A man with a beard and glasses, wearing camouflage clothing, is kneeling in a field of dry, golden grass. He is holding a ram's head with large, curved horns. A compound bow is visible on the ground next to the ram's head. The background shows a line of bare trees under a clear sky.

Read about Matt
Lentsch's HA-12
Archery hunt
Article on page 25

Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation

The **RAMPAGE**

Fall 2018



2016 SUPER TAG BIGHORN SHEEP WINNER JEFF CAMPAGNA

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Hunting Adventure



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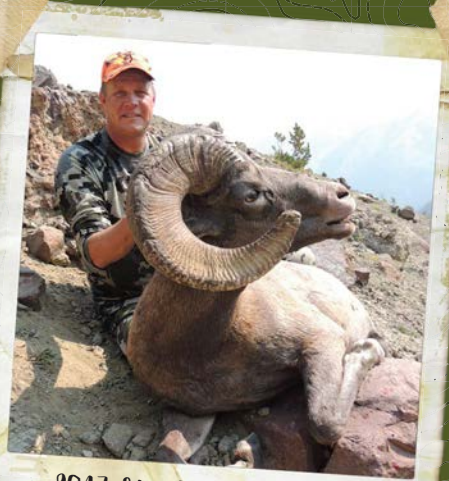
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Fall 2018

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Steve Kilpatrick-Executive
Director

Contact us at:

info@wyomingwildsheep.org
or by phone: (307)213-0998

Wyoming WSF Board & Membership Meetings

Wyoming WSF holds its winter board membership meeting on the first Saturday of December and summer convention/ board/membership meeting the first Saturday in June. Details and locations are listed in the Calendar of Events, and on line at: www.wyomingwildsheep.org. Funding requests for consideration at the winter board meeting are due no later than Nov. 1. Funding requests for consideration at the summer board meeting are due no later than May 1. The Grant-In-Aid request form is available on the Wyoming WSF website: www.wyomingwildsheep.org.
Contact address:
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation
P.O. Box 666
Cody, WY 82414
E-mail: info@wyomingwildsheep.org
www.wyomingwildsheep.org

- 13 “My Wyoming Sheep Safaris” by Freddie Goetz
Read about the changes that LM and Ron Ball award winner, Freddie Goetz has witnessed in our herds during his annual trips to sheep country.
- 21 “A Trip to Wicked River”
Join three Life Members on a dream hunt in British Columbia with our long time supporter, Wicked River Outfitters.
- 25 “My Arm Pit Ram” by Matt Lensch
An archery hunt in HA-12 yields a state record ram, 186!
- 47 “Final Ram” by Eric Johnson
Eric finishes his FNAWS slam with Josh Martoglio in HA-5
- 55 “Mo’s Ram Hunt” by Mo O’Leary
Mo’s dream hunt in HA-7
- 57 “My Wyoming Bighorn” by Kirstie Ennis
A whole bunch of WYO Sheep Hunting diehards team up to make Kirstie’s dream a reality.
- 59 “Hunting, Good Friends and Campfires”
by Marcie Mangold
- 61 “2 1/2 Mile High Ram” Mark Wells
Mark goes to the top of the Wiinds to find his HA-8 Trophy.
-
- 65 “Worth the Wait” by Darren Rhea
After 28 years of waiting, Darren hunts the Winds

Address Changes

Become a member to receive your own copy of the RamPage. Dues are \$25 per year or \$500 for a Life Membership. Subscribe at: <https://www.wyomingwildsheep.org/store.aspx>

Please send address changes to: info@wyomingwildsheep.org or by phone at (307) 213-0998

Advertising Rates

Full-Page \$250
1/2-Page \$150
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1/8-Page \$50

Donations netting WY-WSF >\$500 entitle donor to a free 1/4-page ad in the next 2 issues of The Rampage. Ads must be received in camera ready format by 09/25 & 3/5!!

2018-2019 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 30-Dec 1, 2018
Winter Meeting
Lander, WY

February 7-9, 2019
WSF Banquet/Convention
Reno, NV

May 17-18, 2019
WSF Chapter & Affiliates Summit
Las Vegas, NV

May 31-June 1, 2019
Annual Convention
Casper, WY

June 20-21, 2019
Wyoming Big Horn Sheep Summit
Burgess Junction, WY



Wyoming WSF would like to thank, and recognize, Life Members who have signed up since the Spring 2018 RamPage was published. A complete listing of WY-WSF Life Members is available for viewing on the WY-WSF web page, under the "Life Members" tab:

<https://www.wyomingwildsheep.org/lifemembers.asp>

If you would be interested in signing up or upgrading to Life Member status with WY-WSF, please visit our store or membership pages on the website. A \$500, one-time payment (or \$100 down, with quarterly \$100 payments), invests in Wyoming's bighorns, plus gets you or someone you know a high-quality wall plaque and name tag. We thank all of our past, current, and future Life Members!!

Dear Member; To save printing costs we send one copy per address. If you would like to receive multiple copies, please contact Dean DiJenno at (307) 213-0998 or info@wyomingwildsheep.org

- 533 Bob Meduna
- 534 Kevin Cross
- 535 Kyle VanValkenburg
- 536 Candy McDermott
- 537 Bill Durnal
- 538 Bralli Clifford
- 539 Jo Ellen Butler
- 540 Ron Nading, Jr
- 541 Rocky Yargas
- 542 Brodie Fackler
- 543 Miles Fortner
- 544 Leah Fortner
- 545 Sara Harris
- 546 Barry King
- 547 Colton Sasser
- 548 Connor Shatzer
- 549 Addison Youmans
- 550 Logan Alexander
- 551 Travis Jenson
- 552 Chadd Hartwig

Blast from the Past - Fritz Meyer on Dixon from 1988



Wyoming

Wild Sheep Foundation

2019

**WYOMING GAME AND FISH
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A Commissioner's license is good for Elk, Deer, or Pronghorn and is independent of the regular Wyoming Game and Fish Department license draw. The winner is responsible for all applicable license fees. The Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation Board of Directors and members are eligible to participate in all fund-raising activities.

The license drawing will be held June 1st, 2019 at the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation Convention to be held at the Ramkota Hotel in Casper, Wyoming. The winner need not be present to win. To order tickets online please go to www.wyomingwildsheep.org.



For more information about Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation
307-213-0998 / email: info@wyomingwildsheep.org
WY-WSF, P.O. Box 666, Cody, Wyoming 82414



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

BY STEVE KILPATRICK

Why Do We Conserve Bighorns?

I often ask, “Why do Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation members spend a considerable amount of our time and financial resources on bighorns, and all wildlife for that matter?” Well, I think it’s because we don’t know any different. It’s just part of life here in the West. Simple – you like it, it needs help, you help pay for it. We don’t believe in free rides. We love our wildlife, it’s an important part of our lives, like rodeos and trucks, and we are willing to pay for it. Good old western culture and values prevail. Well, pay for it, you certainly do. Just look at the Wy Wild Sheep web site - <https://www.wyomingwildsheep.org/grants.asp>. You raise and spend \$100 – 140K each year to “put and keep KIDS and WILD SHEEP on the mountain”. In addition, via the Wyoming Governors Big Game License Coalition, the revenue from 5 Governor’s bighorn tags sold around the nation (over \$450K in 2018), is spent annually on Wyoming’s majestic bighorns. Your Wyoming Game and Fish Department estimates the bighorn sheep program to cost about \$2.2M (2017). License sales of about 200 tags/year brings in a smidgen of the costs - about \$180K. Another \$1.7M is brought in from application fees, conservation stamp revenue, federal/other grants, general funds (\$349,933), and interest earned on Department cash balances. Yep, that leaves a shortfall of around half a million that YOU help cover. Simple math indicates that “we” are spending around \$11,000 per tag or \$13,750 per harvested bighorn in management costs/

year. Or, one can look at it another way and say it costs \$110K-\$137K to raise a 10-year-old harvested ram. Sheep are like some kids – high maintenance. But, worth every penny. Many, if not most of you, have already harvested a ram, so why do you keep giving back? Is it because you feel guilty since your tag cost a fraction of the management costs for that animal? No. I’m betting it’s because of a much deeper passion and internal fabric. You have instinctual general appreciation for nature. Yep, those gut feelings are worth fighting for. Moreover, wild landscapes and wildlife are the core of your internal fabric – “a way of life”. You treasure a glimpse of the elusive bighorn. You value gazing at a hypnotic rock infested, cliff dominated mountain landscape and envisioning Bighorns that have mesmerized you over the years. Or, maybe you simply know they live there. Images of vibrant frolicking young lambs, motherly ewes and stately rams making a living in unforgiving landscapes are forever imprinted in your mind. You only take those and other memories to your death bed, no trucks or smart phones. You are keenly aware. You know that Bighorns, while appearing all rugged and tuff, are wimps when it comes to coexisting with humans– only 6% of the historic population in the western US and Canada remains. They are a delicate species. They are the “canary in the mine” for a whole suite of wildlife species. You know that If they vanish, others are soon to follow. In the end, all one really has is time and memories. Your time

and memories in the mountains warms your heart. Moreover, you know your time spent conserving wild sheep will someday enrich the lives of your kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews and friends who will someday be on a mountain that still harbors wild sheep. Spending a portion of your precious time conserving wild sheep will provide them with similar memories.

We treasure Bighorns because it’s just who we are - despite the costs. Without them, our wild country is less wild, our minds less imaginative, future generations lacking. That’s why we conserve bighorns.

On behalf of Wyoming’s KIDS and WILD SHEEP, the WY-WSF sincerely appreciates the deep visceral passion and support of its members. Thank you.

Steve



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY KURT EISENACH



Kurt

It is that time again to bring you the membership up to speed on the WY Wild Sheep chapter you so generously support. I will start with the wonderfully successful banquet held in Casper this June. We had a sold-out venue and a very excited crowd. The night was full of great items in the Live and silent auctions along with a loaded general raffle. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors and bidders we can keep funding a substantial amount of sheep projects for the next year. Check out our web page wyomingwildsheep.org for approved GIA's for details. Be sure to get your registration's in for the winter meeting in Lander the first weekend in Dec. also available on line. Next, I want to high lite the partnerships we have developed with other organizations. Both the Eastern and Midwest WSF chapters have adopted one of our herd projects and dedicated funding to those for the next several years. The Bighorn Sheep Center Dubois, National WSF and this WY chapter have formed a partnership to expand the educational outreach to youth and schools we currently help fund. With all three of us working to promote this education

effort directed towards kids we can help promote the outdoor and wildlife related lifestyle we all so passionately love. If you want this program in your local school or youth group contact the Sheep center for help setting this up [(307) 455-3429 or karen@bighorn.org. They have the programs and material to fit your needs. I now need to sadly say thanks to those board members who decided to step away from the business of the chapter; Mike Porter, Meade Dominic and Dan Hinz. Next time you see these three be sure to thank them for their years of service and efforts for this chapter. They all plan to stay engaged with the future of the chapter and I will seek their council on issues from

time to time. They will always a part of our past and future. Now welcome the new members of your board some of which you already know. Ryan Amundson, who you know as our G&F sheep liaison, has joined the board after retiring from WY G&F. Welcome Ryan, your past involvement speaks volumes about the future value you bring to the board. Mick Mickelsen from Wheatland is our second new board member. He has an extensive history of involvement as a conservation volunteer for several organizations. He helped us out on the Devils Canyon tour we sold at the 2017 C&A meeting. Introduce yourself and get to know a passionate outdoors conservationist. The latest addition to our group is James Owens who stepped up to fill a vacancy on our board and help us keep the outfitters point of view in our deliberations. He owns and operates Lost Creek Outfitters in Cody WY. Thanks for taking up the challenge James and we all look forward to your input. That brings me to the current

opening on the board. Please examine your time and passion for sheep, then consider joining the board. We welcome the influx of new ideas and ways to get our mission accomplished. Call myself, Steve Kilpatrick or any of the board to visit with us about this opening. Lastly, I will inform you that the chapter has been very active in supporting wild sheep here in WY on the national political front. An effort thru congresswoman Cheney to reopen several domestic sheep grazing allotments currently unavailable for several reasons is being strenuously opposed. In cooperation with the WSF LAC and others this effort by a few individuals in the domestic sheep industry needs to be stopped. Hopefully we have been able to get this done. We welcome those who are pushing this grazing issue to come to the WY Plan working group and search for solutions under this WY law. Perhaps we can work together as neighbors to address domestic and wild sheep conflicts as the plan is designed to do. Your board welcomes your input! Feel free to call and visit with any of us about your ideas or concerns on sheep issues. We welcome feedback about the banquets and your ideas for improvement or thoughts on problems. We are working to improve several areas of the June banquet especially the final checkout. Thanks for your patience as we try new methods to make this quicker and easier for you and us. If you have a few hours free we always love volunteer help at this event. If you know a business or individual who might help us by donating a hunt or merchandise to our fundraising efforts, please encourage them and contact one of the boards with details. I personally want to thank those who have stepped up this past year to make it possible for us all to put and keep Kids and Wild Sheep on the mountain!

2018 FULL CURL TABLE PURCHASERS

Businesses and individuals listed on the opposite page (if logos were available) made significant investments for Wyoming's bighorn sheep by purchasing a "full curl" table for 8 attendees at our June 2, 2018 banquet in Casper.

We thank them for their support, and invite others who might be interested in a full curl table for our 2019 fundraising banquet to please contact President Kurt Eisenach, Executive Director Steve Kilpatrick, or any WY-WSF board member. We appreciate your outstanding support, and look forward to another great banquet/fund raiser in 2019!

.....



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## “Time Well Wasted”

Laid up in a chair after a knee injury and then surgery was not my style and not time well spent.

Returning back to work, in the process of recovery, consumed a lot of time, but was a necessary evil. My wife and I raising our son has never been wasted time, as we have loved every bit of it. As I archery elk hunt with him this fall I ponder, as I cannot seem to call an elk in, is this a wasted weekend? Between work and school, the everyday life as we get used to is hard to leave and come back to at the same time. We have been hunting together as a family, the 3 of us, going on 6 years now

# Conservation Fund Update

## BY SCOTT BUTLER

and some skills have been learned. This trip is only the second time my son has heard an elk bugle. He has learned to navigate in the dark [night when tired from a long day and morning when not awake yet]. Separating from him in this treed country when we cannot see more that 50 yards is nerve racking to say the least, but it is all learning for him and I and we are building outdoor skills.

My point is none of it has been bad and will let him [us] fly more free.

Wasting time? Maybe but “Time Well Wasted!”

The Conservation Fund has been doing some work to “Put and Keep Kids and Wild Sheep on the Mountain” by drawing, in June, 2 more Life Memberships awarded to youth in attendance at the banquet. Hoping it will someday spark their outdoor interest, a little more, in all things wild and let the

learning of conservation continue.

Congratulations Brodie Fackler and Addison Youmans! In this day and age that is never wasted. Let us parents, grandparents and mentors never forget that.

Congratulations to the Dall’s Sheep hunt winner Sal Piazza. Maybe we can get a story of your hunt in the next Rampage!

Thank you to the latest donors for helping to “Put and Keep Kids and Wild Sheep on the Mountain”

If you as the membership have any thoughts or input about the Conservation Fund feel free to call or email me at 307-214-6734 or [doublediamondconstruction@hotmail.com](mailto:doublediamondconstruction@hotmail.com)

Conservation Fund Total = \$214,910

Interest to date = \$25,071

GIAs funded = \$13,500

Life Memberships Awarded = 4

**KEEPING KIDS AND WILD SHEEP  
ON THE MOUNTAIN!**

## Ryan Amundson is the 2018 Ron Ball Award Recipient

I cannot think of someone that deserves this award more than this man right here. Ryan Amundson is the hardest working man that I have ever met-and I cannot thank him enough for raising my brother Drake and I with the same intensity. This last week I nonchalantly asked him for a resume to ensure that I delivered this speech about his accomplishments properly, and learned a ton about him, the most prominent thing being that he's done the work of 4 men for his whole life... starting as a "farm laborer" in his home state of Iowa in 1982, his work ethic and desire to be the best in the business pushed him through a job as a conservation technician, greenbelt crew supervisor, biologist technician (in Alaska!), a habitat biologist internship, 11 years of hunting guide work, 17 years as a habitat extension biologist, and most recently, 6 years as the Wyoming Statewide Habitat Biologist. His 23 years with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department have allowed him to network like crazy, explore the most beautiful places on earth, and build relationships with coworkers, landowners, contractors, and countless other folks, many of which are sitting in this room.

Ryan is one tough old guy- a year older today, actually! Happy Birthday! I didn't get you a present because I was writing this speech, so I'm sorry... Anyway, he's a tough old guy that really loves wild sheep and the Wild Sheep Foundation. He is Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation life member 384 and has donated a pair of spur straps and chinks that he honestly slaved over for this year's live auction... number 35, keep an eye out for those). He has dedicated countless hours toward sheep-centered projects,

grant proposal reviews, served as the Co-Chairman of the WGFD Bighorn Sheep Working Group, has traveled to Reno to the national WSF convention for years, and I'm sure there's lots of other stuff he omitted from his resume.... You know, Ryan loves the sheep so much that he paid \$200 to drink a shot of whiskey with a frostbitten miner's toe in it, and it only counts if the toenail touches your lips. That was to join the "Outer Circle Club" in Reno at the WSF convention this year, where the money from this self-induced hazing goes right back to the conservation of wild sheep. And, in 2016, Ryan won the lottery. Not the Power ball, but something SO MUCH better than that. He drew a Montana Bighorn Sheep license and was to hunt the Missouri River Breaks area, where some of the worlds largest bighorns have come from. After a 16 day self-guided hunt with many friends and his beautiful wife, Cindy, he harvested a beautiful ram that scored a gross 188 7/8," landing him in the Boone and Crockett book and a spectacular full-body mount for the trophy room, formerly known as the basement....

