



To reserve your week, contact:
Ryan Brock
Youth Education Coordinator
Rbrock@wildsheepfoundation.org



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Dan Egan

CHAPTERS & AFFILIATES



2023-2024 BANQUET DATES

NOTE: Dates noted are as of press time.
Please check C&A websites for updates.

Sheep Week®January 15-20, 2024.....Reno, NV
Sheep Show®January 17-20, 2024.....Reno, NV
WSF C&A Summit XVI.....June 13-16, 2024..... Canmore, AB
WSSBC Jurassic Classic.....August 18-20, 2023..... Chilliwack, BC

WSF CHAPTERS:

Chapter	Date	Location
Alaska WSF	April 13, 2024	Anchorage, AK
California WSF	April 27, 2024	Sacramento, CA
Eastern Chapter WSF	February 16-17, 2024	Lancaster PA
Idaho WSF	March 16, 2024	Boise, ID
Iowa FNAWS	March 22-23, 2024	Des Moines, IA
Midwest Chapter WSF	March 15-16, 2024	Minnetonka, MN
Montana WSF	February 23-24, 2024	Missoula, MT
MSU Student Chapter WSF		N/A
New Mexico WSF		NM G&F BHS & DBHS Raffle
Oregon WSF	May 4, 2024	Bend, OR
Utah WSF	March 23, 2024	Salt Lake City, UT
Washington WSF	March 9, 2024	Tacoma, WA
WSF Alberta – 25th Anniversary	March 1&2, 2024	Calgary, AB
WSF Alberta – Yellowhead	April 20, 2024	Edson, AB
Wyoming WSF	June 7-8, 2024	Cheyenne, WY
Yukon WSF	TBD	Whitehorse, YT

WSF AFFILIATES:

Affiliate	Date	Location
Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society	May 11, 2024	Scottsdale, AZ
Elko Bighorns Unlimited	TBD	Elko, NV
Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn	April 13, 2024	Las Vegas, NV
National Bighorn Sheep Center	November 4, 2023	Dubois, WY
Nebraska Big Game Society	TBD	Lincoln, NE
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited	April 5, 2024	Reno, NV
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited - Fallon	TBD	Fallon, NV
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited - Midas	TBD	Midas, NV
Northern Nevada SCI Chapter	May 9, 2024	Reno, NV
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society	May 3-4, 2024	Loveland, CO
Rocky Mountain Goat Alliance		Online TBD
Society for the Conserv. of Bighorn Sheep		N/A
Texas Bighorn Society	June 8, 2024	Odessa, TX
Wild Sheep Society of BC–Northern	February 2-3, 2024	Dawson Creek, BC
Wild Sheep Society of BC–Salute to Conservation	Feb. 22-24, 2024	Penticton, BC

2023 Spring/Summer Event Series

Event	Date	Location
Selective Premiere	July 6, 2023	Emerson Theater, Bozeman, MT
Ram Rendezvous II at Schnee's	July 7, 2023	Bozeman, Schnee's & Main/Black
SITKA Summer Bash	August 12, 2023	SITKA Depot, Bozeman, MT

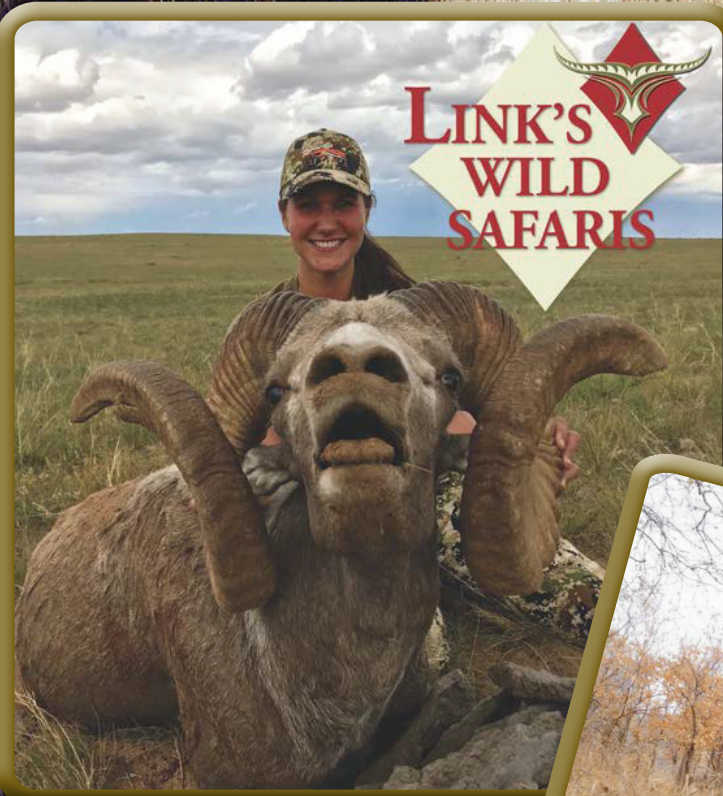
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MIDWEST CHAPTER HOSTS
2023 C&A MEETINGS!



Special Guest Speaker, Renee Thornton, WSF Women Hunt






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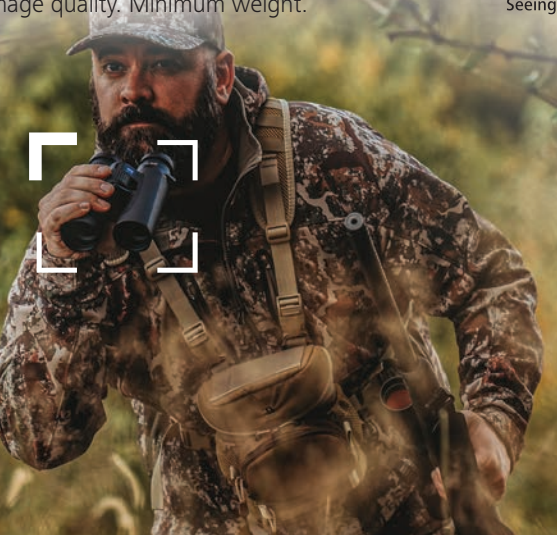


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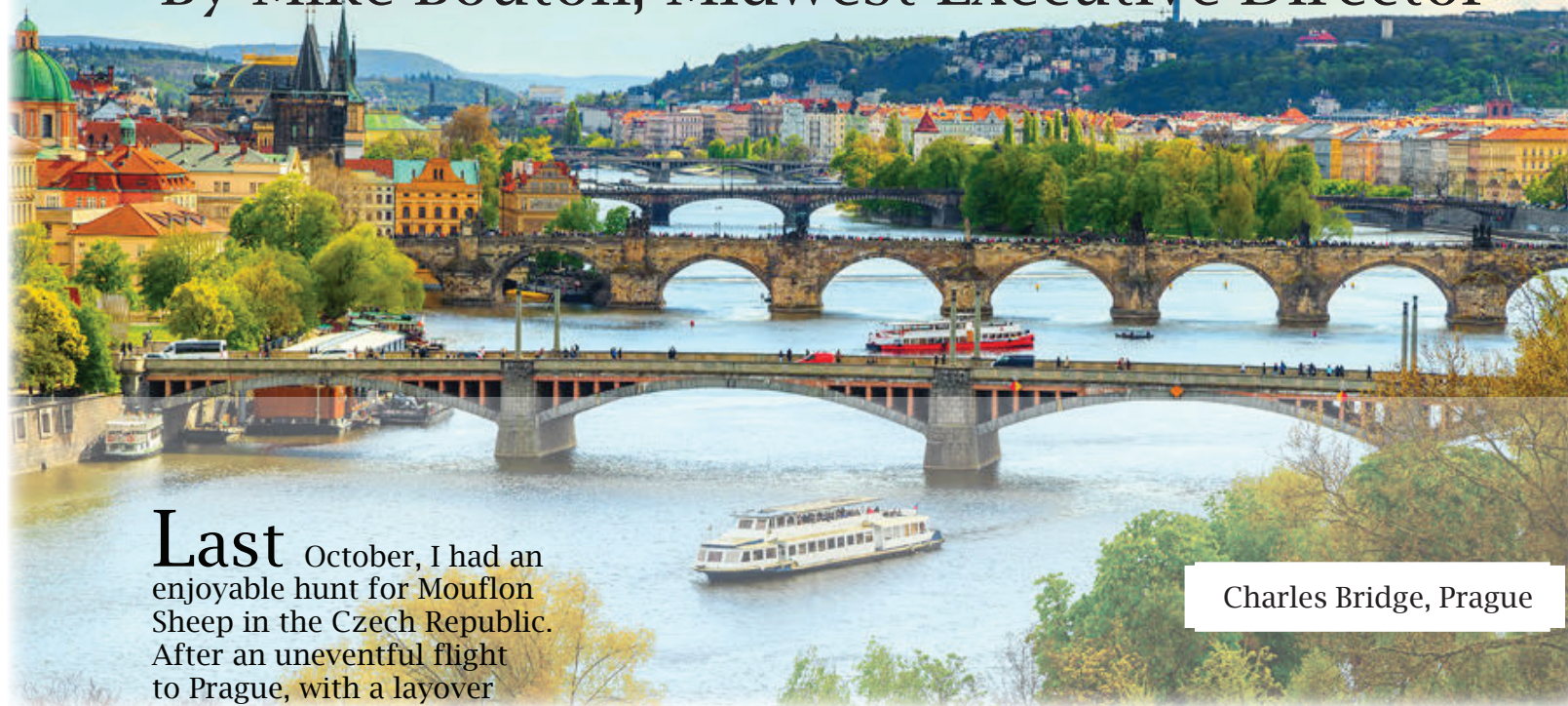
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“Bohemian Paradise”

By Mike Bouton, Midwest Executive Director



Charles Bridge, Prague

Last October, I had an enjoyable hunt for Mouflon Sheep in the Czech Republic. After an uneventful flight to Prague, with a layover in Amsterdam, I spent a couple days in Old Town Prague taking in one of Europe’s most historical cities. Visiting Europe always puts one in a perspective that simply doesn’t happen in the United States. On the first morning, I walked across the world-famous Charles Bridge, a medieval stone arched bridge that crosses the Vltava River; construction on the bridge started in 1357 under King Charles IV and finished in the early 15th century. The Charles Bridge was built to replace the flood damaged Judith Bridge, built in 1158 - 1172.