Wildlife and habitat conservation is my dad's primary passion. Of course he loves hunting, hiking, horse riding and training, leather work, farming, and watching family feud with me (huh, daddy?).... But putting in the initial work so that his hunting itch can be scratched is really what gets him up in the morning. Ryan grew up hunting and views it as a conservation tool. This perception of hunting and wildlife management strategy has helped my brother and I to stand up for and promote hunting as the world's greatest (and most fun) management strategy, something that all of us in this room can probably

agree on. Any opportunity Ryan gets to head for the hills, he takes. That means that "family bonding time" and "date night" and "hanging out" all are highly likely to occur in the mountains. So if you're looking for a weekend to be on your phone and encounter other human beings, signing up for quality time with Ryan is probably not the way to go.

Finally, my daddy is a man of just enough words. At home, his words most frequently come in sets of 3. "Ride that horse, call your grandma, How'd you shoot?, coming home soon? Let's go hunting. Love you, Tiger. What's for dinner?" And, my personal favorite, "Proud of you." Today is a day where I get to use that last one, share this accomplishment, and the present the greatest employee, pizza-maker, cowboy, friend, husband, and father with all of you as I congratulate my daddy, Ryan, this year's recipient of the Wild Sheep Foundation Ron Ball Award!

### Proud of you, Daddy!

*(Editors Note: This is the introduction of Ryan written by his daughter, Sierra, for the Spring banquet award ceremony.)*



# “My Wyoming Sheep Safaris”

## By Freddie Goetz

For years I have been going on what I call my sheep safari. I usually take four or five days in sheep country. This year I stopped in to see Dean and Diane DiJenno on Thursday evening after a day on the North fork of the Shoshone river. Dean and I put my photo chip into his computer to view those bighorn sheep photos I had taken. (by the way, you can go on the web site's photo galleries and click on "Freddie's Photos" and see some of those bighorns.)

After viewing the sheep, the conversation came up about writing an article for the RamPage about what I have seen throughout the years on the sheep I have seen. So here goes.... I don't claim to be a bighorn sheep expert. Everything I write about in this article is what I have seen and watched

for the past 40 years or so. Back in the 1970s I met a gentleman from Lander named Bill Crump who was the Game and Fish district supervisor for the Lander region. He was telling me about the bighorns he had seen in the Dubois area. We then made plans to go to Dubois the next winter and see some sheep. I was excited but had to wait better than a year. December 1975 finally came around. On our first outing we

were up on a hillside watching about 200-300 sheep that were about 400 yards away. I wanted to start walking toward them, but Bill said, "Let's sit here for a while". They will come and check us out. Well, I thought "yeh, I bet they do". It wasn't 15 minutes and guess what... they were all around us! Bill told me not to make any sudden moves and they would get closer. Boy was he right. At one time I felt my right ear getting warm. I turned my head slowly and a lamb was sniffing my ear.

Tower ridge because of the tower they had built on top. There were always sheep on that hillside. There had been a fire which burned some of the timber off making for good winter range. In the late 1970s we made the trip up that steep hill and saw about 200 wild sheep on the hillside. There was a draw just to the west of the tower hill that had a lot of wild sheep in it. John and I walked up there and were having a real enjoyable time watching those rams chasing the ewes around. I was having a real enjoyable time



shooting up the film. At this time, I had a Minolta SRT 102 camera. It had a 75-300 mm lens. I spent more time loading and unloading film. We saw about 150 sheep in this draw. I went back to Dubois throughout the 1970 and made the trek to Whiskey Mtn, Torrey Rim, and Trail Lake about every year

From then on, I was hooked on taking photos and being around the Bighorns of Wyoming. I also learned that if you were below or on the same level with the sheep they weren't quite as nervous, and they wouldn't shy away from you. For the next few years I was a regular in the town of Dubois. I stayed at the Stage Coach Motel and became good friends with John Suda. He always knew where the Bighorns were at. He took me just south of Dubois up what I call

well into the 1980s. One year the wild sheep weren't coming down, so you couldn't get any photos around Trail Lake. I took a trail up to the top of Torrey Rim from the south. I packed both my video camcorder and 35mm camera. After I made it to the top, there were wild sheep all over the place. After about an hour up on that rim, I ran out of film. I had taken 12 rolls and the battery on my video camera gave out after about 35 minutes. I was lucky to have seen between

400-500 wild sheep on this hike. Lots of times when I went to Trail Lake Ranch you would always see wild sheep down at the lake and in the meadows. I would say that Dubois was the hot spot for Bighorn sheep and lots of rams back in those days. In December 1980 the town of Dubois sportsman has a wild game feed for the Rocky Mtn Bighorn Sheep Society members who made the trip up from Colorado to view our wild sheep. I made it up to Dubois two more times for this wild game feed. The second year they had the wild game feed I had given John Suda a photo that he really liked, and he entered it in the photo contest at the wild game feed. His photo took first place that year and I sure enjoyed tasting all that different wild game meat. In December of 1982 I was once again in Dubois taking photos. One Saturday night we came back to the motel and John yelled at me to come over to the office. I went over, and he said he had some guys coming over tonight to talk about starting a WYO Bighorn sheep chapter. At first, I told John that it would cut into my drinking time. He said he could take care of that. So, I went to the meeting, and yes Kevin, there were six of us there that Saturday night in December 1982. They were the following; John Suda, Ron Ball, Dave Steger, Alex Wolfer, Kent Stockton, and Freddie Goetz. We talked about what we could do for the Bighorn Sheep and we made plans to have another get together the next December at the Rustic. I believe we had the next 2 or 3 fund raisers in Dubois. Then we started moving it around the state trying to get more members and guess what we were doing an excellent job. In 1997 we had 25 life members, in 2007 we had 302 life members, today we have over 530 life members dedicated to Wyoming Bighorns. Then we had a big wild sheep die

off in the early 1990s. I kind of lost interest in going to Dubois because the wild sheep just weren't there anymore. They have come back some but no not like they were in the 1970s and 1980s. In the mid-1990s, I really went big time. Minolta came out with a new camera called a Maxim 7000 with auto rewind. It also had a 75mm-300mm telephoto lens. You could take 36 pictures in less than 15 seconds. It was costly developing photos. Thank God for digital cameras. At one of our winter fund raisers in Thermopolis, I was talking to Don Schmaltz and he told me that I should come to Cody and check out the wild sheep out on the South fork of the Shoshone. After we were through with the fund raiser, I took a drive to Cody and went out on the South fork and there were wild sheep all over the place. I couldn't stay very long that day but knew I would be back. I would try and take a week to go on my sheep safari. I would take 2 days in Dubois then take a day and travel to Cody and spend two more days on the South fork. It goes to where I was seeing more sheep in the Cody area than in the Dubois country. I then had to make up my mind where I was going, Dubois or Cody. From 2000 to the present I have spent most of my time in the Cody area on the North and South forks of the Shoshone. I have seen lots of wild sheep on the South fork. It really depends on how much snow they have up high in the mountains. If the snow is deep the wild sheep will be down in the meadows and on the side hills. I would see between 200-300 wild sheep on the snowy days and only about ½ that amount if the snow was not there. I have only been going up on the North Fork for about the past 6 or 7 years. After they had a fire that came down to the highway in places, it has opened some good

hill sides for the sheep to eat on. I can not say where the bigger rams are located but have seen between 175-185 rams between the three locations. The last time I went to Dubois, I had a tough time seeing 100 wild sheep. In December of 2017 I spent 4 days looking at wild sheep on the South and North forks. I saw an average of 100 sheep in both locations. I try and keep track of the lambs, ewes, and rams I see in each herd. Some days you will see more wild sheep on the South fork than the North fork because of the terrain and the weather. This year on the North fork they didn't have much snow the first time I went out. I was stretching my legs and came across a bear track in the mud. It didn't take me long to get back in the jeep. Then it snowed up on the North fork the next day. I saw some lambs and ewes coming through the trees followed by a nice ram. I got out and walked up a road to get closer. There in the snow were fresh wolf tracks. This is a first time for me, bear tracks and wolf tracks. Now that I have a digital camera I usually take on average 300-500 photos per trip. I also have a Sony handy-cam and take 30-40 minutes of video each year. At the start of this article I told you that I am far from a Bighorn sheep expert. What I have seen in the past 40 years is that there was quantity in our Bighorn sheep herds during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Today I would see we have Quality in our herds. If I am able and the editor of the RamPage will let me, I would like to write an article every year after I go on my sheep safari. I will try and spend a few days at the three locations and give you a report on what I see in the years to come. Thanks for your time and I hope you enjoyed my bit of wisdom on Bighorn sheep.



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## *Celebrating 25 Years!*

The National Bighorn Sheep Center in Dubois, Wyoming has had an incredible busy and fulfilling 25th year, and we are entering the season of the rut, which is such an exciting time here in the Upper Wind River Valley. With the support from our partners and supporters, including the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, we have had over 6,300 visitors to the Center since January and have expanding our outreach to reach more youth and adults through our Education Programs in 2018. From our partnership with the Wild Sheep Foundation at the Youth Wildlife Conservation Experience at the Wild Sheep Show in Reno, Nevada to the Wyoming Outdoor Expo in Casper, and presentations to 18 Road Scholar tour groups throughout the summer at the Center, we have reached thousands of people. Additionally, we have hosted over 20 public events including presentations, outings and volunteer field opportunities including two wildlife-hazardous fence removal projects in the Whiskey Basin Habitat Management Area. One of our most exciting highlights from 2018 is the program development and planning for the future one-of-a-kind “Camp Bighorn” for youth at the Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp starting in 2019.

Our partnership with the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation cannot be understated. This year, we worked with longtime supporter of wild sheep and youth, Gary Butler and his family to establish the Butler Conservation Education Fund. In partnership with the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation and the Wild Sheep Foundation (National), this important collaboration with these partners will help expand our education programs in ways we have not yet even imagined. We are grateful for this leadership and the vision of these partners to make all of this great work possible!

Finally, we are kicking off a capital campaign to build a classroom to enhance our education program offerings at the Center. We have already raised over \$229,000 towards this expansion, thanks to many donors, foundations and the leadership of the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. We are well on our way to another great winter to round out 2018, and we are already looking ahead to 2019.

We hope you will stop by the National Bighorn Sheep Center the next time you are through Dubois and also, you can support our organization by purchasing raffle tickets for some of the great prizes at our upcoming annual fundraiser, the Bighorn Bash, coming up on Saturday, November 3rd here in Dubois, WY.

The work of the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, its members and supporters is critical to our organization as well, and we deeply appreciate this partnership and the work to “Keep Kids and Sheep on the Mountain”.

Sincerely,

Sara Domek  
Executive Director



You can reach the Center at: [info@bighorn.org](mailto:info@bighorn.org) or 307-455-3429. We are located at 10 Bighorn Lane in Dubois, Wyoming. Check out our website, [www.bighorn.org](http://www.bighorn.org) and our Facebook page for events, information & our gift shop.

# BIG FOUR RAFFLE



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- Bear Basin Adventures Pack Trip:** Five-day pack trip for two with Bear Basin Adventures in the beautiful Shoshone National Forest (Summer 2019). Donated by Heath and Sarah Woltman with support from Bert Milton Realty, Inc. and the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation.
 
- Upper Wind River Valley Angling Package:** Three-night stay for two at the "Wind River Hideaway at Red Rocks", donated by Ree & Wade Beavers of Wind River Property Group and a half-day guided fly-fishing adventure and demonstration with Cutthroat Fly Shop, donated by Robert Betts (April/May or September/October 2019).
- CM Ranch Stay:** All-inclusive stay for two adults at the historic and beautiful CM Ranch in Dubois (August 26-31, 2019). Donated by Hunter and Mollie Sullivan and the Kemmerer Family.



## Drawing November 3, 2018 at the Bighorn Bash!

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- Go online to our website ([www.bighorn.org](http://www.bighorn.org)) and fill in the online registration/donation form with your name and ticket details. You can pay for your Big Four raffle tickets, 25th Anniversary raffle and make dinner reservations directly online.
- Call us at 307-455-3429, email [info@bighorn.org](mailto:info@bighorn.org) or visit the Center at 10 Bighorn Lane in Dubois, WY (open Monday-Saturday from 10am-4pm), and we assist you with your ticket purchase.

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# 2018 Wild Sheep Chapter and Affiliate Meeting

by Steve Kilpatrick

The WY-WSF hosted the Wild Sheep Chapter and Affiliate Summit XI meeting in Jackson June 22-23, 2018.

The theme of the event was “One Tent – One Campfire”.

The event did in deed live up to its theme as you will hear later.

The event was held at the historic Virginian Lodge in Jackson Hole. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres were served Thursday evening as representatives for numerous Chapters and Affiliates began to arrive. Twelve Chapters and Affiliates sent representatives. Twenty-one Chapters, Affiliates and individuals contributed a sponsorship funding for the meeting.

The meeting kicked off Friday morning with a group Breakfast, over 80 folks from across the US and Canada were in attendance.

A replica of the new world record ram from Wild Horse Island was on display. After breakfast Gray Thornton provided an overview of

the 2018 Sheep Show.

Gray was followed by technical presentations on wild sheep ecology – Horn Size and Nutrition in Mountain Sheep, by Dr. Kevin Monteith; Evaluating the Role of Harvest Demography and Changing Environments on Horn Size of Mountain Sheep. by Dr Kevin Monteith.



Craig Nakamoto (Iowa FNAWS) presented a check (\$12,500) to Sue Consolo-Murphy, Chief of Science and Resource management, at Grand Teton National Park for capture and radio collaring of mountain goats and BH sheep. Iowa FNAWS has “adopted” this threatened Wyoming BHS herd and will

continue financial support into the future.

Greg Schildwachter, Vern Bleich, Melanie Woolever, Bret Jefferson and Kevin Hurley, provided updates on congressional bills, amendments, Species of Conservation Concern (USFS), USFS Risk Of Contact, etc. All very informative. All C/A were provided time for priority updates.

The attendees were split into two groups for afternoon field trips; one group took the Tram to the top of the Teton Range to learn about BH sheep and mountain goats in the Tetons. The same group then went to the National Elk Refuge to learn about the history and management of the NER. The second group took a tour of the National Museum of Wildlife Art and Grant Teton

National Park. The famous grizzly bear, 299, and cubs put on a show alongside the bus. The attendees reversed field trips the next day.

The attendees enjoyed drinks and heavy finger food back at the Virginian Friday evening.



Saturday started with a group breakfast and a presentation by Gray Thornton on Public Outreach – a “New” Narrative. Gray is going to get a little tougher on his conserving wild sheep message. He, and others, feel we are getting kicked in the teeth by wild sheep unfriendly amendments to the Farm Bill and other political actions. Presentations were given by Garrett Long, new communications specialist with WSF and Dinesh Bali on online live auctions.

Technical presentations were provided on diseases by Dr. Bob Garrott, Carson Butler, Dr. Peri Wolff and Dr. Mary Wood. Pneumonia related pathogens are the most wide-spread and limiting factor for wild sheep. Yet, it is a relatively new science with some knowns and multiple unknowns. It is too complex of an issue to discuss here, so I encourage you to Google the above researchers and gain some basic knowledge. It’s a bit complicated, but critically important.

The Saturday night grand finally was literally held under “one tent” on Zach and Gina McDermott’s place east of Hoback Junction – adjacent to BHS occupied habitat.

Over 110 attendees were treated to live country western music, horse-drawn wagon rides, drinks and a fine country-style meal under one large tent.

Donations to the live auction came pouring in at the last minute until we had 50 donations. My hat is off to Joni and Mack Miller, Kurt Eisenach, all the McDermotts, Greg Pope, Jerry Galles, Sarah Dewey and Sara Domek for developing a spreadsheet and organizing what first seemed like chaos. They kept track of everything!

Approximately \$27K was raised!!!  
And, WY-WSF keeps most of it.

In summary, much wild sheep information was shared, new friendships and partnerships made, considerable funds were raised for wild sheep and much fun had by all. The passion for wild sheep was obvious and I encourage you to all try an attend at some time.

The 2019 C/A Summit will be hosted by the Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn, May 17-18, 2019 in Las Vegas, NV.



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# “A Trip to Wicked River”

By LMs Diane DiJenno and Chadd Hartwig



comfort building is almost complete. We met our wonderful guides, Burt and Glenn Dale and were then flown out to camp by Booker in his Super Cub. Diane and husband, Dean, had chosen to hunt by boat on Laurie Lake which has its own airstrip and two nicely maintained cabins. Chadd was hunting at Mia camp which also has cabins and horses to use for the daily hunt. The weather turned wintry and both parties spend the next several days searching for their game and admiring the great north woods. Diane

bread, pastries and cookies. Arriving back to camp we found that our other two hunters had also been successful, James from Texas had connected on both a Mountain Goat and Moose, while John from Edmonton had collected a six point bull elk. At Big Meadow we were able to clean and package our meat before freezing it and take care of our capes and horns. We quickly showered and filled up on some more of Amber's home cooking. Wicked River is a small camp, never more than 4 hunters in any 10 day period and trophy quality is constantly being improved. On day 10 we once again boarded the chartered Beaver for a quick flight out to Pink Mountain, BC and a long drive home. If you are dreaming of a Canadian Moose, Elk, Mtn. Goat, or Black Bear, please consider Wicked River Outfitters.

We flew in to the Big Meadow base camp of Wicked River Outfitters near Pink Mountain, British Columbia on Sept 12, 2018 with great anticipation of the 10 day hunts that were to start the following day. Chadd had purchased his moose hunt during the 2017 WY-WSF banquet auction and Diane had booked with Amber and Booker shortly thereafter. Amber and Booker have donated multiple Mtn Goats and Moose hunts to assist our chapter with fund raising and we knew we were in for the times of our lives! Base camp consists of a beautiful log home where Amber prepares and serves all of the meals. There is a separate log bunk house for hunters, electricity, and hot running water. A new log supply/

connected with her moose on day 6 at 250 yards and her trophy was packed to the boat and then back to camp. Chadd rode long and hard and saw lots of country before finding his moose on day 7. His moose was packed back to camp on horseback and then both parties were flown back to Big Meadow. During the hunt all had enjoyed wonderful pre cooked meals that Amber had prepared and sent out along with her awesome homemade





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# “My Arm Pit Ram”

By Matt Lensch

If you think about it, there may be no more fitting place in the U.S. to hunt a big-horned Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep than the Big Horn Basin in Big Horn County, on the west slope of the Bighorn Mountains overlooking the confluence of the Big Horn River into Big Horn Lake and the Bighorn National Recreation area.

Unfortunately, this hasn't always been the case. Like so many places that once had booming populations of bighorns; competition with livestock, habitat loss, disease and unregulated hunting all contributed to the expiration of bighorns from the Bighorn Mountains shortly after the turn of the century.

Not having bighorn sheep in the Bighorn Mountains is just plain wrong. To remedy the situation several transplants were attempted in the 1930s, 1960s and 1970s. However, like many of the early transplants throughout the west, the Bighorn Mountain transplants ultimately failed. All except one. In 1973, 39 bighorn sheep were transplanted on the south side of Devils Canyon near the Wyoming/Montana state line. The Devils Canyon sheep herd survived, but never thrived. In 2003 it was thought that only 25-40 sheep remained. To revitalize the herd, 20 bighorns were captured on the Lower Deschutes River in Oregon and transplanted to Dugan Bench on the North side of Devils Canyon in 2004. In 2006 an additional 20 bighorns were transplanted from the Missouri Breaks to Dugan Bench.

The supplemental transplants of bighorns into the Devils Canyon really shifted the herd into high gear and that is really where the story of my 2017 bighorn sheep odyssey began.

In 2004 I had the opportunity to assist with the bighorn sheep transplants into Devils Canyon. Initially I was assigned to the ground crew. My job was to hobble and blindfold the sheep in the horse trailer and then load the hobbled sheep into the back of a helicopter after they were processed. The sheep were then flown to the release site on Dugan Bench. About halfway through the release operation I was asked to help escort several loads of sheep to the release site. On one of the flights we had an ewe slip the hobbles, start kicking, and at one point stood up. Having a bighorn sheep bouncing around inside a helicopter flying over Devils Canyon was not a good situation and the pilot was rightly getting excited. Fortunately, I was able to wrestle the ewe down and we got the hobbles back on. The rest of the flight went without a hitch and eventually all 20 sheep were delivered to the release site. (They no longer transport big game in the helicopter, now everything is slung).

That flight sits in my memory as if it happens yesterday. Not so much because things got a little western in the back of the helicopter, but more that I realize there is a realistic chance that the ewe that slipped the hobbles was the mother of the ram I harvested. My involvement in these transplants kindled an admiration of the Devils Canyon herd and helped me

stay the course in applying for an area 12 license through the many years.

It is estimated that there are now about 275 bighorn sheep in the Devils Canyon herd and there have been hunting seasons in Hunt Area 12 since 2008. The herd now serves as a source herd for other transplants. The sheep are mainly found in a relatively small core area along Dugan Bench and the Moss Ranch on the north side of Devils Canyon. This is significant because the area is surrounded by deep canyons and the only access to the core area is through private land. Fortunately, the landowner has played an integral role in the management of the Devils Canyon herd and allows access with a reasonable trespass fee. If not for the cooperation from the Bischoff family, there likely would not be a Devils Canyon sheep herd.

I had been applying for a bighorn sheep tag for 22 years, so I've thought about my sheep hunt for a very long time. I always knew I would opt out of paying the trespass fee and hunting the core area. Not so much that I am cheap, because in the realm of once in a lifetime sheep hunt, the trespass fee was a bargain. It just wasn't the hunt I had been waiting all these years for. I had heard of a small band of rams living south of Devils Canyon on BLM land. My hunt was going to be a true DIY public land hunt.



Shortly after I learned I drew a sheep license in May, I began scouting. Over the years I heard a few people occasionally seeing rams south of Devils Canyon but finding these rams in hundreds of square miles of some of the hottest, driest, windiest, rockiest, most “gnarly” country in Wyoming would be a formidable task.

My initial trip to Devils Canyon was basically an exercise in learning the main roads and figuring out how things lay on

the ground versus looking at a map. That afternoon we were working our way back to the trail head when my friend asked if I wanted to see the Armpit cabin. With a name like Armpit, I had to see it.

I don't know how to exactly describe the infamous Armpit Cabin. The cabin, or should I say, tar papered shack, is a 1950's era uranium mine headquarters. The actual mine site is closed to the public due to high radiation levels. It has character with the interior decorated with a wide array of colorful graffiti. The cabin had an overpowering smell of pack rats' scat, and the thought of dying of Hantavirus must cross your mind. To the disbelief of my friends, I fell in love with this place.

It was the walk from the cabin to our 4-wheelers that molded my plans for my sheep hunt forever. Looking across the drainage to the south I saw four bighorn sheep bedded. Once I got my spotting scope out I could see all four were rams and one was a dandy. Looking back now, I knew at that instant this was the ram I would hunt.

Over the next month, my friends, family and I spent many days scouting the area south of Devils canyon. I put out several trail cameras on water sources, glassed the vast canyons for hours, boated Big Horn Lake looking for places the sheep could come to water and explored every accessible trail. I was learning the country well, but I had a significant issue; I hadn't seen the big ram again, heck, I hadn't seen a single sheep. I was starting to doubt my decision not to pay the trespass fee and hunt the core area.

Then on June 24 I had the opportunity to meet up with a hunter who had the license in 2016. Mark offered to show me some of the spots where he had seen sheep in 2016. Surprisingly, he took me to many places that I had already been, but unknowingly dismissed as not being "prime sheep habitat". I thought I would find sheep in the deep canyons, but Mark told me he often saw sheep on open ridges. He was convinced that sheep prefer elevation.

Later that morning he showed me

where he shot a 180-inch ram in 2016. (The first ever harvested out of the core area). Shortly thereafter we saw a band of 15 rams on the same ridge. Within that band I saw the same ram I saw a month earlier at the Armpit Cabin. I think Mark was more excited about seeing the rams than I was. He is a self-proclaimed sheep nut and quickly told me the ram would easily score 185. I knew he was a good ram but at that point it started to sink in that I had the opportunity to harvest the next Wyoming Pope and Young recorded ram.

While we were watching the rams, Mark told me that every "real sheep hunter" names the rams he sees. The need for a name stuck with me. I thought of several clever names, but I needed something personable. I needed a name for MY RAM. It took me several days but ultimately, I came up with MAPR (My Arm Pit Ram).

Over the next month I utilized Mark's advice and concentrated my scouting trips in an area. During that time, I saw MAPR multiple times. Sometimes he was alone and sometimes he was with other rams, but one thing was apparent, he was constantly moving. As my scouting trips added up, it only cemented my decision to concentrate all my efforts on hunting MAPR. He was my Plan A and I did not have a Plan B. By the end of July, I was confident I was going to be able to harvest MAPR with my bow once the archery season opened on August 1st.

Eventually Aug 1 arrived. My oldest son Zach was back in Wyoming from Boston to get married and managed to sneak away for the opening day. My hunting partner Kevin Ryan had arrived at camp a few days prior and was able to do some more preseason scouting. Our camp was, you guessed it, the Armpit Cabin. I knew back in May this is where I would base my hunt. Kevin wasn't so sure about my choice of accommodations, but to me, this was the most perfect hunting camp I could have imagined.

Opening morning we located a band of 10 rams, but no MAPR. One of the rams had only one horn and I quickly recognized him as one I had seen with MAPR on multiple occasions.

I knew I was in the right area. We searched most of the morning, still no MAPR. Since I only had one day to spend with Zach, I shuffled being a sheep hunter with that of a tour guide to Zach. That afternoon we located the 10 rams again, but still no MAPR. We left the rams and checked out one of the several caves in the area. Evening was approaching so we decided to split up. Kevin set out to scout an area where he had seen a couple of rams a few days prior. Zach and I would go back to where we saw the 10 rams. I knew these rams were constantly on the move, partnering with other rams then moving on again. My hope was MAPR would hook up with the band of rams.

As we approached the drainage where we saw the rams, I spotted two other rams. A quick look through my binoculars and I confirmed one was MAPR.

I quickly grabbed my bow and set out for a stalk. My plan was to get ahead of MAPR and ease in for a shot. Unlike most archery stalks, things went perfect. After about 45 minutes I found myself 39 yards from a perfectly broadside MAPR. I drew back, put my 40-yard pin behind his front shoulder and released. It was the same sight picture I had seen on a 3-D big horn sheep target hundreds of times that summer. MAPR jumped, but to my amazement I did not see any sign of an arrow wound in his side. All twelve rams ran a couple hundred yards and looked back at me. Just then the skies opened and I found myself in a torrential down pour. I scrambled to find cover.

The rams stayed huddled together until the rain stopped. I still could not believe I missed the shot and at that point I thought the arrow must have passed through without the blades deploying properly. Even so, I thought MAPR would eventually lay down. The rams stayed together and moved a few hundred yards when a second intense hail storm moved in. The rams once again huddled together with their backs to the wind and hail. This storm lasted almost a half of an hour.

(Continued on page 46)

# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## Eastern Chapter of Wild Sheep Foundation Adopts a Wyoming Bighorn Sheep Project by Steve Kilpatrick

### **The Partnership**

Wild sheep historically flourished across the western US and Canada. In fact, numbers in the 1800's were estimated at 1.5 to 2 million! However, by 1960, disease from domestic livestock, uncontrolled hunting and habitat fragmentation had reduced numbers to approximately 25,000. Then, wild sheep advocates and wildlife management agencies combined their resources and stepped up to the plate. By 1985, numbers had increased to about 85,000. Still a far cry from the historical millions, but a step in the right direction.

Wild sheep are the "high maintenance" member of the family. They are extremely sensitive and are often referred to as the "canary in the mine" – if you can keep them alive many other wildlife species prosper. While wild sheep are costly to manage, they seldom bring in proportionate revenue to wildlife management agencies. It's common for wild sheep management programs to operate not only in the red, but deeply in the red.

Wild sheep enthusiasts realized "the need" if wild sheep were to exist on our landscapes, and in 1977, the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (now Wild Sheep Foundation) was created. Since then, wild sheep enthusiasts have formed multiple chapters and affiliates across the US and Canada. The two chapters I want to talk about are the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation (WY-WSF) in 1983, and the Eastern Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (ECWSF) in 1990.

Given the Wyoming and Eastern Chapters' goals are basically the same, long-term conservation of wild sheep, it seemed only wise that we form some type of a partnership. These partnerships are being fostered by Gray Thornton as CEO of the Wild Sheep Foundation who created the concept of "one tent-one campfire". This winter WY-WSF approached ECWSF with the proposal that they "adopt" one of our "high maintenance" children – the Devil's Canyon to Ferris Mountain wild sheep trans location project. It

is high maintenance only in that it is costly, not that the bighorns are bad!

The ECWSF, with a commitment to long-term wild sheep conservation at its core, quickly "adopted" the Devil's Canyon to Ferris Mountain trans location project during their 2018 Convention in Lancaster PA. The Chapters collaborated to raise revenue for the newly "adopted" Wyoming wild sheep project. Merchandise related to Wyoming was incorporated in the ECWSF Convention including; WY-WSF hosting ECWSF membership participation in capture and release activities, WY-WSF hosted tourist trip to Jackson, WY. to see bighorns and mountain goats, and the sale of a Wyoming Governor's BH sheep tag (ECWSF keeps 10% of the sale price which they reinvest in the "adopted" project).

### **The end result**

A partnership where ECWSF has a tangible long-term project which is consistent with both chapter's missions. ECWSF members are encouraged to wander West to view and assist with their "adopted" Devil's Canyon to Ferris Mountains trans location project. Activities may include assisting with captures, releases, guzzler instillation and general viewing of bighorns in the two mountain ranges. WY-WSF will continue providing merchandise to ECWSF for the "adopted" project. And, most importantly, the partnership perpetuates the vision of "putting and keeping KIDS and WILD SHEEP on the mountain".

### **About the "Adopted" Project**

In short, bighorns are being trans located from a very productive herd, the Devil's Canyon herd, to a historically low production herd, the Ferris Mountain herd.

### **Devil's Canyon Herd**

This herd is located along the northwestern side of the Bighorn Mountains in north-central Wyoming. Like most mountain ranges in the West, historically bighorns were abundant here. In 1806, Captain Clark, on his return trip down the Yellowstone, saw many bighorns and took several from

his boat. When he came to the mouth of the Bighorn River, he so named it for its great abundance of mountain sheep.

Disease transmission from domestic sheep, occurring during early human settlement in the foothills, and unregulated hunting were likely the cause for the herd's demise.

Transplants in the 1970's from the Whiskey Basin herd near Dubois, Wyoming were largely unsuccessful. More recent transplants from Oregon (2004) and Montana (2006) were from lower-elevation, non-migratory, and earlier-lambing herds. The genetics of the transplants seemed to be a match for the local environment which can be relatively hot and dry with plants curing out and losing nutritional qualities early. With the "new" bighorns lambing 4-6 weeks earlier, plant nutrition is still high, resulting in elevated nutrition for lactating ewes and young foraging lambs.

Since the Montana and Oregon transplants occurred, the herd has been quite productive. One measure of herd health is the ratio of lambs/100 ewes during late fall to early winter. The ratio for Devil's Canyon has ranged from 46-58, which is really good! Currently, 6 licenses are allocated for the hunt area and hunters have been 100% successful. Moreover, one 6 yr old ram scored over 180. Obviously horn growth is also very good.

The current population objective for the hunt area is 175 and the 2016 actual count was 263. Thus, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is concerned about the herd expanding into occupied domestic sheep grazing allotments resulting in lethal disease transmission and a catastrophic die-off. Diseases are generally density dependent. Consequently, it is best to keep herd at moderate numbers and reduced densities, especially since this herd occupies a relatively small area. Lastly, there is the concern of habitat abuse. Reductions in forage quality and quantity ultimately result in a malnourished body condition which leads to decreased productivity and enhanced disease transmission.

# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

It's best to keep wildlife numbers at moderate levels, if one is interested in long-term herd viability.

To prevent the above from happening, a logical tool is an active trans location program. Four such trans locations have occurred from Devil's Canyon to the Ferris Mountains since February 2016, totaling 69 bighorns (Feb 2016 – 24, Feb 2017 – 22, Dec 2017 – 20, Feb 2018 – 23). Trans locations will continue pending a healthy Devil's Canyon herd and associated high recruitment rate.

## Ferris Mountain Herd

This herd is located in central Wyoming, southwest of Casper. Wild sheep were also abundant in the area. Stuart and 6 Astorians the saw “innumerable” flocks of bighorns 1 mile downstream from the mouth of Poison Spider Cr (near Casper) on Nov 12, 1812. On July 30, 1842 Fremont mentions seeing numerous herds of mountain sheep on the North Platte River 25 miles SW of Casper (a few miles above the mouth of the Sweetwater). On May 31, 1846, Joel Palmer and his party saw large “droves” of mountain sheep 4 miles east of Independence Rock (west side of the Ferris Mountains).

Again, lethal disease transmission from domestic sheep, uncontrolled hunting and habitat fragmentation resulted in local extinction.

Bighorns were first reintroduced into the Ferris Mountains in the late 1940's with two small transplants, one consisted of desert bighorns from Nevada. Neither produced a viable herd. Slightly larger transplants occurred in the 1950's and 1960's with numbers still not increasing. Approximately 100 bighorns were trans located to the Ferris Mountains (Muddy Creek drainage) from Whiskey Basin in January of 1985. Dispersal was high, but roughly 40 to 60 of the sheep remained in the herd unit and survival of transplanted animals was good.

While adult survival was good, poor lamb survival during summer months kept the herd from increasing. Monitoring indicated poor forage quality and losses to predation were

minimal. Lambs were found dead and dying in the field. Disease issues were not detected. The source population of the transplants, the Whiskey Basin herd, consists of sheep adapted to high elevations where green up is early and lambing occurs in early June. This is a good match – early green-up and early lambing ewes. Conversely, by June, forage in the lower elevation Ferris Mountains has started to cure and the nutritional quality drops quickly, leaving lactating ewes and foraging lambs with relatively low-quality forage. Only an estimated 15 sheep were present in the Ferris Mountains by 2003.

Low elevation, non-migratory, early-lambing bighorns from Oregon (40) and Devil's Canyon (12) were transplanted into the adjacent Seminoe Mountains in 2009. Bingo! These sheep lambed 4-6 weeks earlier than the Whiskey Basin sheep and were in synchrony with spring green-up. The best of groceries delivered at the right time.

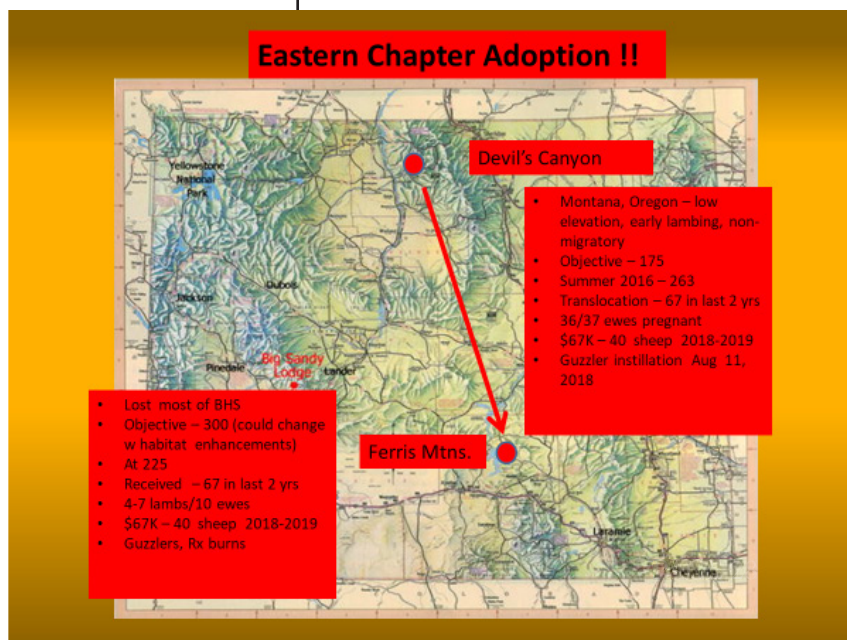
The additional transplants from Devil's Canyon to the Ferris Mountains mentioned above have since occurred. Herd recruitment has been exceptional with 79 lambs/100 ewes in 2015 and 2016! Very high!