The region I hunted is called Bohemian Paradise, a two-hour drive northeast of Prague. After the drive north, I was greeted by my guide with Saint Hubertus Hunting and then checked into what would be my lodging for the next 5 days. A centuries old

castle, built out at the end of a steep sandstone cliff overlooking the countryside of rolling farmland to the north. The first written mention of the castle was in 1353. The landscape we hunted was quite unique, consisting of steep ravines with huge vertical sandstone rock outcroppings and formations encompassed by tall mature semi-open timber. Knowing that the region had a good mix of hardwoods, I scheduled the hunt in October hoping the foliage would be colorful, similar to what we experience in the northern regions of the Midwest.

We saw mature Mouflon rams every day and on the 4th day I took a nice ram about mid-morning. The hunting was much like hunting Whitetails in the west. Sitting in the mornings and evenings overlooking

feeding areas or travel corridors and during the day we would slowly work our way through areas that had thicker cover or could get on top and look down over potential bedding areas.

If you’ve never hunted in Europe, it’s certainly worth considering. It’s much more than just a hunting trip overseas, it’s filled with the rich hunting traditions of the region, you become part of the local culture and people. The food may vary, but is almost always excellent. The ability to hunt species unlike and unavailable in North America in unfamiliar landscapes, makes for an unforgettable experience. In October, I’m looking forward to traveling to Bucharest, Romania to hunt in the Carpathian Mountains and visit Bran Castle in Transylvania. The hunt was with Saint Hubertus Hunting, Prague, Czech Republic.



Castle in Bohemian Paradise Region of Czech Republic

“Engage. Educate. Empower. Inspire.”

By Renée Thornton, Chair, WSF Women Hunt®

The Wild Sheep Foundation's Women Hunt® program has been around for a couple of years and is already making a huge difference in the lives of the women involved with the program, as well as the lives of the thousands of people they've directly and indirectly impacted in their communities and beyond. And the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation has been a part of this exciting journey!

It's possible that you may

the Wild Sheep magazine. Or perhaps this is the first time you're learning about them and the program. Whatever the circumstance, there's no denying their energy, enthusiasm and gratitude to the Wild Sheep Foundation, the supporting WSF Chapters and Affiliates, and our generous sponsors and donors.

So, what happened to inspire such passion in these women? Many of whom had no previous knowledge or affiliation of the Wild

and inspiration!

The WSF Women Hunt® program is run by a group of eight volunteer women from across the United States and Canada. Every year we launch a selection process to choose twelve women to attend our flagship offering, the New Hunter Course. The course was designed and is delivered by the FTW Ranch in Texas and during the four-days they attend, they learn all the basic requirements to confidently begin their journeys as Women in Hunting™. The applications we receive are assessed by the committee using a blind scoring process and rubric, ensuring an unbiased and consistent assessment. The competition is tough and our job in choosing only twelve is hard, but for those women, it's the beginning of a life changing experience!

Attending the course is only the first of three major prongs of the program. The second prong is Mentorship, arguably one of the most important aspects in ensuring that a new hunter has positive experiences and remains engaged in our communities. Following their completion of the course, Women Hunt® works with the Chapter or Affiliate closest to where the women are from to find a suitable and compatible hunting mentor. They also provide them with a community by donating a complimentary one-year membership, which is matched by WSF with a national membership, instantly providing access

have already met some of the women from the Classes of 2021 and 2022 who were volunteering at the Sheep Show®! Or perhaps you follow Women Hunt® on Facebook and Instagram and have become familiar with the alumna from those classes on those platforms. Or maybe you've been reading our stories in the quarterly issues of

Sheep Foundation and its expansive community of wild sheep enthusiasts? Many of whom had little (or no) previous knowledge and awareness of the iconic wild sheep species, let alone the challenges to their survival, and the opportunities which exist to support their conservation? The quick answer is engagement, education, empowerment

Women Hunt - Class of 2022

Learning to use a Firearm.

course, the wild sheep resource we all care so deeply about. This has even manifested itself in an unexpected way in the form of significant financial contributions to the wild sheep economy at the C&A level as well as national. These women are really passionate about wild sheep!

The Midwest Chapter has been an important part of the successes of a remarkable woman from the great state of Mississippi, Paula McClain. When we approached the Midwest Chapter and asked if they would help with Paula's sponsorship, they quickly agreed, and we are very grateful to all of the Midwest members for your generosity. Paula is a truly wonderful person, and she has some pretty impressive credentials. Paula serves as the Principal of the Mississippi School for the Deaf, where her experiences as a person who is hard of hearing perfectly position her to be the very best advocate for her students. She is passionate and determined to demonstrate to them that hearing loss does not exclude them from the hunting and conservation worlds. Earlier this year Paula conceived an idea to bring a day of learning to her students, a “Wildlife and Water Conservation

Day!” It was a huge success, exposing the students to wild sheep and guzzler projects (delivering water to wildlife!) by using Dr. Ryan Brock's education program, as well as surprising and inspiring them when they learned that Principal McClain was a hunter, and that they could be too! To learn more about the cool things Paula did that day with her staff and students, check out her article in the Fall 2023 issue of Wild Sheep!

Women Hunt® has many exciting new developments coming and I invite you to become engaged, follow our progress and support the program. But most of all, celebrate and support the women and young women in your lives, wherever their interests lie! If you haven't already, engage with them and consider inviting them to join you in the outdoors to explore the world of hunting and conservation!

Women Hunt® is deeply grateful for the generosity of the Wild Sheep Foundation, the Midwest Chapter and all participating Chapters & Affiliates, as well as of our corporate and private sponsors and donors. Thank you!!

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Fraser River Bighorn Sheep Disease Mitigation Program. By Peter Gutsche, Wild Sheep Society of British Columbia



From the Northern Rocky Mountains, the mighty Fraser River cuts its course northwest before abruptly shifting southwards, traveling some 800 miles before spilling into the Pacific Ocean. Midway through this path, where the Chilcotin River enters the Fraser, lies the heart of the California Bighorn Sheep range.

It is from these herds that many transplant groups were re-introduced throughout the Western United States. Sadly, these populations have since been affected by M.Ovi and have been in a continual decline.

It was this decline, first noticed in the 1990's, that led to the formation of the

Wild Sheep Society of BC, and it is the recovery of these herds that has led us to our biggest project to date, the Fraser River Bighorn Sheep Disease Mitigation Program.

For the past four years, and with so many others' help, we have tested and removed bighorn sheep along the Fraser. Removing these animals has been both logistically challenging and emotionally taxing, but it has succeeded.

To date, we have tested 258 of approximately 545 sheep spread amongst some 17 bands in the meta-population and have removed 40 of these animals. With another four years of work ahead of us and another 300 bighorns to go, we can draw inspiration from the successes we have witnessed, namely the dramatic increase in lambs in all of our treatment areas.

Where we had previously documented zero lamb recruitment (survival of the first year) year over year, we were now seeing anywhere from 30-50 lambs per 100 ewes—simply incredible numbers.

Without a doubt, we could not have done this

alone; with the aid of the Wild Sheep Foundation and the Midwest Chapter, we succeeded in initially getting things off the ground, and we could not be more grateful for their continued support.

We have done all of our work with helicopters, net-gunning individual animals and testing before release or removal. This is done primarily because of the remoteness of the region. We are hoping to incorporate a drop-net capture this year, much to the approval of our members hoping to get their hands on a wild sheep! If you've got some time to spare in December, be sure to reach out.



“50% Ram”

By Taylor Raats Species: Sheep - Stone

There is no word that can describe sheep hunting. Very few people will ever get the opportunity to hunt these beautiful, majestic animals. Sheep sickness is a real thing. There is no halfway. After your first exposure, a man is either a sheep hunter or he isn't. He either falls under the spell of sheep hunting and sheep country or he won't be caught dead on another sheep mountain.

In September of 2021, I boarded a plane with my dad, Hank, to head to British Columbia. We were both going to hunt Stone

sheep! This was the first opportunity for both of us to hunt them. As we arrived in British Columbia, we were given some bad news that all the guides and spotters had just quit the outfitter. The new outfitter had just taken the outfit over this year from the original owners of 30+ years. We were then told a new guide was to arrive in camp the same day we arrived and that the hunt was going to be a three-on-one for 10 days instead of the original contract of one-on-one for 15 days. This is something you never want to hear as you arrive

in camp on any hunt. I was beyond upset. At this point, I was ready to jump back on the plane and head home.

On day one of the hunt, we headed to a spike camp that took almost two days to get to. This camp was only supposed to take five hours. Once we arrived, I noticed how thick the area was and thought it was going to be very tough to find a ram.

On day two as I was hiking off a mountain, it was starting to get dark and I slipped. I went headfirst into a branch and gouged my eye. I was completely blind in my right eye for two and a half days.