There are currently approximately 200 bighorn sheep in the Ferris and Seminoe Mountains and the objective is 300. However, in recent years the Rawlins Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has done an outstanding job of enhancing bighorn sheep habitat with extensive prescribed burns. In addition, they have managed wild fires to the benefit of bighorns. And last, but not least, they have installed two new guzzlers to enhance bighorn

distribution and uniform habitat use. Consequently, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) and BLM will be revisiting the current objective of 300, to see if an increase is justified.

Because of manpower needs and costs, it takes a village to trans locate sheep. Approximately 15-20 folks are needed on the ground during captures to keep the sheep calm for monitoring/collar attachments. Then the sheep are carried to a trailer for transportation. Costs are steep due to helicopter time, radio collars, disease sampling/analysis, etc. In the end it costs about \$2,000 per sheep. The WGFD hopes to trans locate 40 sheep from Devil's Canyon to Ferris Mountains next year. You do the math! In summary, the WY-WSE, ECWSE, BLM and WGFD hope to continue the transplants from the Devil's Canyon herd to the Ferris Mountains until that population objective is reached. We are vetting other potential transplant sites as well.

**We covet our new partnership with the Eastern Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation and thank them for “adopting” our high maintenance child!**



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## National Bighorn Sheep Center

We thought it might be fun to show you what we are doing rather than write up another article....Enjoy!  
Sara Domek, NBSIC Board of Directors & Staff

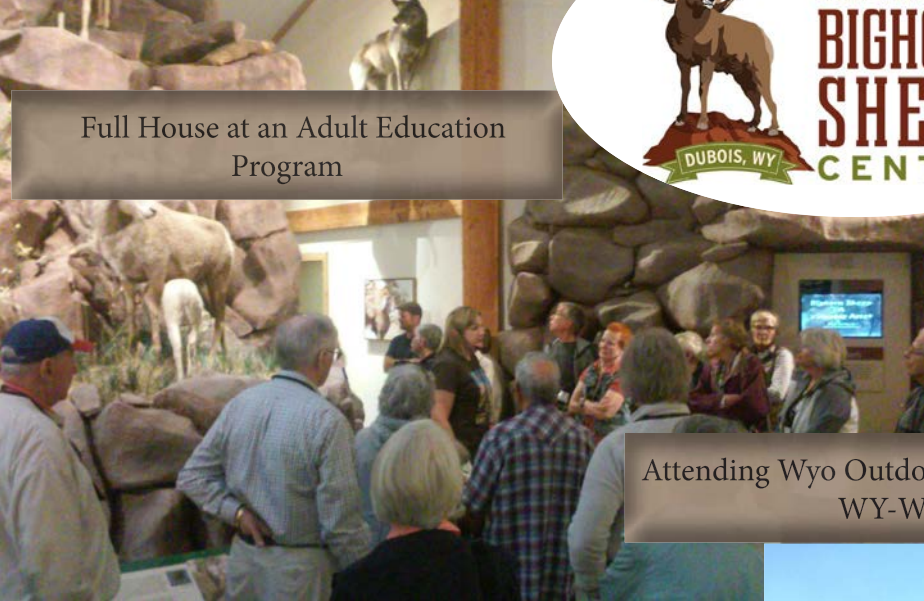
Hosting G&F Commissioner's Meeting  
along with WY-WSF



Education Program



Full House at an Adult Education  
Program



Attending Wyo Outdoor Expo along with  
WY-WSF.



Youth Outdoor Education Program



Staff & Volunteers at the Spring Clean Up



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## Iowa Chapter Adopts the Teton Herd.

By Steve Kilpatrick

A partnership has been made, connecting Des Moines, Iowa to the Grand Tetons of western Wyoming. The Iowa Chapter of the Foundation of the North American Wild Sheep (Iowa FNAWS) has made a commitment to place funding for the Teton bighorns as a high priority. They will partner with Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation (WY-WSF), Grand Teton National Park (GTNP), Bridger-Teton National Forest (B-TFS), Caribou-Targhee National Forest (C-TFS) and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) in conservation of this jeopardized herd.

Wy-WSF has spent considerable resources (approximately half a million dollars) over the past several years helping conserve the Teton BHS. We felt we need assistance from one of our established partners and reached out to Iowa FNAWS. And, respond they did. Iowa FNAWS representatives, Craig Nakamoto and Pat O'Neill attended the Chapter and Affiliate meeting in Jackson this past June. They brought with them a check for \$12,500 and presented it to Grand Teton National Park. The funds will be used for mountain goat and BH sheep captures/ radio collaring in the Tetons during the 2018-19 winter.

Bighorn sheep are an icon of the mountains and foothills of western North America. Like many bighorn sheep herds in the region, the population that lives in the Teton Range of northwest Wyoming is struggling. The

population is small and isolated and over the last 5-10 years the number of bighorns in the herd has declined nearly 50 percent, from 100-125 animals to about 60-90.

Because this population is so small and in decline, biologists agree that Teton bighorns face the risk of local extinction. Historical low elevation habitat was lost to development, leaving these sheep clinging to existence in rugged high country, enduring brutal winter conditions above timberline.

Long-term fire suppression has also affected habitat quality and blocked access to some low elevation winter ranges.

New threats to the bighorn include the loss of crucial winter range due to a significant increase in recreational backcountry skier use and possible habitat competition and pathogen transmission related to an expanding nonnative mountain goat population.

In some cases, sheep have effectively lost up to 30% of the currently available high elevation winter habitat because of displacement by skiers. In other places, sheep were forced to move to avoid skiers, burning precious energy during winter, which can result in poor reproduction and starvation.

The introduced mountain goats, which studies show are likely coming from the Snake River Range to the south, are passing through an active domestic sheep allotment. Mountain goats are less susceptible to die offs from pneumonia related pathogens contracted from domestic

sheep but can be "carriers" and transmit the pathogens to wild sheep. Mountain goats in Grand Teton National Park have tested positive for two such pathogens. In addition, mountain goats can compete with bighorns for habitat. The current population of mountain goats is estimated at 100 or more and modeling indicates that number could grow to over 400. Twining is currently common, and cases of triplets have been documented.

This is a core, native bighorn herd. Meaning once its unique genetics are gone, we cannot bring them back.

The Teton Bighorn Sheep Working Group has identified the following funding needs:

1. Ongoing capture, radio collaring, and disease sampling of bighorn sheep and mountain goats. Iowa FNAWS funds will be used to capture and deploy 7 GPS collars in winter 2018/2019.
2. Remote camera monitoring work. Deploying remote cameras at mineral licks to test a cost-effective technique to estimate population size.
  - a. Purchase additional cameras.
  - b. Support field work to deploy and maintain camera traps and analyze data.
  - c. Support analysis – population estimate.
3. Mountain goat management (translocations or removals).
4. Bighorn sheep and mountain goat helicopter surveys.
5. Revisit of Als Courtemanch's work (with new GPS collar data see if sheep movements and

# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

home range sizes are changing in areas of high, med, and low recreation use levels).

6. Population estimate using fecal samples.

7. Genetic consultation.

8. Summer Resource Selection Function (RSF) and examining effects summer recreation

9. Prescribed Fire.

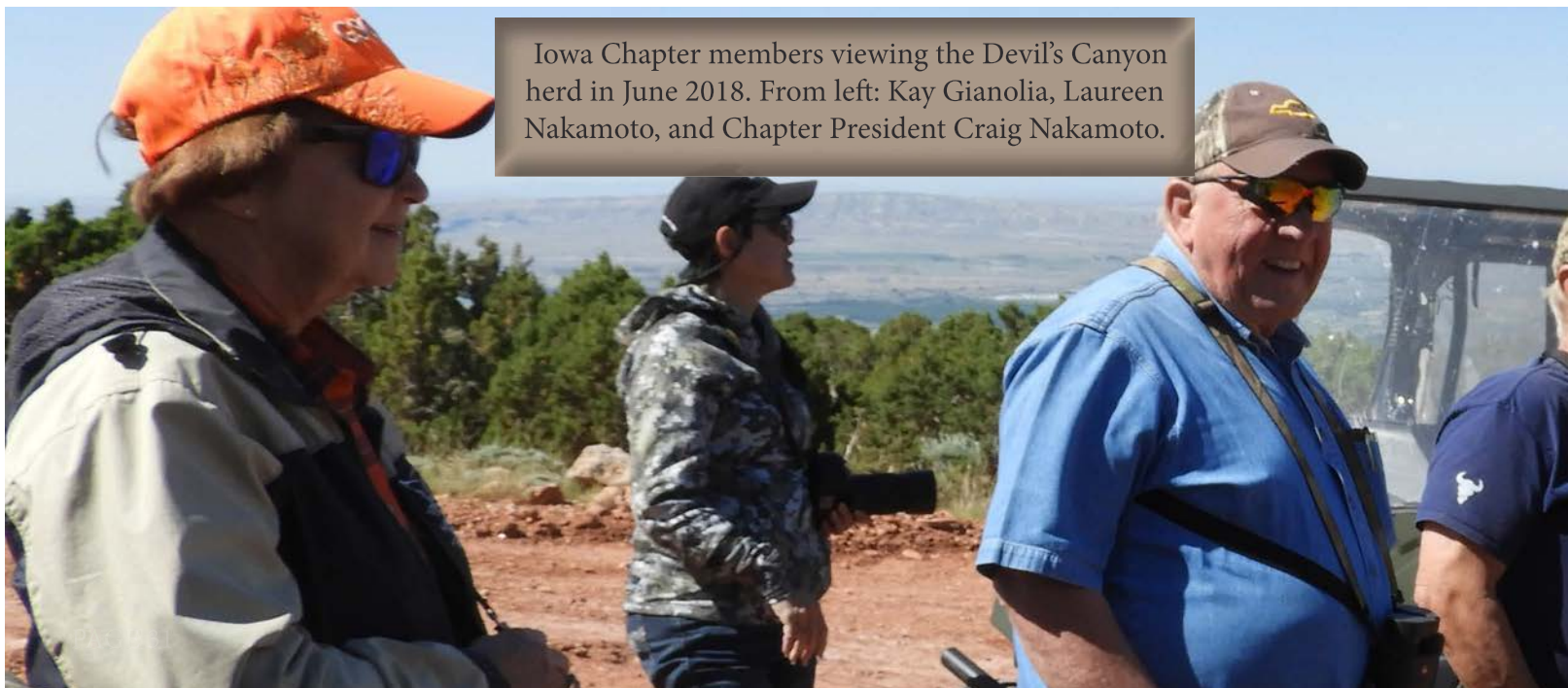
We are all excited to have Iowa FNAWS on our team to conserve this iconic Teton Bighorn Herd. Without bighorns, the Tetons will be less wild and majestic, and our dreams and imaginations tamed.

Commingling  
of bighorns and  
mountain goats.

Bighorn sheep and  
mountain goat caught  
on camera  
trap using the same  
mineral lick within 36  
minutes of each other.



Iowa Chapter members viewing the Devil's Canyon herd in June 2018. From left: Kay Gianolia, Lauren Nakamoto, and Chapter President Craig Nakamoto.





# ENCAMPMENT KIDS CONTINUE WILD SHEEP STUDY

## BY JORDAN SEITZ

Last winter 6th and 8th grade students from the Encampment K12 school had the opportunity to assist local agencies in radio collaring and collecting health data from their local bighorn sheep population (see article in the Spring 2018 RAMPAGE). In the spring, those same students headed back into the field to locate some of the collared sheep using telemetry gear, and observe their habitat. They then helped draft a letter to the Carbon County Committee Members for the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative. The classes took the stance that their local Encampment River WSA (Wilderness Study Area -- part of the local sheep's home range) should be given wilderness protection. It was a tough decision because of the pros and cons that would come with giving the land

the official wilderness title. Fast forward to this fall, and another set of students joined the "Sheep Study." Through classroom presentations on bighorn sheep and phenology, and outdoor field observations, this group will also learn and gather data about the local sheep population. In early October, the students loaded into 4x4s and shuttled up into the foothills where they weathered a couple hours of much needed rain wearing rain gear or gathering under a tarp draped over the hatch of a suburban before the sun came out. It was an excellent "character building" experience (stated by Cufaude as the rain poured down) in addition to educational! Their teacher Jordan Seitz says, "I thoroughly enjoy partnering with local experts and agencies, like Game and Fish, to

study environment related topics in our Platte Valley. Not only does it give my students an opportunity to engage in unique conversations, but they also gain a better perspective and understanding of our natural resources by getting outside and experiencing them first-hand." The plan for the Sheep Study is to continue studying and monitoring the sheep habitat and population down the road (literally!), with hopes to map the core areas the sheep inhabit at various times through the year, and identify key travel corridors. Their goal is to use the gathered data to eventually propose a habitat improvement project. A big thanks goes to G&F biologists Will Schultz, Katie Cheesbrough, and Teal Cufaude for sharing their time and knowledge with the students of Encampment!



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## Pneumonia pathogens in our bighorn sheep herds:

Bacterial pneumonia has been affecting bighorn sheep for over a century, but only recently have biologists and researchers really started to understand this disease. The most obvious sign of pneumonia is all-age die-offs that often happen on winter range. The real dagger, however, is the second phase of the disease where a high percentage of the lamb crop does not survive their first summer year after year. The association of disease in bighorn sheep with domestic sheep is long known, but it took hard-work by multiple generations of wildlife biologists and researchers to reveal what the disease really is. Early disease die-offs in bighorn sheep following association with domestic sheep were often attributed to scabies (i.e. mange). Given our current knowledge, it now seems likely these die-offs were caused by pneumonia with scabies also being present. By the 1930s biologists knew that many bighorn sheep die-offs were caused by pneumonia and many thought lung-worms were the principle cause. Subsequent experiments that infected bighorn sheep with high doses of lungworm larvae failed to produce any pneumonia symptoms and indicated that lung-worms are not the primary cause of pneumonia in bighorn sheep. As microbiological techniques improved, certain bacteria within the Pasteurella family were identified as the cause of this disease. Most Pasteurella bacteria do not pose much risk to bighorn sheep, but a few species that produce a toxin, leukotoxin, which attacks immune cells do pose a risk. Experimental infection with specific leukotoxin producing Pasteurella strains caused pneumonia in the infected bighorn sheep but not domestic sheep; however the available technology still failed to accurately distinguish different Pasteurella species and also failed to identify an extremely important agent of this disease. It was only ten years ago that another bacterium, Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae or M.ovi for short, was first proposed as the primary cause of pneumonia in bighorn

sheep and it was just six years ago that experiments confirming the importance of this pathogen were first published. Even more recently, transmissible sinus tumors (suspected to be caused by an unidentified virus) were first described in bighorn sheep and found to be associated with increased nasal shedding of Pasteurella and M.ovi infections. Given the recent discovery of the infectious agents that cause pneumonia in bighorn sheep, there's a lot left to learn about the disease. That being said, there is a lot we can confidently say about the cause of pneumonia in bighorn sheep, including but not limited to:

- Pneumonia in bighorn sheep originated from domestic sheep and goats and these domestic counterparts still pose a risk to wild sheep. That's not to say a wild sheep never died of pneumonia before domestic sheep and goats first showed up, but the appearance of this widespread and persistent disease in bighorn sheep is clearly linked to their domestic counterparts.
- Prolonged contact between bighorn sheep and the typical domestic sheep flock will likely lead to pneumonia in the bighorn sheep.
- If M.ovi is not present, the risk of pneumonia affecting bighorn sheep is much lower.
- The disease is typically polymicrobial and initiated by M.ovi disabling respiratory cilia from clearing lungs of debris. This helps Pasteurellas (and potentially other organisms) invade the lungs and cause severe infections. From this knowledge stems insights into how we can address the issue of pneumonia in bighorn sheep. What additional management insights could be gained if we continue to deepen our understanding of this disease?

As a start to deepen this understanding state, federal, and university biologists in Wyoming and Montana have been working together to sample bighorn sheep populations for pneumonia pathogens over the last five years. The group aimed to learn how prevalent Pasteurellas and M.ovi are among the states' bighorn sheep populations and how their presence in a population

relates to herd performance. The collective effort captured and tested over 800 animals from over 20 different populations across the two states. Populations included in the research included some fabled ones such as Wyoming's 'core native herds', Montana's Missouri Breaks populations, and Montana's Sun River population. Below are several key findings of the effort:

- Pasteurellas were found in every population and M.ovi was found in about ¾ of the populations sampled. Some populations hosted Pasteurellas without M.ovi but populations that hosted M.ovi always hosted Pasteurellas too.
- The tests to detect pneumonia pathogens in bighorn sheep are prone to false negative errors, making it challenging to precisely track pathogen communities. Failure to detect a pathogen in a population doesn't necessarily mean it's not present.
- Populations that host M.ovi are more likely to have a history of pneumonia die-offs than those where it was not detected.
- Average lamb recruitment was higher in the five populations where M.ovi was not detected than in the 17 where M.ovi was detected (37 lambs: 100 ewes vs. 25 lambs: 100 ewes) but there was a lot of variability in average recruitment of populations hosting M.ovi. All populations with poor recruitment rates (<20 lambs:100 ewes) hosted M.ovi (and Pasteurellas) but about half of the populations with strong recruitment rates (>30 lambs:100 ewes) also hosted M.ovi.
- Approximately 90% of the individual bighorn sheep existing in the study populations live in a population that carries M.ovi and Pasteurellas. Populations hosting M.ovi were larger on average than populations where M.ovi was not detected.
- Populations hosting M.ovi were more likely to be connected to other populations than populations where M.ovi was not detected. All populations where M.ovi was not detected were thought to have limited or no connectivity

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## Can populations have disease and be healthy?

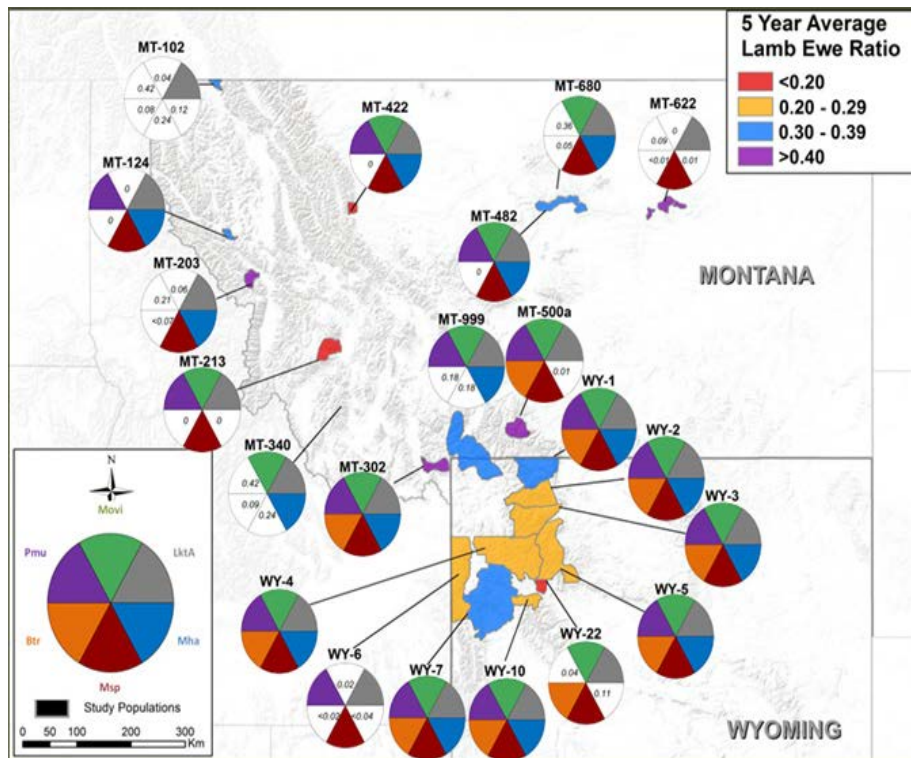
By Carson Butler, Grand Teton National Park

with other populations.

This work re-affirms the important role of *M.ovi* in bighorn sheep pneumonia and highlights future challenges as well as reasons for optimism. It would appear that the pneumonia pathogens are established in bighorn sheep in Wyoming and Montana and are not likely to go away. In addition to addressing risk of disease from domestic sheep and goats, we need to also consider how to manage disease caused by pathogens already resident in many of our bighorn sheep populations. Maintaining populations that are free of pneumonia pathogens is clearly a formidable challenge and may require having smaller herd ranges, smaller population sizes, and little connectivity among populations in order to sufficiently reduce risk of pathogen introduction. These sacrifices come with their own costs for bighorn sheep conservation. Reason for optimism comes from the appearance that populations can have strong herd performance while hosting pneumonia pathogens. This doesn't mean those populations are completely free of pneumonia, but then again does a population need to be completely free of disease to be considered healthy? Not even human populations are completely free of disease so perhaps absence of disease is not the best definition of health. We don't yet know why some populations appear to be doing well despite hosting a full suite of pneumonia pathogens, but their existence offers hope that a mechanism exists to reduce the impact of pneumonia on bighorn sheep. As technology progresses, so too does our power to investigate genetics, nutrition, stress, habitat, and numerous other biological factors that might influence how populations respond to pneumonia pathogens. If traits associated with reduced impacts of pneumonia can be identified, management strategies that promote these traits could be developed to help mitigate the disease. A logical next step that is being pursued is to combine the results

of numerous other investigations of pneumonia pathogens in bighorn sheep. A longer list of populations known to host the pathogens and have strong population performance will improve our ability to identify shared traits of these populations that may be linked to more resilience. There's little hope bighorn sheep will ever be completely immune to pneumonia pathogens, but even a reduction in the typical severity of

Funding for this work was provided through the Montana, Wyoming, and Eastern Chapters of the Wild Sheep Foundation, the Pittman Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, the Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, Yellowstone Forever (formerly the Yellowstone Park Foundation), and the National Park Service.



disease could do a lot for management and conservation of the species. The prospect of learning more about this disease while applying what we already do know to wild sheep management gives me optimism that there will be more sheep on the mountain for the next generation to enjoy.

The work described above would not be possible without the efforts of dozens of dedicated professionals, students and volunteers from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, Montana State University, and the Wild Sheep Foundation.

Map of study populations and detected bacterial pneumonia pathogens, with population ranges color coded by the five-year average lamb ewe ratio. Populations are labeled according to their state defined hunting unit or district. All sections of the pie-charts are fixed to equal size and represent whether the respective pathogens were detected in the study population. Where pathogens were not detected, the numbers in the unfilled section indicate the probability the pathogens were present. The green slice represents *M.ovi* and the remaining slices represent *Pasteurella* species that have been associated with pneumonia in bighorn. Ranges of populations without adequate recruitment data are not shown.



Ross German  
PHOTOGRAPHY



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep – Solutions through Collaboration

By Daryl Lutz, WGFD – Lander Region Wildlife Management Coordinator

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department, in partnership with the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, the National Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Center, and the University of Wyoming's Ruckelshaus Institute, is embarking on a public engagement



process to intensively explore management concerns, issues and opportunities for the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep herd. This herd has struggled to recover from a catastrophic all-age die-off caused by pneumonia in 1991 causing an estimated 30% decline in the number of wild sheep in this herd. The management goal is 1,350 sheep and there are an estimated 700-800 sheep in this population today. They continue to languish below the desired population size primarily because lamb survival is very low due, in part, to the persistence of lamb pneumonia. Recruitment has been alarmingly low each of the past 2 years. In addition, WGFD observed a change in bighorn sheep distribution and behavior on winter ranges the last two years. The bottom-line is, we simply don't know how to turn this important bighorn sheep population around and hopefully arrest the decline. We do know diseases, habitat condition, and predator

activity are having effects on this herd and we are working with University of Wyoming researchers to better understand the dynamics of all these factors. It goes without saying the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep herd is important at the State and

even the National level. It was once one of the biggest Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep populations in the world and served to provide hunting and viewing opportunities locally and as a source herd for sheep transplants throughout the West. This herd continues to decline

and recently at an alarming rate. There is much to be learned how to best address this decline and to implement management strategies and projects most likely to succeed in arresting the decline and reversing this trend. To do this, it is clear we must consider a different approach. This includes enlisting and engaging with everyone interested to capitalize on local knowledge and the expertise of other sheep biologist/researchers, increase capacity to conduct needed research and management, and to develop acceptance of known needed work and perhaps new/novel approaches and ideas to address these

critical issues.

WGFD has had similar experiences with mule deer population decline statewide. The result was implementation of the Mule Deer Initiative and engaging with and including all who are passionate about the species in a formalized collaborative process. Collaboration, in a formalized setting, creates space for increased trust, situational understanding, funding, social/political acceptance of old and new ideas, and perhaps most importantly, critical thinking to develop ideas or solutions to progressively address the sheep population decline.

This process began this fall with a "situation assessment" that will help tailor the collaborative process. During this coming winter through next spring we will host a series of workshops with all interested and bring bighorn sheep specialists from within the Department and elsewhere together in a formalized, structured way to best chart a path forward in an attempt to reverse the trend in bighorn sheep numbers in this iconic herd.



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## Giving bighorn sheep habitat a new look on the Southfork.

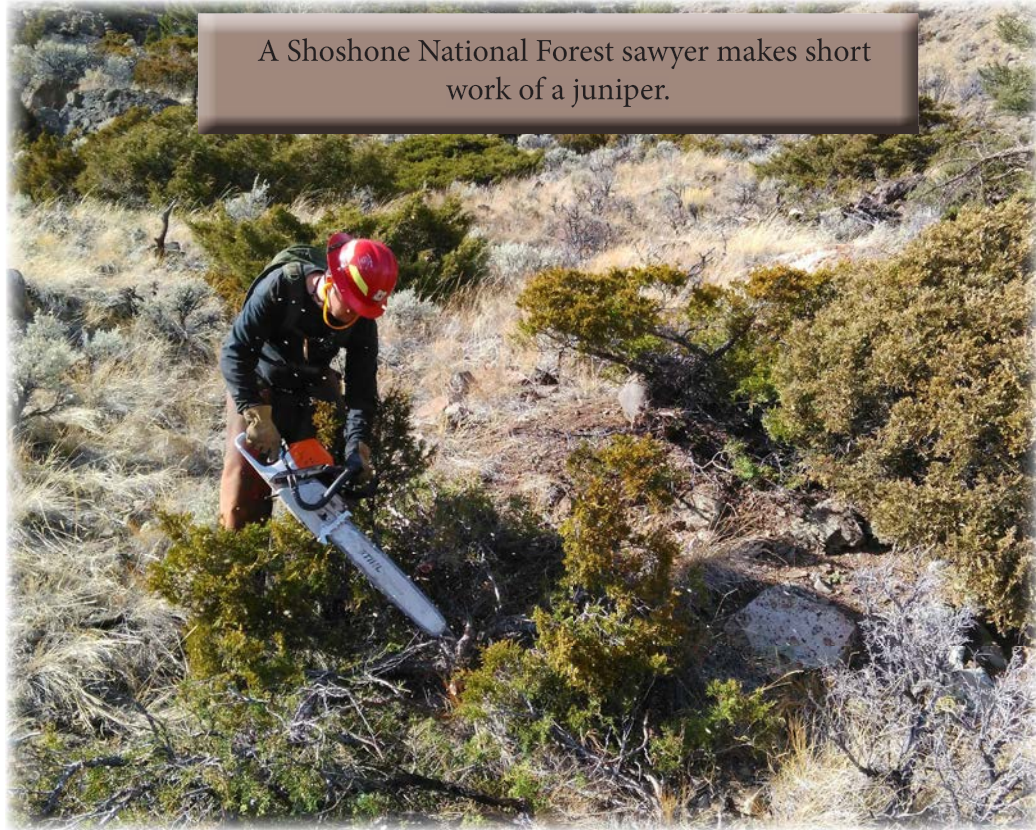
By Jerry Altermatt

Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Shoshone National Forest completed a conifer removal project within bighorn sheep crucial winter range on the upper Southfork of the Shoshone River. Using a combination of a private contractor and a Shoshone National Forest crew, juniper and other conifers were removed using chainsaws on a total of 516 acres.

Extremely rough and rocky terrain precluded the use of mulching machinery, leaving chainsawing as the only practical option to mechanically remove the conifer.

In most areas, trees were lopped and scattered, but where densities of trees was high, hand piling was employed. These piles will be burned during the winter.

The upper Southfork of the Shoshone River is one of the most important winter ranges for bighorn sheep in the Absaroka



A Shoshone National Forest sawyer makes short work of a juniper.

Mountains. Bighorn sheep rely on sagebrush/grassland habitats and the notorious high winds of the Southfork to provide

wind-swept winter forage.

In the absence of fire, these critical foraging areas become encroached with conifers, which not only outcompete forage plants, but reduce visibility for bighorn sheep, making sheep more reluctant to use the areas.

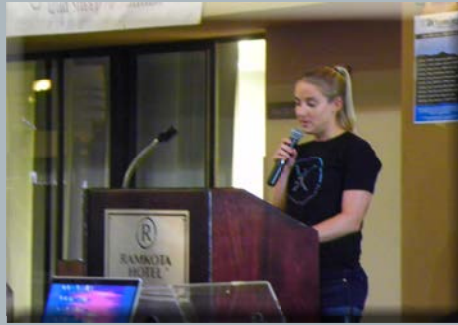
The project will maintain the value of winter habitat for bighorn sheep as well as mule deer and elk.

The project was funded by Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Shoshone National Forest



Conifer encroached bighorn sheep crucial winter range on the Southfork of the Shoshone waiting for a new look.

# 2018 Annual Convention/Banquet





# June 2, 2018 in Casper, WY



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## “Nutrition, predation, and disease in bighorn sheep: exciting new research to get underway this spring”

By Rachel Smiley, Brittany Wagler, and Kevin Monteith

As the morning sun started to flood over Arrow Mountain and into Whiskey Basin, Brittany and Rachel heaved their packs onto their backs and headed up the Glacier Trail. They had been covering as much ground as possible in the Wind River and Gros Ventre Ranges this past summer exploring the places where collared bighorn sheep lived. Their goal for this trip was to find a route up Spider Peak- a formidable mountain just a mile from the continental divide in the Fitzpatrick Wilderness. During a previous trip with WGFD biologist Greg Anderson, the three of them stared at the sheer granite faces of Spider Peak from No Man's Pass and concluded there was no way sheep would hang out there. The GPS collar data, however, indicated otherwise. Many of the collared ewes' locations were scattered all around the seemingly vertical slopes. The next morning, from their camp on the shore of Bomber Lake, they set out with telemetry, and spotting scopes. Crawling up talus fields, they made their way around the east side of the mountain. Rachel glanced up from the boulders and saw Brittany frozen, her eyes fixed on something that she could not yet see. She carefully stepped over to where Brittany stood, and saw what had caught her eye. On a small rocky outcropping not 50 yards above them were two ewes and two lambs. The researchers stood perfectly still and watched as the ewes transitioned from alertly watching them back to grazing on the small patches of sedges and alpine havens. As they watched, they noticed that one of the ewes

looked much skinnier than the other, and still had much of her winter coat to shed, long clumps of hair hanging off of her. Then they heard a wheezing. Her lamb was coughing, its whole body noticeably contracting with every wheeze. This was a stark reminder of why they were there, exploring sheep country in preparation for the next phases of the Wyoming Bighorn Sheep Nutrition Disease Project. Hired on as graduate students at the University of Wyoming under Dr. Kevin Monteith, the two are now part of a team of researchers, biologists, and wildlife managers from all over the state charged with investigating the causes of poor lamb recruitment in the Whiskey Basin bighorn sheep alongside the Jackson and Cody herds. Their goal is to capture and collar lambs for the next three summers to disentangle the role of predation, disease, and nutrition in lamb mortality. They will also conduct habitat surveys to evaluate the nutritional availability and habitat quality in the sheep's summer ranges. Overall, they hope to better understand how environmental factors influence how sheep respond to and cope with disease. For the past century, bighorn sheep herds have experienced die offs, largely because of bacterial pathogens associated with pneumonia.. Some populations are able to recover quickly from these die-offs while others

continue to decline or remain stagnant. The Whiskey Basin herd has been struggling to recover from a pneumonia outbreak in the 1990's. The Gros Ventre herd has suffered several outbreaks in the past few decades, but has recovered following each outbreak. Ongoing research throughout North America has made strides in identifying the specific pathogens involved in causing pneumonia, however, the ecological factors that may well interact with the presence of disease remain unclear. Nevertheless, it is an understanding of those ecological factors that may well help identify management alternatives for populations afflicted by disease. With critical support from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition, Bureau of Land Management, and Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation to get the next phase of this research underway, researchers will begin the coming spring to evaluate lamb survival and summer nutrition in more detail.



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## “Water for Bighorns in the Bighorns”

By Jerry Altermatt



Wyoming Game and Fish Department recently teamed up the Bureau of Land Management to install two guzzlers on rim of Devil Canyon in the Bighorn Mountains east of Lovell, WY. The guzzlers will provide water for bighorn sheep and other wildlife in an otherwise dry area within the range of the Devil Canyon bighorn sheep herd. The two tanks were placed about a mile apart on the east rim of Devil Canyon. The tanks were located on narrow benches just below the canyon rim to eliminate the need to fence out cattle. The location of the tanks will also allow sheep to use the water sources without venturing far from escape terrain. The rugged terrain of the tank locations made foot access difficult and allow vehicle impossible. Wyoming Game and Fish Department personnel leveled the rocky sites with pick axes and shovels in preparation for the 8 ft

X 16 ft tanks (purchased from Boss Tanks, Elko NV). Bureau of Land Management contracted a Type III helicopter to sling the tanks in from the Cottonwood Trailhead, six miles away. Wyoming Game and Fish Department Habitat and Access crew will install the two 25 ft X 100 ft poly aprons above the rim and approximately 1,300 feet of pipe next summer to complete the project. The new water sources will expand the habitat bighorn sheep can effectively use east of Devil Canyon. The water will be particularly important during lambing, when ewes seem to prefer the rugged canyon rims. Funding for the project was provided by Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation, Bowhunters of Wyoming, Bureau of Land Management and Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

**(Continued from page 41)**

Although much more support will be needed to see the project through to completion, the current partnerships are strong and all players, from financial supports all the way to the researchers are committed to helping do their part in seeking possible solutions to aid in keeping sheep on the mountain.



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## Two Domestic Goats Removed From Devils Canyon Area

by Leslie Schreiber

The Devils Canyon bighorn sheep population consists of approximately 200 sheep that live in and near Devils Canyon located east of Bighorn Lake in the northern Bighorn Mountains. This herd provided sheep for transplanting to the Ferris & Seminoe Mountains over the past 4 years. On August 31, 2018, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) personnel

WGFD obtained permission to lethally remove the goats, because of the disease risk they present to wild sheep. During the next several days, WGFD personnel attempted to locate the goats from the ground, but were unsuccessful. Due to the difficulty of the terrain, WGFD requested emergency funds (\$3,000) from WY-WSF to pay for a helicopter search. WY-WSF approved the funds for

were picked up on the shore of Bighorn Lake by boat, transferred to a vehicle, and transported to the State Veterinary Lab for necropsy. Test results indicate that the goats carried pathogens already present in the Devils Canyon herd, and no *M. ovi* was detected. Neither of the goats showed any indication of pneumonia. The goats were located less than 1 mile from two collared bighorn sheep rams (collars also



confirmed the sighting of two domestic goats near Devils Canyon, which fell within currently occupied bighorn sheep range in hunt area 12. Domestic goats can carry diseases which could potentially be passed to wild sheep. Considerable effort was made to locate the goats' owners, with no success. Through coordination with the Wyoming State Veterinarian,

flying and on September 11, 2018, WGFD personnel were able to locate the goats 1.3 miles north of their last location. The helicopter landed and WGFD personnel were able to lethally remove the goats and disease samples were taken. Both goats were Boer (or Boer X) males with no identifying tags or markers. The larger male weighed 219 lbs. The carcasses

funded by WY-WSF). Those rams are moving around normally, and WGFD will continue to monitor the health of this herd with more disease testing planned for winter 2018-19. Only through the close partnership of WGFD and WY-WSF were we able to act quickly to remove these potential disease threats to the Devils Canyon herd.