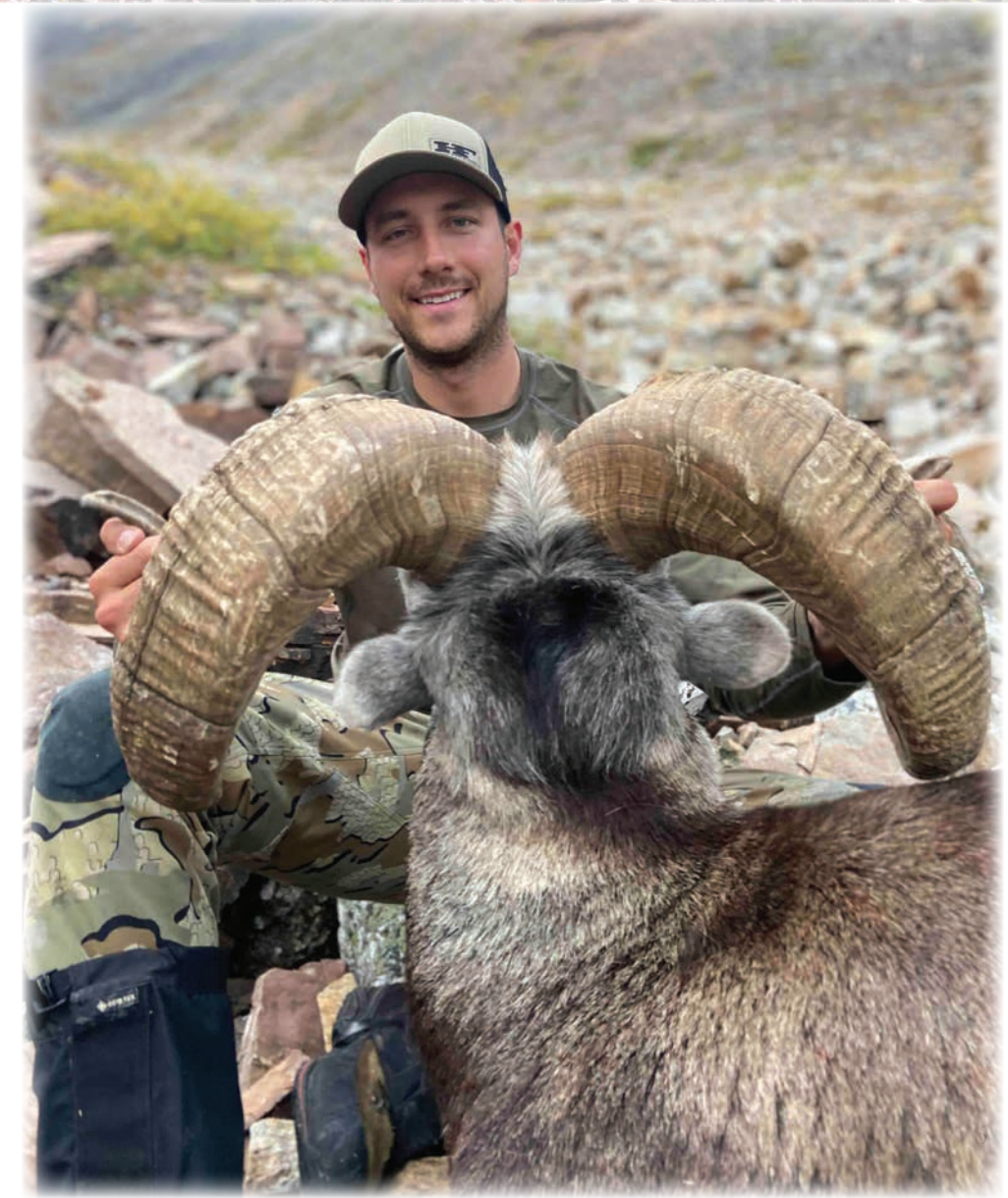
As it turned out, the first seven days of the hunt we found six rams but none that were legal. At this same time, one of the hunters with me was hunting mountain goats. The main guide and I spent an entire day hunting goats so this hunter would be tagged out and taken back to the main camp.

Day eight was here, and I was panicking about if I was going to get a chance to kill a ram. I quickly texted my buddy who had guided a handful of years for this outfitter and he replied with where we should relocate. We did what my buddy said, and as soon as we got near that area, we stopped on a vantage point. As I sat there, I noticed a ladybug crawling on me. I reached down, picked it up, and made a wish. It wasn't more

then two minutes later that I was looking through my binoculars and found my ram over three miles away. I knew he was something special. He had the most perfect look. We came up with a game plan, ditched the horses, and started the four-hour hike to get to where he was. All I could think of was my hope that the ram would still be there as I got to where we saw him last. We finally got into position and found a few smaller rams but not my ram. We decided to hold tight for a bit, and as luck would have it, here came two beautiful dark-caped rams down the side of a mountain. My ram was the back one following a younger ram. I quickly lay down prone and got ready for a shot. My rangefinder spit out 454 yards, and I adjusted my turret on the scope. Waiting and waiting, my ram finally stopped. Boom! One well-placed shot and my ram tipped over dead in his tracks. I started high fiving with my dad, realizing I just got my 50% ram.

This is something I'll never forget. I was flooded with emotions and started tearing up immediately, crying like a baby. It was a feeling I cannot explain. After all the highs and lows on this hunt, to finally get a beautiful ram was bittersweet. As we made it over to my ram, I was speechless. He was by far the most beautiful animal I had ever seen in my life. I'm now 50% Slam completed, and the feeling is amazing!

Hunt sheep while you can because you never know what tomorrow will bring.



Arizona Youth Waterhole Project

By Cris Bickman Otte, Midwest Chapter WSF
Youth Waterhole Project Director

The Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation Youth Program Mission Statement reads:

"We are dedicated to enhancing wild sheep populations, promoting professional wildlife management, education the public and youth on sustainable use and the conservation benefits of hunting while promoting the interests of the hunter and all stakeholders."

Who benefits from a waterhole project and why?

The Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) traditionally sends 12 youth and four chaperones to attend a waterhole project somewhere in Arizona to gain a greater appreciation for conservation and natural resources. The camp affords the youth a unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience and knowledge in a natural, rugged, and remote environment.

To select the twelve deserving youths, an essay contest is conducted on the theme, "Who benefits from a waterhole project and why?" Youth between 14-18 years of age are encouraged to enter an essay contest to be eligible for an all-expense paid trip to help build a waterhole somewhere in Arizona. Essays are selected by a blind review method.

The Arizona Youth Waterhole Project is a

nonprofit program that is funded by volunteer sponsorship and fully supports all expenses, including travel, meals,

Sheep Society (ADBSS), which includes the chapter's Ram's Horn magazine, and tickets to attend the Midwest Chapters Annual Fundraiser



Posing at the "drinker" before the concrete and stone walkway was developed: K. Winrich, I. Bickman, R. Gomes, T. Jones, M. Heggedahl, P. Nelson, Oscar Carlson (Forest Lake, MN), C. Wallis, Steve Powelson (Faribault, MN), H. Palodichuk, S. Bradley, Mark Almgren (Watkins, MN), T. Tix, D. Rademaker, C. Bickman Otte, K. Berg. Missing: Andy Otte (Randolph, MN).

camp sites, and educational excursions. It not only makes a difference for conservation, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife, it also makes a difference in the lives of the youth attending. The future is in their hands.

The participating youth received a document of volunteer hours from the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), a one-year membership to the Arizona Desert Bighorn

Banquet. They are asked to "give-back" by one doing one of the following:

- * Write an article for the Midwest Chapter WSF magazine, "Ram Tracks".

- *Share their experience at our annual fundraiser banquet and/or schools.

- *Spread the word of wildlife conservation efforts and how others can get involved.

The future of wildlife and our environment is dependent upon our next generations' involvement.

Save the date,
February 2024.

We will begin accepting essays for the 2024 Youth Waterhole Project August 1, 2023. If you are aware of an interested youth between 14-18 years, please email CrisOtte.MidwestWSF@gmail.com for more information.

What is a Water Hole Project?

Each year the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society (ADBSS) builds or redevelops five or six water holes under the direction of the state and federal agencies responsible for the management of desert bighorn sheep habitat (ADBSS.org).

Each project is completed in three days. There are currently 185 desert waterholes benefiting bighorn sheep and up to 50 other species. Drought conditions are critical to wildlife in the drought stricken southwest with minimal rainfall. In an arid climate like Arizona the purpose of a wildlife water development is to provide free standing drinking water when no other source of water is available, either on the surface or within the vegetation. Wildlife needs water to live. Through this project, wildlife can expand their use of the range/habitat and increase their population.

The ADBSS motto is:
"Sine aqua mortis,"
which is Spanish for
"Without water
we die."

Rihanna Gomes (photo 1) and KayLea Berg (photo 2) weld large portions of the 800' of new pipe rail livestock enclosure fence. The enclosure fence is designed to keep wild horses and mules out and let all other wildlife species get through. Wild horses and mules destroy the collection aprons and damage the waterholes.



Oscar Carlson is honored with a plaque by the ADBSS and AZGFD at the final campfire celebration. Pictured: Brad Remfrey (ADBSS Director), Carlson, Charlie Kelly (past president ADBSS), and Bill Davis (president ADBSS). This project was dedicated to Oscar Carlson for his contribution the youth waterhole projects. A medallion honoring Carlson and the Midwest Chapter WSF was embedded into the foundation.





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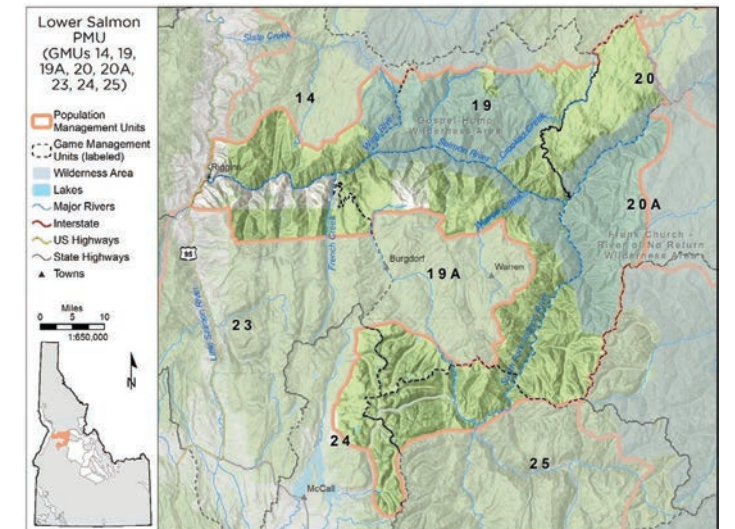
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IDAHO BIGHORN MANAGEMENT PLAN

LOWER SALMON



ISSUE

This is a collaborative project designed as a manipulative experiment that builds on and improves previous Test and Remove (T&R) *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi) clearance efforts. We are using adaptive methods to identify the least invasive, most efficient approaches to clearing Movi from six free-ranging bighorn sheep populations in Idaho (Lower Salmon and Lower Panther Main Salmon PMUs), Oregon (Lookout, Burnt River and Lostine), and Washington (Yakima). These six focal populations represent a range of health and demographic histories (size, native vs reintroduced, etc.), patterns of space use, infection, and accessibility. This is an ongoing project, and this would be the third year of capture in the Lower Salmon Population Management Unit (PMU).

The first T&R experiments aimed to test every adult female, or every adult of both sexes in free-ranging bighorn sheep populations to identify and remove chronic Movi carriers as a proof of concept. The approach this time is to strategically reduce infection pressure, as opposed to testing every animal. This change is based on experience gained from T&R in Hells Canyon. By taking advantage of knowledge about the space use, connectivity, and Movi shedding duration and prevalence within each population to characterize transmission dynamics and identify Movi “hot spots” we hope we can stop the chain of transmission and that Movi will be cleared from the population through a combination of selective removals and natural attrition.

The Lower Salmon PMU is a priority for management due to its potential connectivity to the North Hells Canyon

PMU. There are bighorns from both areas (genetic analysis) moving to habitat between the PMUs. We are concerned that the Lower Salmon bighorn sheep could re-infect Hells Canyon. The Lower Salmon bighorn sheep is also a native population with significant value to the state and species as a whole.

METHODS

After the initial years of testing, we will be focusing on those subgroups that have been identified as having the greatest prevalence of Movi shedding. Individuals that are positive will be retested the next year to distinguish chronic from intermittent carriers. Testing will occur over at least three years and removals will occur in years two and/or three following positive tests over two years. If necessary, we will extend the project as conditions dictate. This will be year 3 of capture and testing in the Lower Salmon PMU. However, because of issues dealing with wilderness and the use of helicopters to capture bighorn sheep, the total number of sheep captured from jet boats is less than what we had hoped going into year 3. We hope to deploy more collars in this PMU this field season.

BUDGET (IDFG, ID WSE, WSE, Midwest WSE)

- Collars: 20 @ \$1200 = \$24,000 + others = \$33,000
- Helicopter Capture: 25 sheep @ \$1000 = \$25,000
- Jet Boat (ground capture) = \$6,000
- Health Testing: 40 @ \$100 = \$4,000
- Necropsy (testing): \$2,000
- 2022-23 Budget total: \$70,000

Reprinted Courtesy of Idaho
Wild Sheep Foundation

"Mule Deer Hunting in Mexico, January 2023"

By Oscar Carlson

On January 10th, 2023, three of us flew down to Hermosillo, Mexico to meet Roger Gabaldon of Terra Encantada Outfitter guide service. My son, Jason and friend of mine, Alan Bakke, joined me on this hunt.

Normally I have flown into Phoenix, but some reason we were scheduled for Mexico City and then back to Hermosillo. That made it a lot longer trip. We were greeted at the airport by Roger. This time we did not have to check our guns because Roger and Pete provided them for us. Checking guns in and out of the U.S. and Mexico is a real hassle, so that was a big help. Roger's hunting area is within 2 hours of Hermosillo, so we still got there in the daylight and were able to settle in and meet our drivers and guides. For those that have not been down hunting in Mexico, there are 3 methods of hunting. The first one is to start walking until you run across fresh tracks and follow them. The second method is to post on the ground or into

a high blind. The third one is to use high racks on the back of pick-ups.

On the second day of our hunt, Jason was able to take a beautiful, large, and symmetrical desert mule deer (picture attached) from a ground blind. The rest of his hunt, he spent time



trying to take a Coues deer. Alan and I saw a few does and I only saw a fleeting glance of one side of a buck rack through the grass as he was passing through. Neither one of us got a crack

at a muley or a coues.

For a little background on Roger and his outfit, Roger, years ago exhibited at our Midwest Chapter fund-raiser for several years. That's where I got to know him and his family. His wife, Teresa, and two sons, Jude and Pete, have been involved

in the operation for a long time. In addition to leasing ranches from Mexican landowners, his main business is hunting Oryx in New Mexico. Both Roger and Pete have been acting as my guides over the years. I know of a number of people from our Midwest Chapter that have hunted with Roger and consider him a friend of the Midwest Chapter. Roger's health has been failing for some time and I wanted to hunt with him one more time before either of us would be unable to hunt together. Hopefully, Roger

will be able to continue for a while. I know he's thinking of turning the business over to Pete for the Mexican hunts and possibly, both Pete and Jude, for the Oryx hunts.

Any questions, you are welcome to give me a call.

"New Zealand"

By Joe Perrella

Hunting in New Zealand should be on every big game hunter's wish list. The scenery in every direction is breathtaking. The quality of animals is spectacular. A hunting paradise. We got a taste of everything on this trip from big mountain hunting for tahr and chamois to hunting rolling hills for red stag and fallow deer. We spent a morning bird hunting next to the ocean, and an evening hunting wallaby. Non-stop excitement.

I did this hunt with Gary Herbert's New Zealand Hunting. If you have ever looked in to hunting in NZ you've heard of Gary Herbert. He's the best there is and provides an experience you won't find anywhere else. Food & lodging are first class all the way. Daily laundry service, 3 fabulous meals per day, private sleeping quarters with bathroom, grand

dining room, stocked bar, knowledgeable hard working guides, and a lodge staff that never stopped working. Gary also does all the trophy prep & packing in-house so he gets your animals

The hunt itself was booked through Cabelas Signature Outdoor Adventures. Adam Bender is the main man at Cabelas SOA and he accompanied us on this trip along with his photographer. This isn't a deal where you book the hunt and you're on your own. Adam is with the group the entire time. Him and his staff handle every detail and make sure all of your expectations are met. All you need to do is be at the pickup spot to go to camp. 68% of their business is

shipped home within a couple months. If you ever go to NZ, don't even bother with anybody else. There's the New Zealand hunting experience and then there's the Gary Herbert experience. Gary is the best there is.

repeat customers which is a testament to the great work they do. They do a great job vetting the outfitters and if you go on one of their hunts, you are going to be hunting with the best of the best.

After shooting the guns the first day we were heading out right away. The weather was perfect and we needed to take advantage of it. My first hunt was for Himalayan Tahr. They are native to the central Himalayan



regions of India & Nepal and were introduced in New Zealand in 1904 to attract international hunters. We used a helicopter to take us from camp to a spot about halfway up the mountain. We spotted a nice bull tahr on the skyline and hiked up to get into position to shoot. Day 1 was a success.

Day 2 was more mountain hunting. This time for chamois. Chamois are smaller animals weighing between 60-90 pounds with short hooked horns. They are found throughout the mountains of Europe and the chamois found in New Zealand were a gift from the emperor of Austria in 1907 in exchange for rare birds & lizards. Again we used the helicopter to fly above the vast mountain areas looking for chamois. In addition to looking for a mature specimen worthy of hunting, you also need to make sure there's enough flat ground within shooting distance so the chopper can drop you off. And most importantly you need to make sure you can retrieve the downed animal one you squeeze the trigger. The helicopter gave us the opportunity to cover more ground and some of these animals live in areas where you'd never be able to reach on foot. Day 2 was a success. 2 animals down.

Next we now had our eyes on Red Stag Deer. With the quality & quantity of game in the area we knew success wasn't going to be an issue. We spent an evening glassing and getting an idea for what

we wanted. It is hard to judge these animals because of the configuration of their antlers. You have number & length of points, mass, width, height, palmation, drop tines, etc.... No two stag look alike. Red stag have the largest antlers in the world in relation to their body size. They are found mainly in Europe and Asia. They were introduced into New Zealand in the late 1800s from the British stock. After a half day of glassing an area that looks like it came directly from the Lord of the Rings, we were able to get our hands on a beautiful deer with huge antlers. I can't imagine how strong their necks are to carry around so much weight.

Fallow deer weren't in my original plan but who can turn down this opportunity when you're surrounded my so many awesome creatures. Fallow deer are native to the Mediterranean region of Europe and Asia and have been introduced to every inhabited continent. These particular deer were brought over from England & Scotland in the late 1800s. After roaming the hilly countryside with my guide Will, we spotted the perfect animal across the valley from the peak we were glassing from. We got as close as we could and I was able to get a 280 yard shot across the valley. The deer was down and it was time to hike up and get our hands on him. These deer have hair color ranging from white, gray, tan, to dark brown. Some have spots.

Plenty of decisions to make before going after one.

The last day and a half were a complete surprise and definitely a time I'll never forgot. We were able to spend some time on a flooded field next to the ocean hunting Black Swan. These birds are huge and we had a great time hunting them. We finished off this short side trip with nighttime hunting for Wallaby using side by sides and a spotlight. They don't freeze at the light so you need to be quick. Wallaby look like small kangaroos and are considered a nuisance. They are destructive to the environment and with no predators they grow in large numbers.

If I had to recommend a hunt to somebody looking to experience a bit of everything it would be this one. One of my favorites. I'd be shocked if they didn't come away being addicted to this passion of ours. From the best accommodations, highest quality of game, highest level of service, and non stop fun.. this hunt will definitely send you home with an addiction.



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Whiskey Basin Core Native Herd

By: Katie Cheesbrough, Executive Director of
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation

The Whiskey Mountain Bighorn sheep (WMBS) herd encompasses the northern Wind River Mountain Range in west-central Wyoming. The herd has been an important component in bighorn sheep management for Wyoming and other western states for many decades. Recognized for years as the largest congregation of wintering bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) in the country, the herd has been a management focus for the Wyoming Game & Fish Department (WGFD), federal land management agencies, and non-government conservation groups for over half a century.

From 1949 through 1995 over 1,900 bighorn sheep were captured and moved from the WMBS herd to establish new bighorn sheep herds or augment existing herds throughout the West. At its peak, the herd provided substantial recreational opportunities for hunters and photographers. Following a large, all-age die-off caused by pneumonia during the winter of 1990/1991, the bighorn sheep herd has

consistently experienced low lamb production leading to continued population decline. Observations of the bighorn sheep herd over the past 28 years also reveal the persistence of bighorn sheep (lambs and adults) exhibiting nasal discharge, coughing, parasites, viral infections, and low body mass. All of these symptoms indicate bighorn sheep in the herd are generally unhealthy, likely subject to environmental stress-ors, and continually exposed to contagious or transmissible pathogens and parasites.

It is unknown how many bighorn sheep inhabited the northern Wind River Mountains prior to European settlement. Early explorers noted mountain sheep were easily found throughout the Wind River Range. It is known that increased domestic livestock grazing in the late 1880s through the early 1900s had a dramatic impact on wild sheep populations throughout the West. In particular domestic sheep grazing contributed to large-scale die-offs of bighorn sheep

due to transmission of bacterial pathogens. By 1940, Honess and Frost (1942) estimated there were approximately 500 bighorn sheep in the Wind River Mountains. By the mid-1950s, WGFD acknowledged the importance of maintaining crucial bighorn sheep winter ranges on and adjacent to Whiskey Mountain for bighorn sheep persistence in the Wind River Mountains.