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# New Board of Director's Member

## Introducing: Ryan Amundson

From an early age, I knew that I wanted to be out West and work to conserve and manage wildlife and their habitats. I moved from a small farming community in central Iowa to Laramie for college in 1991. At UW, I studied rangeland management and fish and wildlife management. Starting in 1995 I began my employment with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, where I worked in the habitat field for 23 years. I had supervisors and co-workers that fueled my passion for bighorn sheep over my career including Gary Butler, Bill Gerhart, Ian Tator, Doug McWhirter, Martin Hicks, and many others too numerous to mention. Doug and I co-chaired the Department's Bighorn Sheep Working Group for several years, tackling many sheep-centric issues including habitat, disease, population management, and research. In addition, I participated on the Governor's Big Game License Coalition / Bighorn Sheep Committee and also chaired the Coalition for two years. Those special assignments helped me to really grasp bighorn sheep management issues and at the same time also introduce me to the Wyoming Chapter of Wild Sheep Foundation. My time with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department was nothing short of spectacular. I made so many good memories and developed many friendships with co-workers, and am so proud of the accomplishments we were able to complete during my tenure. The Department is made up of many dedicated professionals and is led by a top notch administration. In June, I left the Department to go to the private sector. Today, I'm managing wildlife and land resources on the Old Elk Ranch located east of Laramie. The ranch has many different habitat types within its boundaries and wildlife is plentiful. While no bighorn sheep habitat can be found here unfortunately, habitat for other big game species is present across all seasonal ranges. Wildlife habitat on the ranch is of primary importance to the owners, and they dedicate financial

and human resources to manage for native habitats and open spaces. I became a member of the Wyoming Chapter of Wild Sheep Foundation in the late 1990's and graduated to Life Member #384 several years ago. My children, Sierra and Drake, are Life Members #438 and #460. Now that I've moved on from work in the state wildlife agency, I'm able to contribute to the chapter as a board member. With the background I have, I'm hoping I'll be able to provide a lot of input on projects and proposals, to make sure the Foundation is getting a good return on their investment in the projects we choose to fund. The relationships I have made over the years with Department employees, University faculty, and others didn't disappear upon my departure and I know that I can have frank, open and honest discussions with them



about proposed projects and we can collectively accomplish great things for wild sheep and wild places and we'll do so being fiscally responsible and transparent. Others have mentioned the Wyoming Chapter of Wild Sheep Foundation is like "family". I couldn't agree more. I look forward to the annual meeting and fund raiser, winter meeting, and everything in between, where

I have a chance to visit with people that share the same passion for wild sheep and wild places. "Family" has been there to support my daughter, Sierra, as she prepares for a career in wildlife disease research, with financial assistance for an internship at the Thorne Williams Research Center, and the on-going support and cheer leading that everyone gives her when they see her. "Family" awarded me the Ron Ball Award this past June in Casper. That award means more to me than any other I've received in my 23 years of working for wildlife, and only provides "more fuel to my fire" to work for the Foundation. My admiration for bighorn sheep comes from the fact that they are such a fragile specie, but yet choose to live in some of the most inhospitable country known to man. As Gary Butler has stated, "bighorn sheep are

the canary in the mine". This is so true, as the specie can be an indicator of the health of our higher elevation habitats in Wyoming that are home to a myriad of other species seasonally. When bighorns do well, so do the dozens of other species that utilize the same habitats. I promise to give the organization my best effort. We need to continue to grow

and maintain our position as the premiere conservation organization in the state, and be recognized regionally and nationally as leaders in the conservation world. We have a passionate group of people giving of their time, talent, and money. Thanks to every single member that contributes to our collective cause of "Putting and Keeping Sheep and Kids on the Mountain".

## New Board of Director's Member Introducing: Mick Mickelsen

I am a Wyoming native and was born and raised in Wheatland where I have enjoyed the outdoors all my life. My four children, seven grandchildren and wife also enjoy the outdoors. My wife and I try to spend at least a couple of days a week in the mountains around Wheatland watching and listening. I have been lucky to have a sheep herd close by and have been able to watch them interact and live their lives. Each spring brings the “who drew a permit and who gets to watch and wait for next year” conversations, and then the fall questions are “what rams were harvested, or not even sighted?” I have followed the National and Wyoming Sheep Foundations from their early years and have always been amazed at what they have accomplished through time. Putting Sheep on the Mountain has become a reality due to the efforts of the Wyoming Game and Fish and the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation and due to their work

there are now herds in many new places throughout the state. The future looks great for wild sheep. I am honored and thrilled to be able to work with the dedicated

people that compose the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation and look forward to helping them achieve the goals they have set.



# “The Final Ram”

By Eric Johnson

In the journey for the FNAWS, the Rocky Mountain Bighorn tag is probably the hardest to draw or obtain. After years of sitting through state draws and several years of One More For Four drawings waiting for that ounce of luck we all dream about happening to us. I started to consider Conservation tags that benefit all, the management of the species, it's future, my opportunity, and all the opportunities a well managed herd provides for future generations. After participating unsuccessfully in a few auctions, I felt I had some luck at the Iowa FNAWS banquet and came home with one of the Wyoming Governor's Bighorn Sheep tags. What a better way to finish my slam than in my home state.

I hired WY-WSF Life Member, Josh Martoglio of Shoshone Lodge Outfitters to help make this a reality. I have hunted elk with Josh the past 2 years and have been impressed with his ability to find quality animals quickly and you can just tell he loves what he does and cares about the conservation of wild sheep.

Finding an older age class ram was important to me. We made a plan to mutually scout over the summer and to hunt the best ram we had found during the opening week of the rifle season. If unsuccessful we were going to hunt the last two weeks of the season for sheep and elk (as I drew a limited quota elk tag in a good sheep unit too).

Fast forward to late August,

we compared notes, although we both had seen many rams, we did not find the “one”. We decided to hunt one of Josh's favorite areas that historically has many rams and some nice ones too.

Like many hunts originating out of Cody, Wyoming we met at the Irma for breakfast 2 days



before the opener. Josh, Eduardo, Kenny and I plus 10 horses and mules drove to the trailhead and packed the stock and headed out for a long ride to spike camp, about 20 miles. After riding most of the day along a river we headed up a tributary to higher ground. After several miles of sidehilling through dense timber, across rocky avalanche chutes we came to the edge of timberline to a beautiful meadow with a bugling bull elk and 7 rams above camp. You could not ask for a better setting. We setup our tents and kitchen rain fly in the legendary wind the Wyoming mountains are known for.

The next morning we woke to another beautiful sunny day. The plan was to ride up to the divide and scout for some rams Josh had seen a week earlier on the south side. While taking care of my morning duties I saw a couple rams up by a snowfield above camp.

Josh took a look and saw them go over the top of the rocky ridge. On our ride up to the divide we glassed that rocky slope and noticed several moving brown dots, a half dozen grizzly bears were looking for moths!

We spent most of the morning glassing the south side of the divide turning up lots of ewes, lambs, and elk, but no rams.

The wind was picking up and we felt we needed to get to a higher vantage point and glass the north side which was out of the wind. Kenny took the horses back to camp while Josh, Eduardo, and I climbed up the ridgeline to the north east with the plan to hike along it and then drop off it all the way back to camp (where the G-bears were seen).

We worked our way up to the high point at over 12,500 ft looking for rams. While making our way down a particularly steep spot above some cliffs, rolling a rock or two in the process, out popped 3 rams from the cliffs each bigger than the previous one. We were able to get a pretty good look at them before they dropped into the next basin. One ram was quite large and we realized that these are the rams we





saw go over the top in the morning.

saw 6 rams now, all on the far side of the basin. We were able to get some good video of the biggest ram and decided to hunt this ram on opening morning. On our descent back to camp on the steep rocky slope we were happy to see that the G-bears had vacated the area!

On opening morning we woke early and rode the horses back up the rocky slope to the ridgeline at over 12,000 ft. The horses and

mules did great navigating the rocky slope and letting us save our energy. Once on the ridgeline we moved down to the basin we left the rams in the night before. We found only 3 rams in the basin, but lucky for us the biggest ram was there and up and feeding. We were able to close the distance to about 650 yards by walking on the off side of the ridge until we got cliffed out. Shortly thereafter the rams bedded and we had time to get around the cliffs but only able to close the distance to 480 yards. Josh said this is where we need to shoot from and asked if I have a rear bag to support my rifle (2017 WY-WSF Banquet rifle). Of course

pack and sat it on a rock. While getting set up for the shot I accidentally bumped the rock ever so slightly, and the bag fell on it's long edge and rolled down off the ridge into the cliffs never to be seen again! We all had a good laugh and it relaxed me quite a bit!

We laid there, prone for some

45 minutes waiting for the ram to stand up. Finally just when I was getting uncomfortable, he stood, turned around, paused facing us, and started walking toward us, then faster, bringing the other 2 rams up under the slope toward us. Once they dropped into a steep ravine we were able to



reposition for a sitting/kneeling shot downhill below us. The rams finally came out of the ravine one by one and stopped in the sun about 220 yards below us all bunched up together. Seemed like minutes waiting for them to separate...once they were all clear I was able to squeeze

the shot off to fulfill my FNAWS in my home state at over 12k ft on top of the Wyoming rocky mountains!

The feeling was great to have stood on 4 mountains from Mexico, to Wyoming, to BC and the NWT chasing these magnificent creatures that deserve a high place on the mountain.

The ram was just what I wanted an old broomed 10 yr old ram with lots of wear and tear on his horns. We had a steep and long hike to get him back to camp, where we had a celebration of his life.

I encourage everyone to get involved, to do whatever you can do to keep and put wild sheep back on the mountain for future generations.

Special thanks to my wife, Katherine,

Also: Arctic Red River Outfitters, Tavas and Rebecca Molnar, guide Alan Klassen,

Folding Mountain Outfitters, Blair and Rebecca Miller, guide Chad Miller,

Desert Hunt, Luis Romero, guide Rafael Aguilar.

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# “My Arm Pit Ram”

By Matt Lentsch

(Continued from page 26)

Once the hail stopped, all 12 rams ran off into Montana. It had been well over an hour since I shot, and I was sure MAPR would have lain down if he was hit. We went back and found the arrow. Sure enough, no blood. Somehow, I had missed.

At that point I questioned what went wrong. A forty-yard broadside shot should have been a chip shot. During my stalk I looked down and discovered one of the blades had deployed, likely snagging some sagebrush. At the time, I simply reached down and pushed the blade back into position. I concluded that the plastic shock collar that locks the blades in got damaged. The force of releasing the arrow likely caused the blade to deploy in flight causing the arrow to fly erratic. Looking back, I should have grabbed another arrow out of my quiver and that mistake just cost me a record book ram.

The next day the wind blew hard and never let up. I knew I could not shoot a bow in 30-50 mph winds. All we could do was glass for the band of rams. Late in the morning we spotted 3 rams bedded several miles east. One was the one horned ram. Unfortunately, the rams were in Montana, strongly suggesting MAPR was somewhere in Montana also.

On day three, we once again found the one horned ram with 4 others. The rams had moved back into Wyoming. Later we spotted 6 more rams in two small bands, but no MAPR. Remembering how MAPR suddenly appeared on opening day, we did our best to keep tabs on all the rams. At one point two of the bands converged and bedded. We had been watching the bedded rams for several hours when I noticed there was now an extra ram. A look through my spotting scope and I confirmed MAPR was back. Somehow, he slipped in out of a side canyon. I grabbed my bow started my stalk. This time I was able to get within

34 yards of MAPR but never had a clear ethical shot. Two of the younger rams spooked, running away with the others following. Not wanting to push the rams out of the area, I backed off.

The next morning, we quickly found the one horned ram with two younger rams. Hoping MAPR and the others were near, we began to scour the area. I noticed many fresh sheep tracks in a mud puddle in a rut in the road. We had gone by the puddle only an hour before and saw no tracks. We knew the rams were in the area. A few minutes later we located 8 rams (including MAPR) along a nearby canyon rim. I was still 500 yards from the rams when to my surprise, the rams spooked and took off at a dead run. The last we saw of the rams was them dropping off into a deep canyon over two miles away. At that point I knew pursuing the rams into the canyon would likely only push them out of the area. Stinging from what just happened, I decided to go home for a day, let things settle down, get a few things done for work and most importantly collect my composure.

The drive home was painful. All I could do is think about how I blew my opportunity on day one. If I only had swapped the arrow for another in my quiver, I thought.

The next day, my wife Cindy and our two younger sons decided to go back up to camp. They had been a big part of my scouting trips and it seemed fitting they participated in the hunt.

We were getting close to camp when Kevin flagged us down, saying four rams were heading our way and that I needed to be “on top of that ridge in two minutes”. I scrambled to throw my camouflage on. I didn’t even get a leg in my bibs when I spotted MAPR’s head pop over the rise. He was with 3 other rams. It was clear the rams were set on a destination to the canyons to the south. I recognized the other rams as those remaining after they split up on day one. Interestingly, it

was as if MAPR came back for the rest of his buddies and he was escorting them back to the main band of rams.

I quickly grabbed my bow and set out to head them off.

MAPR was about 250 yards away when he stopped, intensely staring at me. The other rams were several hundred yards behind feeding. MAPR kept staring, pinning me down. The other rams eventually caught up and they all bedded. I was behind the only piece of sage in the area, and there was nothing but 6-inch-tall grass between me and the rams. I was leery of pushing the rams after what happened the day before. I thought my best opportunity at getting a shot was to stay put and hopefully the rams would continue my way. Almost an hour went by before the rams got up. Unfortunately, the rams moved away from me. I tried to out flank them but couldn’t. The rams were feeding in a prescribed burn. I huddled behind a juniper, hoping the rams would feed my way. After 20 minutes the rams bedded.

It was another hour before the rams got up. Once again MAPR took the lead and began walking towards his original destination. I needed to decide, quick. I was 250 yards from MAPR and he was not getting any closer. I needed to decide, risk spooking the rams or letting them go for another day. I went for it, making a beeline at a 45-degree angle to where I calculated MAPR was heading; keeping low and avoiding eye contact. I was about 90 yards away when he stopped. I could tell he was getting spooked. Luckily the other rams still seemed relatively calm and were feeding. MAPR turned and started back towards the other rams. I bee lined it back towards the other rams. I was 43 yards away when MAPR met the other rams. I was almost in total disbelief when I realized I was once again in bow range. There was a problem however. MAPR was behind another ram and

# “My Arm Pit Ram”

By Matt Lentsch

(Continued from page 50)

I did not have a clear shot. I patiently waited for the other ram to move. As soon as I had a clear shot I brought my bow up. A second problem. The wind was blowing so hard I could not stay on target. I was not about to chance making a marginal shot, so I let down. I told myself, “breathe”. Suddenly I felt the wind die down. I brought my bow up and made a perfect double lung shot. MAPR ran about 200 yards before he expired. Amazingly all this took place in sight of Cindy and the boys. It could not have been a more perfect day.

As I approached MAPR I was in awe of what great ram he truly was. Very seldom are hunters blessed with such an opportunity to hunt such a magnificent animal in such an awesome place.

About the Author: Matt Lentsch is a Wyoming native; growing up in Sheridan and migrated to the Big Horn Basin in the 1980s. He has served as the Worland game warden since 1992. His passion is getting kids out hunting. In 2000 he founded the Paint Rock Hunter Mentor Program which serves as one of the best youth hunter recruitment programs in Wyoming.

MAPR scored 186 0/8 inches making him the largest bighorn sheep ram ever taken with a bow in the state of Wyoming.

**The Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation played an integral role in providing funding for the bighorn transplants into Devils Canyon and continues to support transplants of sheep from Devils Canyon into new areas such as the Ferris Mountains.**



# “Naming Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation as your beneficiary” By Ryan Amundson

Last winter I was sitting in the lobby of a tire shop flipping through old magazines laying on a coffee table. I came across a Ducks Unlimited magazine article that talked about planned giving options.

While highly interested in the topic, I just never thought articles like this one pertained much to me. One kid in college, another heading there next year, a state employee for 23 years, a mortgage on a farm and house, not much cash in the bank, and living paycheck to paycheck.

I own a pickup, a few horses, two huntin' dogs, and a couple guns. That's not a very deep portfolio, but would guess it is quite similar to other hard working folks that are members of this organization too.

I continued reading the article and getting towards the end, and the topic shifted to another option of naming a conservation organization as the beneficiary in a life insurance policy.

I've had a life insurance policy through Northwestern Mutual since I was a baby that my parents started for me, and I inherited the responsibility of the annual premiums when I became an adult. I've picked up a couple other life insurance policies since then, and feel confident that my family will be taken care of when I pass.

Knowing this, I decided to look further into naming Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation as my beneficiary for the life insurance policy that my parents started 48 years ago.

I contacted Northwestern Mutual and they sent me two simple

pages of paperwork to complete to change the beneficiary name.

To do so, I needed the following:

1. Name of Organization, Address, Business / Tax ID#
2. % of funds to be given to primary and secondary beneficiary (if one or more is named)

To complete #1, contact WY WSF Treasurer Joni Miller.

To complete #2, make the call on your own or after consulting with your family and currently named beneficiaries.