It appears bighorn sheep numbers increased substantially during this from the 1940s-1970s. And held steady from 1958-1971 as indicated by classification data. However, WGFD personnel noted a significant decline in lamb/ewe ratios in the early 1970s which led to a study indicating poor herd health that may have been due to inadequate forage, overpopulation, and exposure to disease. Researchers and managers had concerns that any additional environmental stress on this herd could easily result in a catastrophic disease outbreak. This prediction came true during the winter of 1990/1991, with a disease outbreak resulting in significant

mortality across all age classes with the highest mortalities seen in lambs and continued low lamb recruitment.

Documented bighorn sheep pneumonia-related die-offs typically show a pattern of low lamb recruitment for approximately 3-5 years following the disease outbreak. After this period, recruitment often increases gradually and populations recover and begin to grow. In contrast, the WMBS herd has continued to decline due to poor lamb recruitment over the past 30 years.

The WMBS Herd's inability to recover from the die-off in the 90s resulted in further studies which continued to find poor bighorn sheep health attributed to nutritional deficiencies despite decreased populations and underutilization of forage. Capture studies done from 2015-2018 indicate that adult bighorn sheep maintain body condition throughout winter better than bighorn sheep in the nearby Jackson and Cody herds (Monteith 2017), suggesting that the WMBS herd may be subject to some unknown nutritional stress on their summer range.

Compounding the nutritional issues identified in this herd is the persistence of bacteria and other pathogens. Multiple species of bacteria related to pneumonia in bighorn sheep have been consistently identified in the population during testing over the years. Recently, the presence of sinus tumors has been observed in this population as well. Other diseases and parasites such as contagious echthyma (ORF) and lung worms are also known to be present. At this point, managers do not know if poor bighorn sheep health in the WMBS herd is strictly due to pathogens and parasites or if the persistence of pathogens and parasites is the result of nutritional stress. Most recently, increased



Photo Courtesy of Mark Gocke.

wolf activity in and around Whiskey Mountain appears to have altered the behavior and distribution of bighorn sheep on winter range.

Over the past 30 years, WGFD has taken a number of management actions aimed at improving bighorn sheep health and spurring population growth in this herd. Actions have included forage enhancement on winter range including prescribed burns and fertilization, de-worming bighorn sheep, removing clinically ill bighorn sheep with symptoms of pneumonia, salt and mineral supplementation, and predator control. None of these actions have had any noticeable, positive impact on the population.

Regardless of the reasons for the continued decline of the WMBS herd, it now appears the population size is less than what it was in the 1940s at approximately 334 bighorn sheep. The management challenges WMBS herd are complex and require novel solutions. In 2019 the WGFD engaged the public in a collaborative process to fully assess the situation in the WMBS herd and come up with a management plan to address the challenges facing this herd. The plan has been completed and the WGFD

continues to work with partners like the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation to ensure the future of this very important core native herd.

It has been proposed that the persistence of pneumonia in chronically infected bighorn sheep herds may be attributed to individual ewes that consistently harbor the pathogens and continually reinfect others, especially lambs. These ewes have been termed "chronic carriers" and their removal is associated with a fade out of pathogen presence within the herd and subsequent herd growth. Researchers have created a "test and remove" strategy that requires several rounds of disease testing, determining the chronic carriers, removal of the chronic carriers from the population and continued disease monitoring within the population.

After several western states have seen success utilizing the test and remove method, the WGFD has proposed implementation and evaluation of this strategy in the Red Creek portion of the WMBS herd. In cooperation with Kevin Monteith at the University of Wyoming, this management strategy will be rigorously assessed to determine its effectiveness.



Photo Courtesy of Steve Kilpatrick.

North Dakota Bighorn Sheep Population Hits Record High Despite Harsh Winter

*North Dakota's bighorn numbers are surprisingly healthy
even though lamb survival rates were lower than usual*

By Katie Hill, staff writer for Outdoor Life

Bighorn sheep were extirpated from North Dakota in the early 1900s. Now, their reintroduced population surges toward 500 individuals.

North Dakota's resident bighorn sheep population broke several records during the 2022 population counts. For the third year in a row, the northern badlands population reached an all-time high of 347 sheep, which breaks down to 96 rams, 206 ewes, and 45 lambs. (This doesn't include the sheep in Theodore Roosevelt National Park or the sheep that live on the Fort Berthold Reservation.) Strangely, the survival rate among winter lambs also broke a record, falling to an all-time low of 54 percent.

"We were encouraged to see the count of adult rams down just slightly from last year, and adult ewes were at record numbers," NDGF big game biologist Brett Wiedmann said in a press release this spring. "Unfortunately, following a record summer count of lambs, winter survival was ... the lowest level on record and well below the long-term average. The lamb recruitment rate was also near a record low. Nearly six months of harsh winter conditions was the likely cause of poor winter survival of lambs."

There are two ways of looking at these dismal lamb numbers. On one hand, the high winter mortality is concerning. Fewer lambs will mean fewer mature adults reproducing in a few years. On the other, the numbers remain steady. Even without a normal year of lamb production, the population still beat out the 2021 count of 335 sheep and rose above the five-



year average by 15 percent.

Poor lamb survival and recruitment isn't the only drag on North Dakota's overall sheep population. The southern badlands population, which lives south of Interstate 94, remains at its all-time low since the first sheep were introduced there in 1966. Pneumonia wiped out all but 20 sheep in the region in 1997. That population slowly climbed back to 80 sheep before another outbreak hit, and it's hovered around 20 individuals ever since.

While the 40 additional sheep that call Theodore Roosevelt National Park home don't contribute to the huntable population in the state, they do bolster its total bighorn numbers. Similarly, the Fort Berthold Reservation herd

has thrived since 30 sheep were translocated from the Rocky Boy's Reservation in eastern Montana and released in January 2020. The Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, also known as the Three Affiliated Tribes, manage this population through their fish and wildlife division.

Bighorn sheep were extirpated from North Dakota by the early 1900s. Today, North Dakota is home to an estimated 470 wild sheep, all from reintroduction efforts that began in 1956 and are ongoing. Over a century later, all five hunters who received tags in 2022 successfully harvested rams, and rules for a potential 2023 hunt will be set by Sept. 1.

North Dakota Wild Sheep Update

By: Brett Wiedmann, North Dakota Big Game Management Biologist



When the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) introduced bighorn sheep from the Breaks of Montana in 2006 and 2007, the belief was that the large-bodied Breaks bighorns were very similar to the native population that had been extirpated from the state by the early 1900s.

Almost 20 years later, as North Dakota achieved its third consecutive record count of bighorn sheep, those assumptions back in 2006 have proven true. The descendants of the original translocated Breaks bighorn sheep continue to endure North Dakota's severe winters just fine, and high adult survival coupled with high rates of lamb



recruitment have resulted in robust population growth.

A bonus to hunters has been a marked increase in the size of rams harvested in North Dakota. Rams in the 160s were typically the largest the state produced 20 years ago. Today, however, most hunters harvest rams in the 170s or larger. In fact, North Dakota has produced five state record rams in the last seven years and there are plenty of contenders coming up that could challenge the current record.



Bighorn sheep reintroduced onto the Fort Berthold Reservation near Lake Sakakawea from Montana in 2020 are doing equally well. The population has already nearly tripled, and the rams subsequently born there have put on exceptional horn growth. I expect a few Mega Rams to be harvested from that population once hunting commences in 2026.

NDGF will set the number of hunting licenses on September 1 after completion of the summer population survey. Whether a new state record is harvested remains to be seen, but all lucky hunters will have an opportunity to take a great ram.



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For youth under 18 years of age. All new Youth Annual Members will receive all the same benefits as our regular Annual Members.

"FNAWS"

By Sean Keck

You may want to turn the page to the next article if you are looking for a regular hunt story. This is a story of what a Midwest whitetail deer hunter learned over the course of hunting a FNAWS: a Dall's sheep, a Stone's sheep, a Rocky Mountain Bighorn, and a Desert Bighorn. Be in sheep shape, maximize your shooting capabilities, use the lightest gear you can afford, use a backpack that carries 75+ pounds well, wear a pair of good boots, wear clothes appropriate for the weather conditions on your hunt, etc. That could be the 'CliffNotes' version that we all read or hear about...they are all true, but not what we really learn. Let us peel back the layers to see how sheep hunting can change us as hunters, as people.

August 2015, Brooks Range AK 'The Cranker' Dall's sheep

"I think you are the type of guy that could really get into sheep hunting, but right now your back needs to get better so we can go after that ram." Cabot Pitts

When you are on the side of a mountain for 12 days and sitting in camp because your back 'went out' on day one, you talk with your guide about everything: family, career, hobbies, goals... maybe too much! In all that conversation and time, there is much contemplation of all aspects of life. Are your priorities straight? What are your real

goals in life? What changes do you need to make?

After three days of nursing the lower back, thinking my first sheep hunt was becoming an expensive camping trip, Cabot and I went after that ram. We swam across a river, hiked to the end of a rainbow, and witnessed a few miracles to get our cranker of a ram!

When one brings an 11lbs sleeping bag on a sheep hunt, you can imagine there was an epiphany every day for me. I had to rethink everything about my gear and then some. I didn't realize what a change in priorities it was going to make in me. What are your real goals in life? I



Cabot Pitts

had my answer after that first sheep hunt.

August 2018, Spatsizi 'Land of the Red Goat' BC Stone's sheep

"...it is in the passions that people achieve their highest potential of being human." James Swan

After returning from Alaska, I became a member of the Wild Sheep Foundation and attended the 2016, Sheep Show®. Attending my first Sheep Show® was an adventure itself; the labyrinth of outfitters, the auctions, the banquets, the chance of going on another sheep hunt!

After numerous conversations and a lot of apprehension, check # 136

was written on June 27, 2016, as down payment for a Stone's sheep hunt in August 2018. I felt I was out of my league on this hunt. Over the next two years, I would meet, befriend, and lean on other hunters who have 'been there, done that' for guidance to prepare for this amazing adventure.