## Simple.

My family understands my passion for wild sheep and wild places. They know that I am always asking myself, “How can I do more?”

Well, I found a way to do more because of the magazine article I read sitting in the tire shop.

I'm thankful for the opportunities that Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation has provided my family and know that the board and its membership will continue to make great strides in the conservation of wild sheep.

It takes financial resources to do that however.

I may not be in the financial place to make big cash donations, or spend money at the banquet I don't have today, but at some point, when the end of life on earth comes for me, there'll be a contribution made to Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation that will help carry on the great work they do for Wyoming's wildlife and wild places.

**Please ask yourself, “How can I do more?” I hope that you'll consider naming Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation as a beneficiary to do just that!**



Members are encouraged to submit photos for publication in the RAMPAGE as well as in our website galleries. Please send your photos via email to: [info@wyomingwildsheep.org](mailto:info@wyomingwildsheep.org).



LM Miles Fortner



Photo by LM Richard Lennington



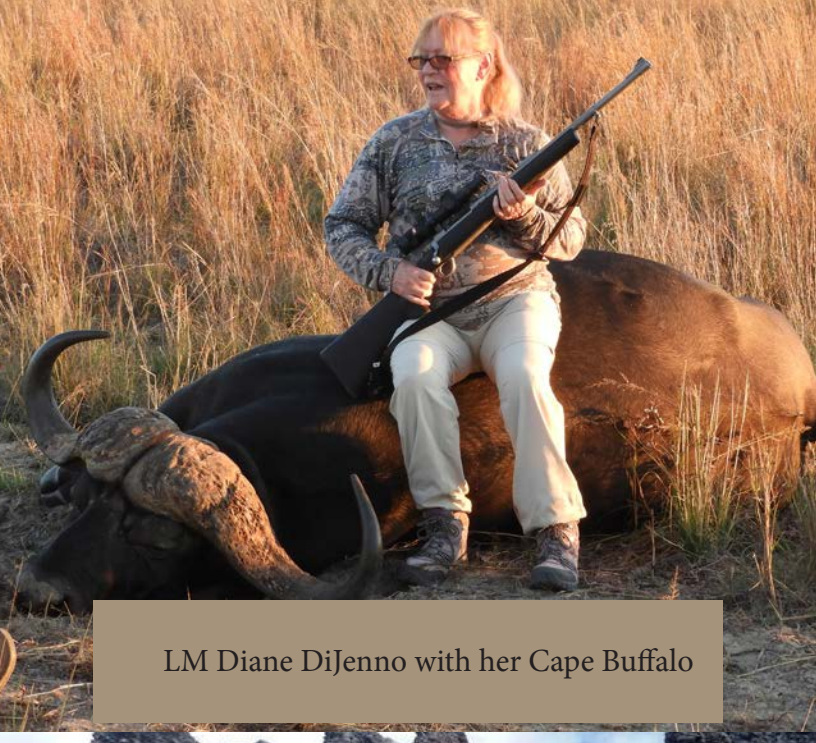
LM James Rinehart took an Alaskan Caribou.

# Member's Gallery

LM Steve Brock with his Yukon Moose

Glenn Pauley-HA-4 taken with Wind River Backcountry Outfitters





LM Diane DiJenno with her Cape Buffalo

LM Calvin Eisenach with his Wyoming bull elk.



# BLAST FROM THE PAST

DO YOU KNOW THIS GUY? (Answer on Page 3)



LM Vic Dana bagged this buck antelope in Sweetwater County.

LM Rocky Yardas with his HA-5 ram.



# “Mo’s Ram Hunt”

By Mo O’Leary

I don’t remember why I decided to put in for a bighorn sheep tag. I didn’t grow up hunting; in fact, no one I knew growing up hunted. I began hunting in 1991 when a friend started taking me. My first gun was a 243 Winchester for big game; then I took up bow hunting with a 56 lb. recurve. In 1992, I got a cow moose tag and a 30-06.

I really love to hunt. I so enjoy the quiet and sneaking through the woods looking for game. The different colors and sounds, sunrise and sunsets, hiking or riding in the dark and cresting a hill to see the first light on the mountains is so awesome. Being in the wild with no one else around or being at the top of a ridge at sunset when a full

moon rises reminds me that there is so much to observe and enjoy.

In December, 2015, I slipped on some ice—my present that Christmas was a total hip replacement. Two years later, I fell while downhill skiing and that accident resulted in a screw and plate in my other hip, and no weight-bearing for six weeks. Then with twenty preference points, I happily drew a bighorn sheep tag for hunt area 7 for the fall of 2017!

Although I was eager to

hunt with a local outfitter, Brian Taylor, his schedule was full, so my boyfriend and I went scouting during the Great American Eclipse on August 21, 2017. No sheep but viewing the eclipse from 10,200 feet was well worth the outing! On opening day, Armond and I bushwhacked on horseback up the Lavender Hills only to find

spotted 3-6 sheep on top of the Gray Hills near Lightning Creek. Finally! Unfortunately, they were all ewes and small rams and I had no idea how to get near them. The next day, Armond and I returned to the Gray Hills and found more ewes and rams on the ridge line.

On October 3 we spotted 6 rams; one looked like maybe a 3/4 curl, but they were over a mile away. We did a GPS way point as they walked uphill and out of sight. Given the time day and the wet ground, we decided not to attempt to go after them. The next morning, we rode up Haystack Creek through sunshine, sleet, snow, and rain. The trail was so slippery that we dismounted to lead the horses down the steep



antelope and deer. Instead of a bighorn sheep, I shot a buck antelope on opening day.

In September, we scouted and rode up Bull Creek to the base of Cream Puff, 8 miles to the head of Boulder Creek, another 15 up Bunker Creek, Poison Creek, Shorty Creek, and Flat Creek. By the end of the month there were still no sheep; I was getting frustrated and nervous about filling my tag. One day, driving back from Dallas Lake Trail head, Armond

sections. No sheep or signs of them—we never saw that group again. The following day on the Gray Hills, however, we saw 15 sheep, but no big rams. Our plan was to ride up past Dallas Lake, but the Gros Ventre road had turned into muck and as I pulled aside to allow another truck to pass, we became royally stuck. That passing truck driver returned & fastened a tow rope on our horse trailer. He pulled, I backed, and we managed to return



my vehicles to the road. After unloading the horses and scraping 3 inches of mud off the tires, we chained up and were able to drive up the road to a flat sagebrush area to turn around. We reloaded the horses & headed home.

Other scouting rides took us to Flat, Sheep & Crystal Creeks and the Gray Hills above Dallas Lake. Some days yielded sheep sightings, others we saw none. Returning to a previous site of seeing animals, we rode up Alkali Creek trail to find sheep tracks, grizzly scat, but no rams. The weather deteriorated with snow, sleet, hail and wind, so we headed back and en route enjoyed a spectacular rainbow from the ridge top.

Steve Kilpatrick told us there was another 3/4 curl ram in the group where he had guided a wounded warrior hunter; we spotted 7 rams, but all too distant to determine their size. We rode the Haystack Creek trail in an attempt to get above them, but they were in trees way below us with no good way for us to approach

without spooking them. That day ended early with a flat tire.

The end of the season was fast approaching; I was worried about not filling my tag, as we had not seen any rams over 1/2 curl in ages. On October 26, I spoke with outfitter Brian Taylor about where we had seen sheep. He planned to go scout, then take us hunting Saturday. He called later, having seen sheep, and we planned to meet Saturday at 7:30 am with our horses. I am excited now!

We were up at 4:30, and after half an hour to catch the horses, and an hour and a half drive, we met Brian and rode across the Gros Ventre river and uphill over Lightning Creek. We tied the animals and started climbing uphill—a significant challenge at 72 with asthma. We reached a cliff and spotted 7 rams lying down about 308 yards from us. One was a 3/4 curl, the others less than 1/2 curl. We took turns watching, alternating between shade & sun for hours; about noon the animals got up and began moving closer

to us. The largest ram appeared to be limping with a wound on his back leg; he stayed down as the others grazed. The youngsters returned and rubbed heads with the big ram before lying down around him again. We could not get any closer. The young rams began grazing again around 4—getting as close as 150 yards from us; the big one remained in place until around 5. In spite of using my pack for support, I had trouble getting a firm rest for my gun. I finally shot and the ram ran uphill. I shot again when he stopped and he began somersaulting downhill. We took off below the cliff band so the other sheep would not see us. I couldn't believe it! He seemed pretty big with thick horns; Brian caped the head out and quartered him as the sun was setting. Armond put one shoulder, a boned-out shoulder, back leg, loins and back strap in his pack. Brian tied the head and cape on his pack and carried the other back leg. I shouldered my pack and gun. We departed in the dark; happy that we

did not need to return in the morning. An hour later, with parts of the 60-degree slope behind us, we loaded the pack horse and headed across the river. At 9 pm we reached the horse trailer and celebrated with a beer. I had been up for 20 hours but was much too excited to sleep.

The following day, the Game and Fish checked, plugged and measured: age 9, horns 33" with the broomed off side 29", base 14". A really nice ram—over 3/4 curl. It was hard work and long days looking in many places I had never been. It was an adventure of a lifetime; I felt very lucky.



# “My Wyoming Bighorn”

By Kirstie Ennis

**O**n September 20th, I drove through the dark for 10 hours to get to Cody, Wyoming. All sorts of thoughts flooded my mind – “Is this really happening? Can I do this on one leg?” I have trained harder than most and spent countless hours in the mountains, but there’s always a fear of what could hold me back.

The next morning, we hit the ground running. I can still feel the brisk breeze on my face and the cold air entering my lungs. The drive from the Game and Fish to Area 5 was the calm before the storm. As soon as we approached the corral where all of the horses

were, it was hard to contain a smile while my heart beat out of my chest. It was like being a little kid again.

The moment my guide, Kenny said, “Let’s go,” I was ready. I threw my prosthetic leg over the mule without skipping a beat.

While I was nervous, it was a weight off of my chest. I have dealt with a lot over the course of my recovery to treat injuries sustained in Afghanistan, but being able to be independent and pack into camp on a mule gave me a new confidence that I can do anything regardless of my lack of limb.

The three-hour ride into camp gave me plenty of time to reflect

on where I have been, what I have been through, and where I plan to be. While calming, the ride was also extremely adventurous. Sure, I had ridden horses growing up, but nothing quite like this. As we approached camp, I became more and more impressed. I am not quite sure what I expected, but it certainly wasn’t this. The white tents, cots, and even propane heaters were luxury! Josh Martoglio and his team at Shoshone Lodge Outfitters definitely know how to live in comfort while back at camp.

Josh came in after guiding another successful group of mule deer hunters; he was a bit bruised and beaten up after losing a fight with

rams a few canyons up several days earlier and now, I was going to be put to the test. Had I trained hard enough? Sleep was scarce, but my adrenaline fueled me. The next morning, after we were all situated, I jumped on the mule Johnny and off we went. We rode in for another two hours. I was used to going over this terrain by my own power, but using the horses to climb so high was a whole new world. Shortly after hitting a plateau, we began to glass. Josh spotted 9 rams creeping into dense timber.

We grabbed my front hooves (my forearm crutches), binos, and the rifle, and started the hike in. Everyone quickly recognized my struggles with

moving if the high side is on my prosthetic side. Side hilling is far from enjoyable. None of it is easy, and I often question why I continue to do the things that I do. The altitude wasn’t a problem considering I just came off of the highest point in Europe, but I became my own worst enemy. In my mind, I wasn’t moving quickly or quietly enough, it was a constant internal debate.



Kirstie with Outfitter  
Josh Martoglio

a mule. I was so excited to see him and everything became very real, very quickly. After dinner, we broke down the plan for the following day: wake up at 5 AM, a quick breakfast, saddle up, and get moving. I was eager to go to crawl into my sleeping bag and sleep just to speed up the process of getting on the hunt.

Josh and his crew had spotted

We approached the rock wall and I positioned myself up against it. The leverage of the rock was crucial as I need it for stability -- my aluminum leg doesn’t quite have the balance of the one I was born with. The wind screamed and tore into my face. I started to wonder how my shaking from being cold would affect my shooting.

I have always admired mass and a typical frame in all horned and antlered animals. One of the rams had super heavy horns, but a severely broken left side. And then, there was my ram...an animal I could admire for hours. Heavy, mature, and a full curl. We moved further down the rock wall so that I could get into a more stable position with the high winds.

I laid down in the dirt and fumbled my way through making a rest. I was rushing, but for no reason. This ram was smart. He would lay behind fallen timber, then stand, take five steps, and conveniently position himself behind another tree blocking his vitals. For two hours I sat behind the scope. My eyes wanted to quit; it was torture now at this point.

I would change position and lose him in the scope, only to frantically talk my way through relocating him with Josh.

Then, he threw himself on to his hind legs to stand one last time. Through 40 mile per hour winds, heavy timber, and a tricky 440-yard shot, the ram fell. I squeezed the trigger and didn't breathe or move until someone said,

“He's down.” I simply rolled off of the rifle, pulled my blaze orange beanie over my eyes, and cried. I cried for all that the ram would provide, the effort that was made, for the people and the love that surrounded me, and for the opportunity to be apart of such great conservation efforts with the Wild Sheep Foundation.

The hike up to my ram was the most humbling part. I fought tears as I tried to catch my breath. I had only seen my ram from afar and he seemed to continue doubling in size as we approached him. My



Looking around camp at everyone wearing smiles and feeling victorious (and maybe a little warm from the Big Horn Whiskey), my heart was full. I have lost a lot at a young age. I lost my left leg above the knee, my Marine

Corps career due to the injuries, a large portion of my memory, and years of my life to the hospital. However, I choose to look at what I have gained - the people being the most important. Sheep hunting has turned strangers into friends and friends into family.

I would not be where I am today without the people who surround me and the physical, mental, and emotional lessons that these experiences have taught me. I am forever thankful to WY-WSF Life Member Pepper Neustel for donating his Big Horn tag to me. Thank you Shoshone Lodge Outfitters, WY-WSF Life Member Josh Martologio, Kenny Gun, WY-WSF Life Member (and Executive Director) Steve Kilpatrick, WY-WSF Life Members

Larry McDermott and Cole

Benton, WY-WSF Life Member Dan Currah of Hunting with Heroes, and Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation for making my dream of being one of the elite, a sheep hunter, a reality.

legs collapsed underneath me as I grabbed the ram's horns and thanked him. He was absolutely beautiful.

Once we made it back to camp with the toad of a ram, it was time to celebrate.



# “Hunting, Good Friends and Campfires”

By Marcie Mangold

**Some** wait years, even decades before they get the chance for the hunt of a lifetime.

Patience is a must. You scan the internet on the day the tags are released, holding your breath in anticipation... then for the fortunate, a whoop of elation when you recognize your name. Dreaming of mountain cliffs filled with trophy rams. Those dreams become a reality, as you begin scouting the towering mountains that surround this beautiful state we call Wyoming.

Richard Hlavnicka or Opey as his friends call him has been blessed to live this dream twice in his lifetime. Just ask him and he will be glad to recount each adventure with a lopsided grin. Each trip is carefully thought out. Starting as soon as you read your name on the list of lucky hunters. This trip was no exception.

**The number one Rule when hunting Bighorn sheep is to go where the Bighorn sheep are.**

Waking in the pre-dawn morning brewing coffee over an open fire and listening to the horses paw the ground in anticipation of the morning ride. Opey looks over the camp fire at his hunting buddy, Clint Saures. It's a warm morning filled with the scent of smoke and trees, you can hear the creek water bubbling over the rocks as the men make their plan for the day. They saddle the horses and begin to ride west toward a valley that they hope will take them to find what they have come looking for... They ride in the dark for a few hours until the horses have taken them as far as they can go. Clint stays behind to scan the hills from below and Opey begins the hike toward the top just as the first rays begin to break the new day. The horses are glad for the break, eating

grass as Clint watches from below as Opey ascends the steep trail. He gets half way to the top and sits to catch his breath. Taking his binoculars out, he scans the cliffs to his left. He spots two rams., their coloring is almost the same as the rocks that surround them. They will do...both are fine thick horned animals. After many scouting trips much like this one they have finally found the area they will hunt come the first part of Sept.

The week before the hunt is as busy as the week before Christmas. Baking and making meals. Everyone has a smile on their face! Excitement fills the air! I listen carefully as Opey gives me last minute instructions on what to do on the week he will be gone. The dogs and I wave as he pulls out of the yard. Dorothy, his faithful dog and

best buddy hangs her head because she is not going on this hunt. Dash and Luke the other two dogs try to cheer her up but she is having nothing to do with it. I look down at Dorothy and she looks at me...I understand what she is thinking because I too feel kind of left out. But both of us are in no shape to hike like Op will be hiking.

Op has with him two friends, Steve Lynn and Clint Sauers. They tend to the horses and set camp in the perfect spot. The meadow is beautiful, lined with trees and a creek close by. They can see the towering cliffs that hold something that is equally as precious as gold to a hunters heart. Bighorn sheep. That evening they eat dinner and tell stories over a campfire poking the fire once in a while to keep it going. Sleep that night comes fitfully



waiting for the first day of hunting.

The sun is up and Opey is glassing from the perfect vantage point. He can see them. He watches them for a while waiting for them to settle down. He doesn't move. He doesn't want them to see him. They don't settle down and after what seems like an eternity they decide to jump over the top into no man's land. Op has no choice but to wait for the afternoon and see if they show up. Much to his disappointment they do not come back. Dinner that evening is a strategy session. It isn't long before they have the area mapped out in the dirt with a new plan of attack. When they go to bed it doesn't take long to fall asleep sore muscles and all.