I met Kevin Muir at the 2018, Sheep Show® Grand Finale Banquet. Since then, we have met in Wyoming for prairie dog control, we just hunted Coues deer in AZ, and we regularly stay in touch about hunting trips and

the shooting sports. Kevin is good at imparting wisdom

to us younger types. One of his best comments is, "There is nothing easy about sheep hunting". Everything about a sheep hunt is a challenge: paying for the hunt, learning to travel with hunting gear, time away from family; not just the physical aspect.

Being an engineer, one can imagine I like things just so, and I wasn't receiving satisfactory answers on a few questions prior to the Stone's sheep hunt. In a desperate act, I lobbed my questions at the Facebook Sheep Hunting group. My apprehension was eased after Matt DeFrank answered all my questions over a phone call.

Sometimes your scope isn't verified, or your parallax isn't properly adjusted causing us to miss the mark. I've learned the sheep hunting community is tight and those in it can be your best spotters. This is proven by the people you meet reading the wind, giving you corrections, and getting you back on target. Who have been your best spotters? Be sure to reciprocate when it is their turn on the firing line.

September 2020, Montana Rocky Mountain Bighorn 'Unlimited Luck'



Kevin Muir

"For something to happen, the universe must hear it." Conor McGregor

Spring 2020, no trips planned for the fall and there was this thing called Covid. I was thinking, 'Why not go on a backpack trip to Montana carrying a sheep tag and a rifle?'. Who doesn't want to do that?! One can imagine there aren't many sheep hunters in Wisconsin to lean on for advice. So, I asked the universe; well actually the Facebook Sheep Hunting group again, "Any suggestions for someone thinking about hunting the Unlimited units?". Surprisingly there were responses, but one came thru direct message. A few messages back and forth led Mike Bouton, and I, to a range day sighting in rifles, which led to hunting elusive rams in an Unlimited Unit in September 2020. Have I mentioned sheep hunters are a tight group willing to help each other?

About 15 miles into it, I sent my wife a one-word message, "BRUTAL". Hunting the Unlimited units is no joke. They are tough, physically and mentally. That was the most difficult thing I have done since Marine Corps boot



Mike Bouton

camp. A lingering question I kept having after the Dall's and Stone's sheep hunts was, "Am I really a sheep hunter or just a guy that has been on a couple sheep hunts?". After this hunt, I knew the answer. After putting in the effort, Mike and I hiked out with our Unlimited rams. Glad it was with Mike. Couldn't have done it without him.

February 2022, Isla del Carmen 'Grandpa' Desert Bighorn

"Don't start", is the advice Clay Lancaster gave in episode three of the Talk is Sheep podcast. I agree,



Matt DeFrank

one may find themselves in this predicament if you start hunting sheep.

Sheep Show® 2019, it was good to catch up with old friends and hear about recent adventures. There is something about being at the show that motivates you to go on an adventure. There are different paths to take for a desert bighorn hunt. Do you book with an outfitter? Do you play your hand and apply for a draw? Do you bid on an auction tag? After multiple conversations with Sergio Jimenez, making the decision to book the FNAWS hunt on Carmen Island with Mexico Hunts made perfect sense for me. A sheep hunt can be that once in a lifetime adventure for many. If I was going to be fortunate enough to hunt a desert bighorn, who would I want to do it with? Family, of course!

Carmen Island is not only a desert bighorn conservation success story, but one in a chain of islands that are a national marine park. The area is full of wildlife from blue whales to the blue footed booby. My family was able to take a break from the Wisconsin winter and enjoy walks on the beach, mountain biking, or simply relaxing while I was out chasing rams. Curiosity led me to wonder whose footsteps I followed on this adventure. I noticed a few notable names within the island guest register such as Renee Snider, Joshua Spies, Tom Foss, and J. Alain Smith. All have provided an example for us to follow in their contributions to conservation.

On the third afternoon of our hunt, we found 'Grandpa'. Gaspar, Abundis, Mata and I were able to execute the plan and take the FNAWS ram! The chipped horn warrior was estimated to be twelve

years old. The best part was having my family there for this special achievement in my little world. The remaining days on the island I was able to focus on the most important priority, my family.

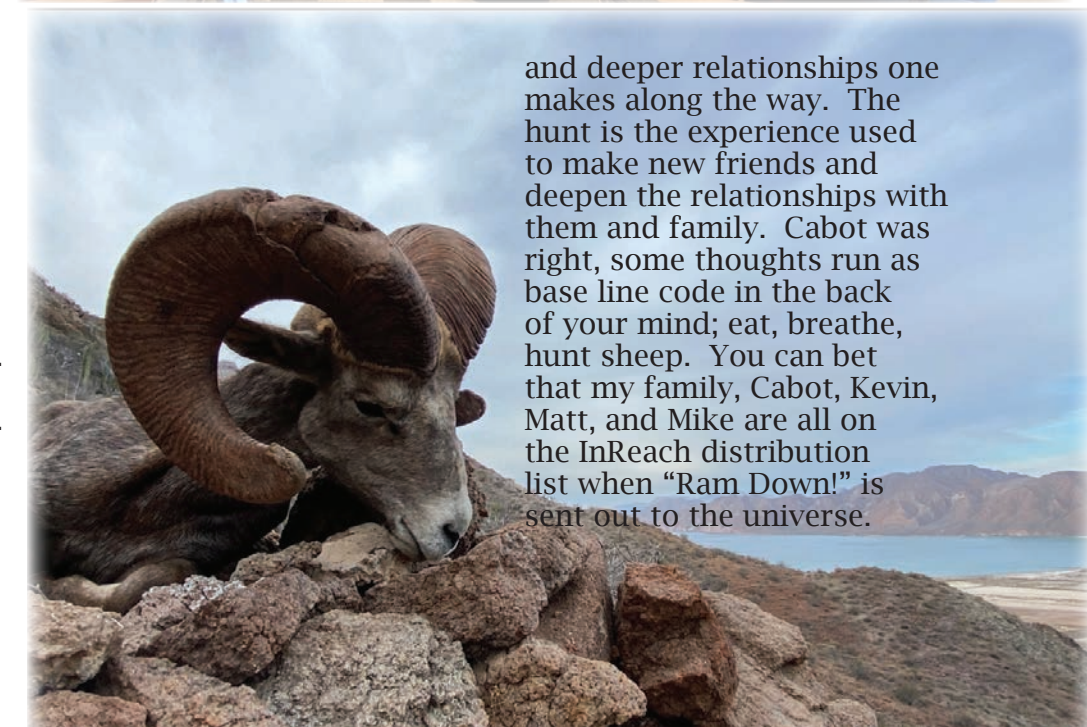
The FNAWS

"I am a collector of experiences, not animals." J. Alain Smith

I have learned much over the last seven years hunting sheep from Alaska to Mexico. I learned how to travel to other countries with hunting tools. I have attended a shooting school to freshen up what I learned in the Marines. I no longer use an 11 pound sleeping bag. The most meaningful thing I have learned is what is the real FNAWS. It is the friendships



The Keck Family



and deeper relationships one makes along the way. The hunt is the experience used to make new friends and deepen the relationships with them and family. Cabot was right, some thoughts run as base line code in the back of your mind; eat, breathe, hunt sheep. You can bet that my family, Cabot, Kevin, Matt, and Mike are all on the InReach distribution list when "Ram Down!" is sent out to the universe.

“Hoosier Hysteria”

By Julie Chapman, WSF Board of Directors

Like most sheep hunters, I had been training hard for months in eager anticipation for my bucket list Wyoming bighorn sheep hunt. With excitement, the day finally arrived and I reluctantly headed for the airport to fly from Indiana to Cody. I say reluctantly only because I had to leave my two teenagers to manage their Dad or perhaps he manage them! I held little hope that, while away, all of our kid's activities and schedules would be completed.

Actually, I lowered my expectations to 'all will be well if the house doesn't burn down and everyone is alive and not in jail before I get home'. I boarded the plane and headed to Cody to meet up with renown videographer and friend, Jordan Budd, of Running Water Media to capture and record my bighorn sheep hunt. After all, the golden rule in our competitive family is, "if you don't document the events, then it really never happened".

Jordan and I met up with guide and owner, Josh Martoglio, of Shoshone Lodge Outfitters at the local hotel. After meeting with his team of wranglers, we jumped in his truck full of gear and pulling a trailer full of horses headed off to the trail head. After a final check of gear, food, license, and everything else we could fit into our packs, we gave them all a final weigh and appropriately packed the horses. The excitement that had been building started when we saddled up and the hunt actually started. The anticipation of a successful and epic hunt fueled the adrenalin

rush that was aided by the smell of sweat stained saddle leather, the old saddle blankets full of history, and even the horse itself. The simple beauty of the horses as they clicked and clacked on the rocks along the trail we squeezed through groves of cottonwoods was tranquil music to my ears. As we continued onward we travel through a large stand of pines and the crisp clean air, accompanied by mountain pine scent, was so wonderfully



invigorating. As no words were spoken, I wondered if I was the only person in the group that was noticing the splendor of the Shoshone National Forest. Just as I thought it couldn't get any better, the string of horses descended down through one of the many streams of ice-cold water trickling across the rocks. My keen awareness of the sounds and beauty all around me had my heart skipping a beat or two. Again, I sat high on my horse and pondered if everyone else was accustomed to this brilliant landscape and could I be the only one not taking it for granted?

I have been fortunate to successfully harvest big game and sheep in several beautiful places such as Idaho, British Columbia, Mexico, the Yukon to name a few, but this was my first hunt in Wyoming. The stories I've had the pleasure of reading or hearing about the magnificent hunting in Wyoming was all becoming a reality. The breathtaking landscape of the western mountains to a "flatlander" from the Midwest can be awe

inspiring. I feel that those that live in the shadows of these mountains often take the beauty for granted just as a Midwesterner do the rolling hills filled with green corn, grasses, and bean fields.

Did I mention I was from Indiana—oh yes, a Hoosier. What the heck is a "Hoosier" you may ask. The answer is "I don't know" but I would like to try to explain "Hoosier Hysteria"--- perhaps a little later.

After several hours of riding trail, we made it to one of Josh's lavish wall tent base camps. As the opening day for Wyoming bighorn sheep was two days away, the simple plan was to scout the next day and try and locate a shooter ram. The weather was perfect, cool but not freezing and no snow or sleet. That evening, like every hunter that has shared a hunting camp, we sat motionless in the dark for hours, mesmerized by the crackling fire as it spit embers skyward. Life long friendships are most often made sitting around a warm fire and this was no different. As the hours

flew by, story after story was told and the anticipation of the next day began to grow higher. While tucked into my warm sleeping bag I began to count my blessings. I was serenaded that evening with the sounds of bull elk bugling back and forth. I gave it my best effort to relax and try to fall asleep. But, like a five year old awaiting Santa in the morning, sleep just wouldn't come. The realization that I was finally hunting sheep in Wyoming took my excitement to new levels that left me awake most of the night.

Morning coffee behind us, we loaded up and set out for a day of glassing. Our view for most of the morning was compromised by the smoke from the surrounding states forest fires. As we made our way from one glassing point to another the nervous excitement began to fade. After a short nap basking in the sun, I went off by myself and tucked into a small pine tree to begin glassing yet again. I sat quietly with my binos positioned perfectly, when all of a sudden I heard a strange noise headed directly towards me from the valley below. As I pulled away from my binos, my eyes locked with a large bull elk who stopped on a dime about 7 yards from me. I'm not sure who was startled the most at this point but he definitely ran across the mountain landscape a lot faster than I could. After all this commotion we decided to move across the mountain to look into a different valley. The repositioning paid off as we found a nice band of rams. Several hours later we had all agreed that this was "the ram" and we would watch him till bed. As the day was coming to a close, we hustled back to camp to get a few hours of rest and pack for the morning hunt.

The day had finally arrived. I had been dreaming of hunting sheep in Wyoming for several years. Wyoming has great numbers of bighorn sheep and you never know what kind of sheep you will turn up, that's what makes this place so special. I remember my teeth

chattering that morning while we were riding in the dark, not from being cold but from getting so worked up and nervous about the day ahead. That all passed when it was go time. We tied up the horses, loaded our packs, and headed up the mountains. We had planned on a long day of hiking but as we crested the first mountain ridge, Josh quickly jumped down and turned to whisper "ram". We all hurried into position but this turned out to be the first of many false alarms. The rams had ran down the mountain side, crossed the creek, and was bedded half way up the other side to stay out of the wind.

After an intense 45 minute stare down, we found an opportunity to move a little lower on our side of the mountain to try and put us directly across from the rams. We all played a great game of cat and mouse for well over 6 hours. As one of the rams would stand to stretch we would run across the side of the mountain to a new position, only to run back to the original spot when they would step back to the right. This repositioning went on and on until they finally decided to break from the cover of the trees. The patience and perseverance was rewarded when he separated from others allowing me to make a clean and ethical shot from around 300 yards. And just like that, Wyoming Ram down!

The elation and adrenaline rush is overwhelming and can't be described. The feeling of accomplishment you have when that majestic ram is loaded into your pack and you are carrying it off the mountain one painful step at a time. Every sense is heightened to an almost euphoric state. This too, I have felt before with Hoosier Hysteria. As an Indiana high school basketball player prior to class basketball we would find ourselves packing gyms of 7,000 fans. Towns literally shutting down to go watch us play, the smell of popcorn as you walk into a gym, fans screaming from tip off to buzzer, the locker room walls shaking as fans were standing and stomping for us to take the floor. If you took "March Madness", the World Series and the Super Bowl and put the excitement from those on steroids with every town and every rabid basketball fan in the entire state you would be getting close to describing Hoosier Hysteria. And this is exactly how I felt coming off that mountain as a successful sheep hunter. The wonders of mother nature in the beautiful Shoshone National Forest left me speechless and hard to find the words to describe its magnitude. I try desperately to be a good person, a good Christian, mother, wife, and a good hunter but I don't know what I have done in my life to earn such a blessing as this hunt.



“The Big Sexy”

By Hank Raats

In my younger years growing up in Alberta, Canada, I hunted Rocky Mountain sheep every opportunity I had. Although I never did get one, I always dreamed of killing a big Rocky. My Grand Slam quest started in 2018 when I killed a Dall sheep in NWT with my son. That is when I figured I better get after it!

Fast forward to 2021 when I acquired a Rocky tag in Oregon. My son, Taylor, reached out to Sheep Mountain Outfitters about guiding the hunt and what they realistically thought we could hunt and kill. The anticipation set in as the hunt date got closer. We had planned a scouting trip about three weeks before the opener, but we had to cancel because of all the fires in the mountains. Talk about being worried! Would I even be able to hunt on August 1st because of the smoke?

Sheep Mountain Outfitters' Dan and Todd kept sending Taylor and me pictures of rams they were finding. On one beautiful morning, I

received a text with some new pictures. They had found a ram which they called “Big Sexy.” My heart exploded! I instantly fell in love with him. Every angle was something so special. Mass, length, flared out – he had it all.

Taylor and I flew out to

arrived on another flight.

We quickly jumped in a little prop plane and flew over the Snake River country. Talk about a nail biter! The canyons were huge. They were rocky, and cliffs were everywhere. I was getting nervous. Once we arrived at camp, everything began to set in. The scenery was breathtaking. There were over 10 guides with Sheep Mountain Outfitters to help out on this hunt. The morning before opening day, we made a plan. Four of us were going to hike into the area, and two other guides were going to horseback in another way. It took most of the day to get to spike camp where we met the other two guides and horses. We made some dinner and got the tents set up for the night.

Opening morning came, and the hunt was on. We hiked a couple miles to get into position to find Big Sexy. We spent half the morning looking for him but couldn't turn him up. All of a sudden, one of the guides back at base camp over four miles away had found Big Sexy. We relocated and got in position to try and find him. We started hiking downhill off a cliffed out ledge, and I turned to

my right and said, “There he is, Taylor. That's him.” He replied, “There's no way that's him. That's a boulder.”

Big Sexy was 400 yards below, staring right at us. We quickly identified it was him, circled around a little knob, and had a stare down with him for an hour and 15 minutes. Big Sexy would not budge. He knew something was wrong. He had heard us but didn't know exactly what kind of threat we were. At this point, I was sitting with my gun shouldered, waiting for a broadside shot. All Big Sexy had to do was turn to the left and walk out in the open. As luck would have it, Big Sexy turned to the right, took four steps behind a boulder, and bedded down out of sight. We had to relocate around

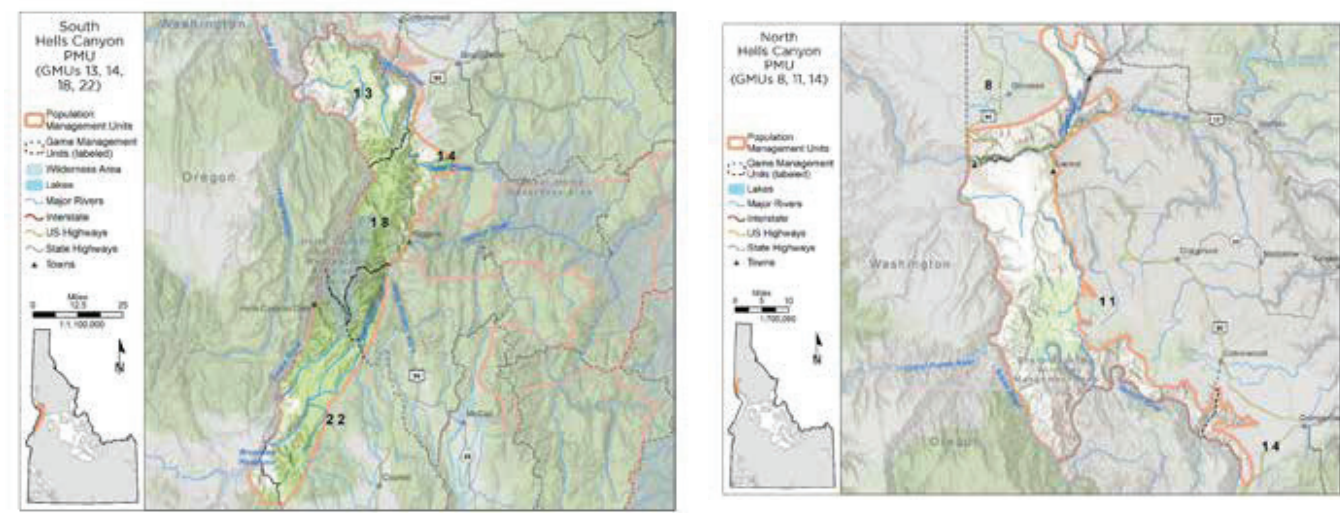
to the left and further down the mountain to get a better view. Taylor ranged Big Sexy at 252 yards and said, “When he turns broadside, let him have it. Breathe. You got this.” Boom! Smack! I sent a 195 grain Berger right into Big Sexy. He turned and ran off to the right, stopped for five seconds on a ridge, and right before he went over the ridge, I put another round into him. Big Sexy went down! I couldn't believe this. I had just killed the sexiest ram I had ever seen in my entire lifetime.

As I made it over to Big Sexy, his horns grew on all of us. I was in shock. His right horn was almost 45” long! This is when I knew we had misjudged him big time. Big Sexy was green scored at 196”. I'm now half a Slam complete, and it feels good.

I can't thank the whole crew at Sheep Mountain Outfitters and my son, Taylor, enough. I couldn't have done it without their help.



HELLS CANYON INITIATIVE



Continue to monitor and maintain a sample of radio-collared bighorn sheep in Hells Canyon to gain better information on population performance, habitat use, and movements post Movi clearance. Thirty-five collars will be deployed on adult females, males, and 8 – 10 month old lambs in GMU’s 11 and 13. Ground and aerial monitoring will be conducted to determine productivity, cause-specific survival, population abundance and composition. This information will be important to help us predict movements and changes to habitat use in healthy, growing populations of bighorn sheep.

This is a collaborative effort involving state wildlife agencies in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, WSF national and chapters, CTUIR and Nez Perce Tribes, BLM, FS, and others.

BUDGET: IDFG, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, WSF national, ID WSE, OR WSE, WA WSE, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and Nez Perce Tribes, BLM, USFS, and others.



Reprinted Courtesy of Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation



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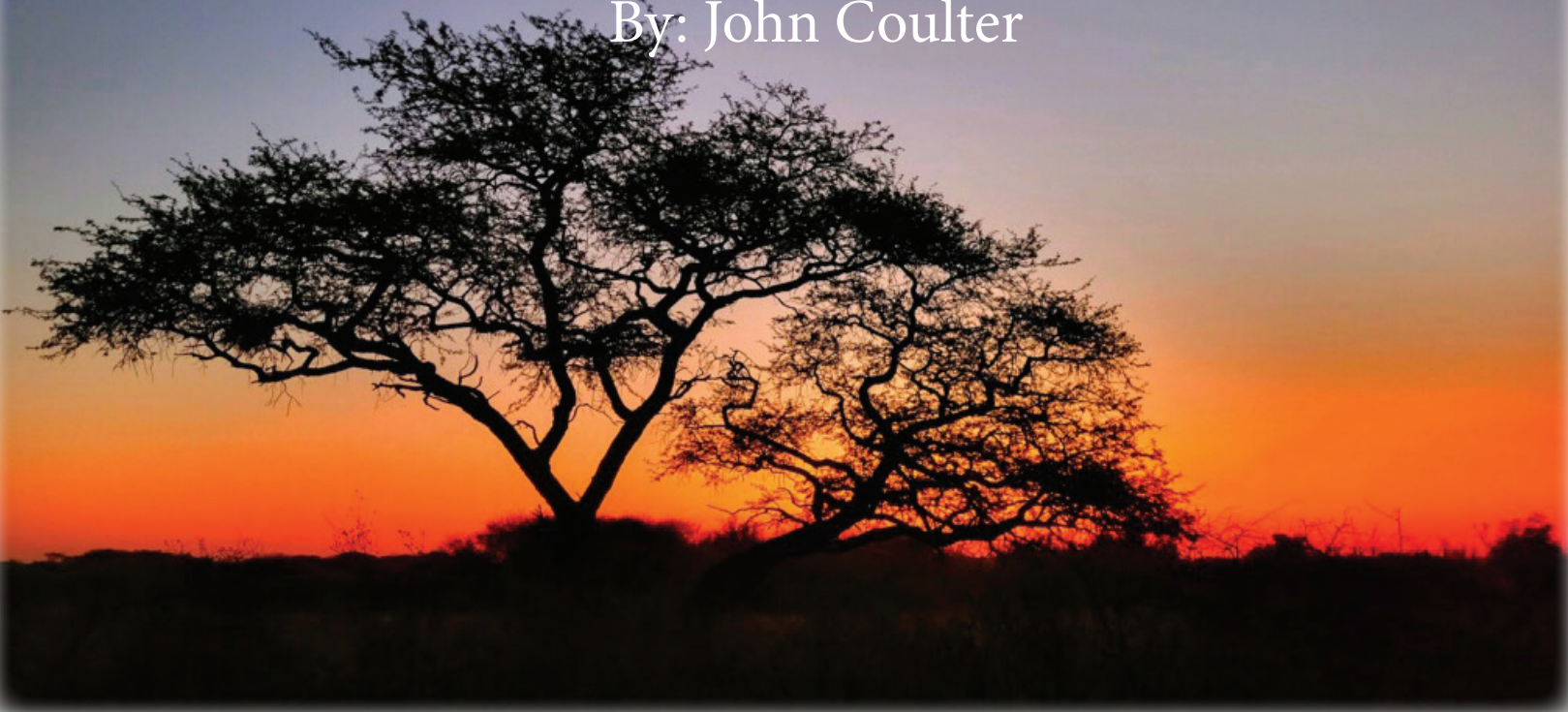
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“South African Hunt”

By: John Coulter



John and Muriel Coulter spent the middle of June on safari in South Africa. They hunted the 60,000 acre Manketti Game Preserve on the southern Botswana border with Quagga Safaris. Recently, Quagga acquired exclusive hunting rights on the Manketti Preserve.

The Coulter's said, it was in the high 30's in the morning, but warmed during the middle of the day. Perfect fall weather - no mosquitos - no snakes! It was cold enough this June to snow in Johannesburg for the first time in 11 years.

The Manketti is so large that all the hunting is spot and stalk or sitting quietly at waterholes. John and Muriel said, Quagga's Lodge and service has to be experienced to really be appreciated. They were so impressed with absolutely everything they are returning to hunt with Quagga June 7th, of 2025, "God Willing."

When the Coulters, who were career teachers, escort people on their first safari, they always encourage them to bring educational supplies to give to the children. The reaction of these kids is worth the grueling 17-hour flight!



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Check out the What's New section each month for information about the latest hunting gear.



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FEATURES:

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Looking to decrease weight and increase your success? Instead of packing both a rangefinder and binocular, how about carrying the only rangefinding binocular to deliver a complete ballistic solution in MOA, MILS, or yards? Gunwerks' optics division, Revic Optics, has done it again with the new Acura laser rangefinding binocular complete with an onboard ballistics solver and environmental sensors to provide everything you need to glass, range, and account for wind, all in one incredible device.

The laser rangefinder and onboard ballistic solver are capable out to 5,000 yards, and your rifle profiles are easily transferred via the free Revic Ops mobile app via Bluetooth. The Acura series binocular features 10x magnification and 42mm objective and boasts a large 321-foot field of view at 1,000 yards. It also features extra low dispersion (ED) glass, chosen for its superior clarity vs. HD.

FEATURES:

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- Dimensions: 5.25" x 2.75" x 5.70"
- Effective Ranging Distance: 10 to 5,000 yards
- Ballistic Output: MOA, MILS, BDC (Yardage Turrets)

MSRP: \$2,695

For more information, go to www.gunwerks.com.



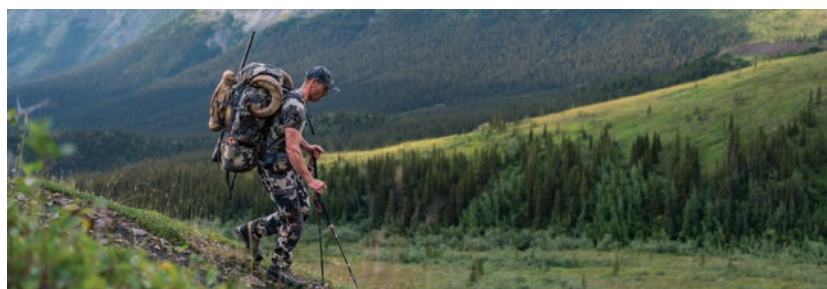
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Steve Powelson (MN)	Joshua Spies (SD)	Lucas Wobig-Iacono (MN)	
Andrew Pratt (TX)	Edward Spies (SD)	Len Wurman (WI)	
Dale Prochnow (WI)	Jim Spies (SD)	Joanne Zacharias (MN)	
Bud Pulsifer (MN)	Randy Splett (MN)	David W Zacharias (MN)	
Glen Pyne (CA)	Paul Spyhalski (MN)	Loretta Zacharias (MN)	

If your name is not on the list or if you have the passing of a Life Member to report.

Please contact Mike Bouton at: (612) 940-1979 or mikebouton midwestwsf @gmail.com

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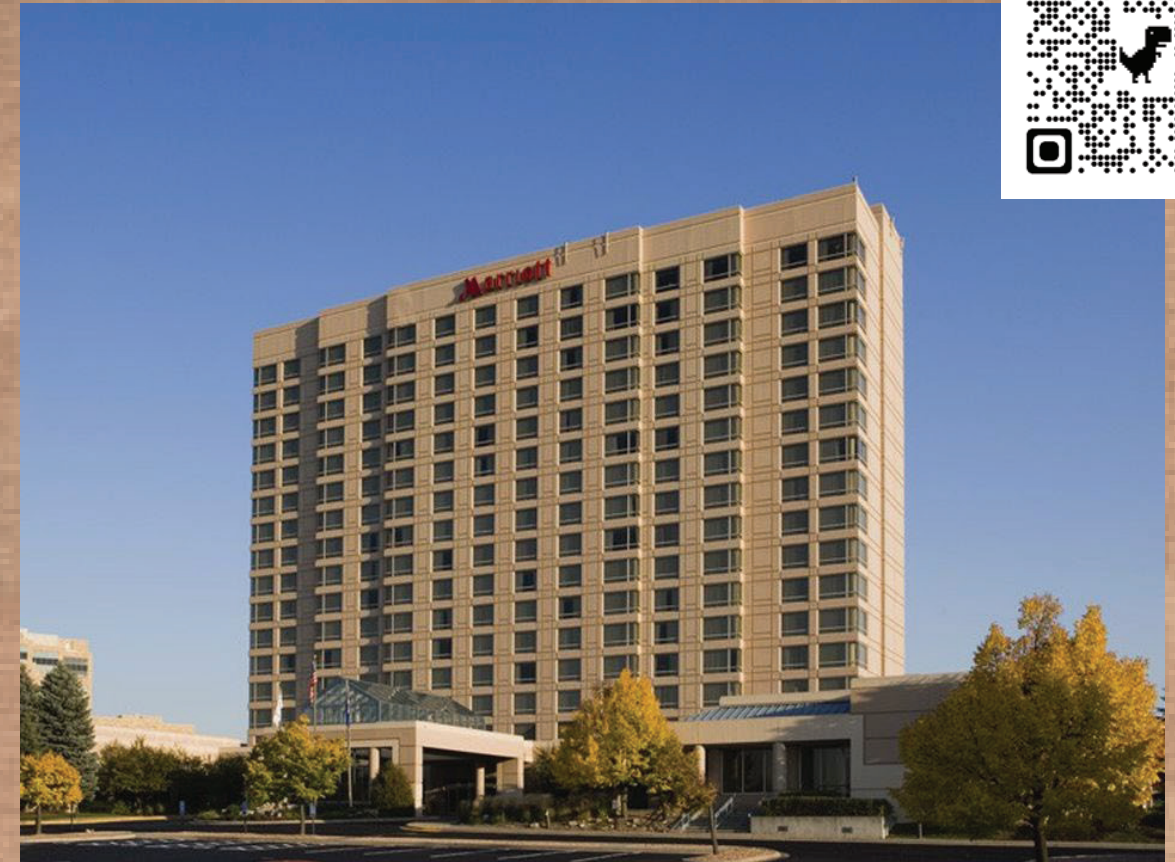
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