## Determination

The next day Opey glasses the cliffs. He sees something move. This Ram is huge. He is by far the biggest Op has seen. He is trying to breath slow as he moves to get into position to shoot. Holding the gun still...he holds his breath and shoots. Clint and Steve are looking up where Op is lying on the out cropping of rock holding their breath as well. Opey's scope has cleared a dirt pile but the gun does not. This monster ram bolts over the top never to be seen again. Op kicks himself over the mistake. Kicks himself over missing the ram of a lifetime. He hopes the day will get better as he makes his way down the mountain. He stops and looked back one more time. Not believing his luck he spots another Ram. This one is not as thick but is a ram anyone would be proud to kill. He raises his gun holds his breath and shoots. It runs a short distance and drops. Opey again can't believe his luck and neither can his hunting buddies watching from below. It will be a job to pack it out of there. They are about 3 miles straight up and a good 3-hour ride into camp after they hike down below the cliffs. He knows he can't reach it before night fall. These cliffs are too steep to negotiate in the dark. One mis-step and you could end up with a broken leg or worse. It will be best to go after it in the morning.

Any hunter can tell you that packing an animal out is tough, but packing it out on the side of a cliff is hell. Clint, Steve and Op spend most of the day working their way down the side of the mountain. This is the point where you are thankful you have friends to give you a hand and even more thankful you have pack horses to take it the rest of the way into camp. For Opey, a week in the back country with friends is a good as it gets, time spent renewing your soul and spirit in God's country.

The passion for hunting is deeply implanted in a hunter's heart and this is how it is with Opey. Hunting is a way of life for him, not just during the season but throughout the year. I have learned this about him and I have learned this about each of his friends.

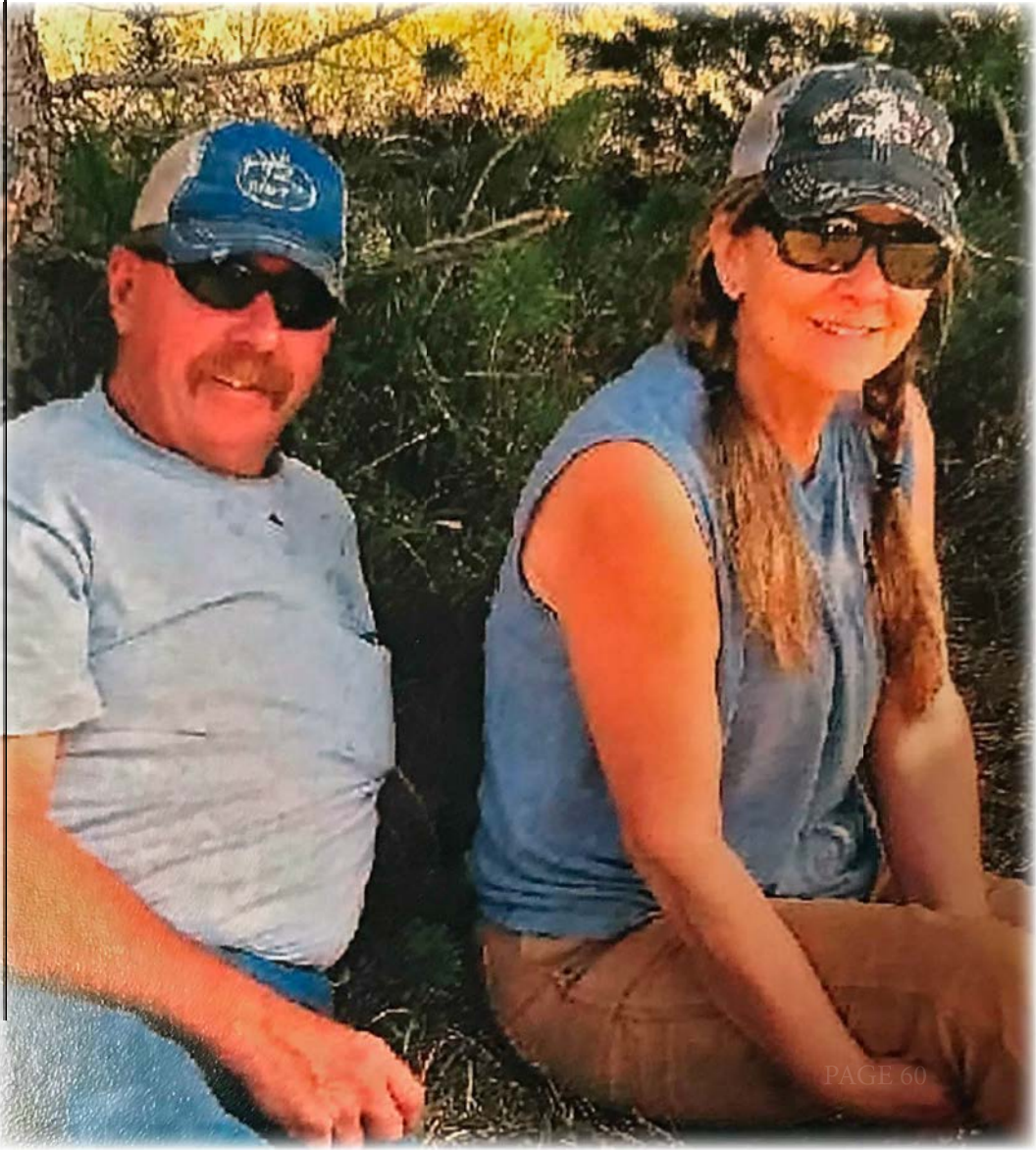
I enjoy listening to the stories about the projects that many of his friends take part in like Bob Joslin, Mac and Joni Miller and Rick and

Donai Bezanson to name a few. For them hunting doesn't stop with the hunt, it goes on as they volunteer their time with organizations like the RMEF and WY-WSF in order to put back a portion of what they have taken from the mountain.

Conservation is such an important component of hunting. A wise man once said that "without hunting there would be no conservation...without conservation there would be no wildlife.

For us hunting is a way of life., not taken lightly and taken respectfully. Respect for the animal, respect for the land, respect for people.

## Our way of life.



# 2 1/2 Mile High Ram

By Mark Wells

What a great feeling it was when I checked the results for the Wyoming Bighorn Sheep draw and to see that I was successful in drawing an area 8 sheep tag!

I knew right then that I needed to begin my workouts and my research to make this Wind River sheep hunt a success. Lots of people told me I should hire an outfitter, but I knew since I grew up hunting in Wyoming and had spent last fall hunting sheep in the Yukon, I could get this done on my own. My brother Kevin was just as excited for this hunt once he found out I drew the tag and I knew that with his help and guidance, I was determined to harvest a Wyoming Ram!

We took two separate scouting trips to the Wind Rivers, one trip utilizing our backs with packs and the second using

personal livestock. We scouted in early July as well as mid-August, mostly to learn the country and to help us decide where we wanted to hunt come the opener on September 1st. We did not see any rams on either trip, just lots of ewes and lambs, but we are confident we would find one during the hunt.

On August 31st we rode in on horseback, about 4-5 miles to Slide Lake, an area we had not scouted but chose due to options it provided us. The next day we spent 8-9 hours climbing with 50 lbs. packs to higher elevation and finally decided to camp after our legs couldn't handle any more climbing for the day. We spent the next three days hunting out of this camp at 11,000 ft. elevations, only finding more ewes and lambs. We felt we needed to get to higher elevations so we moved our camp the next day.

Our next camp site was a great location with plenty of water, great glassing points and easier access to higher ground. The next two days found more ewes and lambs at 12,000 ft. elevations, but still no rams.

On the seventh day of the hunt, we climbed higher yet and got to a great glassing point just west of Baker Lake. We spent all morning glassing all the high basins, only to spot yet more ewes and lambs. At noon, the three of us gathered to discuss our next plan and where we to look next for a ram. As we were talking, I glanced down the ridge at a large snowfield that I had glassed all morning and noticed two black spots in the middle of it. Those spots weren't there earlier in the morning! As I raised my binoculars, I knew right away that it was two rams lying in the snow to cool off! The adrenaline kicked in and the three of us had

to calm each other down! Finally what we had been looking for all this time.

We moved down the ridge about 50 yards and I laid down to get in a good position for a shot. After studying the two rams, we decided which one was bigger and was confident I could make the almost vertical downhill shot. I had to wait almost an hour for the rams to finally get up and present a good, ethical shot. The smaller ram stood first and walked off the snowfield below us to feed in a small grass patch. Eventually the bigger ram stood, turned away stretching for a moment and then began to move down towards the other ram. After moving



Mark & Kevin Wells with Ray Dinsmore

## Ferris/Seminole Mountain Habitat Analysis

By Amy Anderson, WGFD – Lander Habitat Biologist

about 50 yards, he stopped and began to feed as well. My brother ranged him at 288 yards, so I dialed my Huskemaw scope to 280 yards and put the crosshairs right on the big ram and squeezed the trigger. After the shot, my brother exclaimed, "you toasted him." I jacked another round in to my .300 Win Mag and found the ram in my scope. He was running and stumbling then crashed after about 20 yards! We all yelled "he's down" about the same time and then the jubilation and celebrations began! What a great feeling to have harvested one of the toughest, most regal animals on the planet. I was so excited to know that we had accomplished what a lot of folks thought we couldn't do on our own!

It took us about 45 minutes to get down the ridge to where my ram laid and that seemed to take forever! What a beautiful animal! He was heavier than I thought and I was extremely happy with my ram. I knew he wasn't the biggest ram on the mountain, but he was an awesome trophy in my book! It took us 4 hours to cape my ram for a life-size mount, quarter him up, and load our packs. We got back to camp about 8 pm that night and enjoyed a relaxing night knowing that we had a lot of work yet to do. It took us 3 more days to get all our gear and my ram to the bottom where we could have a friend ride in with horses to carry it all out the last 6 miles.

This was the most grueling and toughest hunt I had ever done, yet it was by far the most rewarding!

After studying Google Earth, we figured we had backpacked, bushwhacked, and hunted a total of about 45 miles and climbed up and down a total of about 32,000 feet! I now know why most people say sheep hunting is not for the meek and mild!

To date I am half way to my North American Grand Slam and could not be more excited for my next sheep hunt!

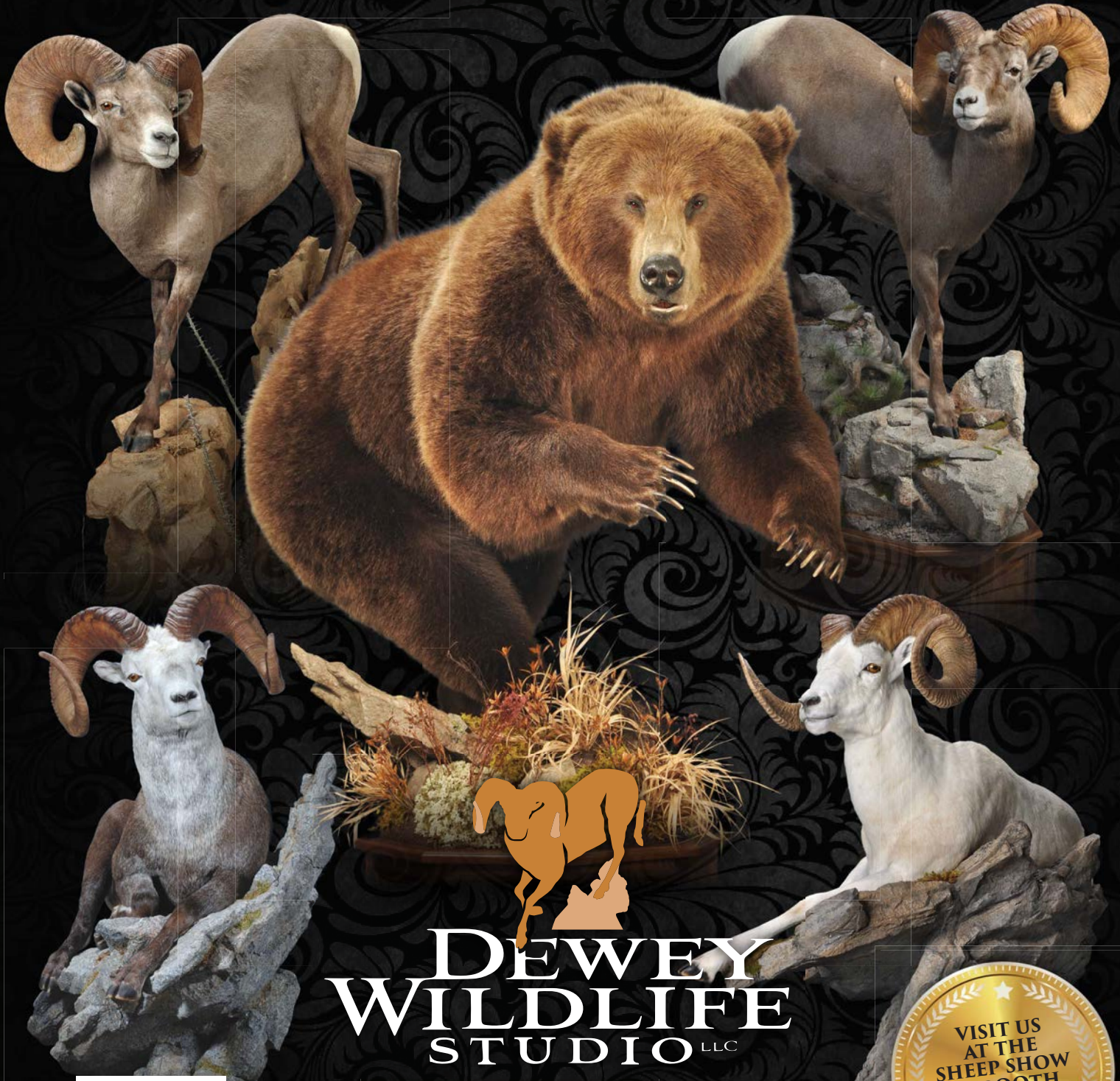
I wish to thank my family, friends, and the good Lord for allowing all this to come together. What a blessing.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department in partnership with the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, the Haub School at the University of Wyoming, and Bureau of Land Management- Rawlins Field Office are assessing habitat condition and availability in the Ferris/Seminole herd unit in preparation for the herd's objective review. Starting in 2010, bighorn sheep from the Devil's Canyon herd have been relocated to the Ferris and Seminole Mountains. As a result, the Ferris/Seminole herd has reached the objective of 300 bighorn sheep. Recently, BLM and WGFD personnel

began collecting data to estimate whether habitats in the Seminole/Ferris Mountains are at capacity. In August, habitat biologists, BLM range conservationists and Water for Wildlife interns collected vegetation production data across the Ferris and Seminole Mountains. Dr. Kevin Monteith's shop at the University of Wyoming will use this information in concert with other data to assess resource availability for bighorn sheep and whether the current objective is appropriate. The habitat analysis will occur through the upcoming winter, and results will be available in Spring, 2019.



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### Youth Photo Captions

1. Tayen Wakkuri

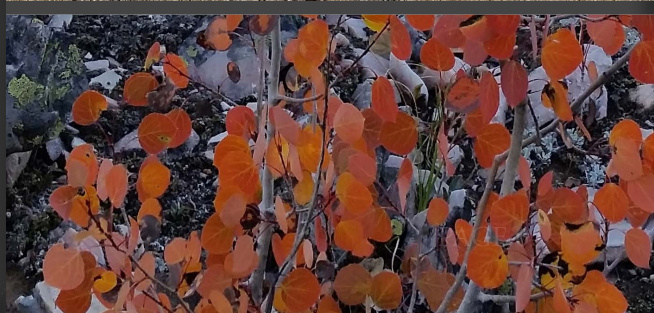
2. Drake Amundson

3. Matthew Wakkuri

4. Levi Kilpatrick

5. Isaac, Mickey, Steph, William Oland from proud grandpa, Steve K.

6. LM Chance Butler used his Banquet rifle to harvest this nice buck.



# “Worth the Wait”

By Darren Rhea

I grew up in Western Wyoming surrounded by the legendary mountain ranges that harbor the largest core bighorn populations in the state. The Gros Ventre, Wind River, Absaroka and Teton mountain ranges were my playground, and each contained a drainage or basin that I considered my own. Deer and elk would bring me there every fall, but the bighorn sheep that shared the country with them would captivate my attention the most.

I yearned for the opportunity to pursue the bighorns I grew up with, but the opportunity never came my way. I had applied every year I could with no success. When the Wyoming Game and Fish Department implemented its preference point system for bighorn sheep, I was a senior in high school preparing for my first year of college. Unwilling to risk the prospect of drawing a sheep tag during my first freshman semester, I opted to forgo the application and ride the pine for a few years. Eighteen years would pass before my dream of hunting sheep would become a reality, twenty-eight years after my first unsuccessful application.

My sheep hunt was full of milestones, each a memorable event, that together, built the experience I would call my sheep hunt. The day I found my drawing results; the day I got my tag in the mail; my first day of training; first day at the range; first trip up the trail; first sheep sighting, first ram. My ultimate goal was the ram I had pictured in my mind, but I wasn't going to let that detract from the whole experience, I would enjoy every minute of it. I started by getting in better shape than I had been in a long time, I became more proficient with my rifle and practiced more frequently, I refined my equipment and familiarized myself with its application. I spent days learning the backcountry, the trails that would get me there and the mountain peaks I would navigate through. In late July, I started looking for sheep. I started

by exploring the margins, the lesser known areas where elusive rams might take refuge. My first few trips were blanks, vast areas of alpine that seemed devoid of any life. Finally, on a short overnight into some rugged drainages away from what many consider sheep country, I spotted my first rams. Two miles away on a grassy slope, three rams had exposed themselves to the sun, just enough for me to quickly gauge them before they disappeared in the sea granite boulders.

Two weeks later, I would follow my good friend Dean Clause on a six day trip into the heart of Sheep County, across the Continental Divide of the Wind River Mountains and down the spine to where they begin. Sheep sightings came daily and rams seemed plentiful. This was my first trip into this country, away from the horse trails that had brought me below it in the past. This was the summer home of the storied Whiskey Mountain herd and I wasn't letting a second pass without fully appreciating the gravity of the experience. I was hunting, without a weapon, the infamous sheep I had grown up admiring, surrounded by peaks and glaciers I had only looked on from a distance. August drew to a close as I worked on the final preparations for my upcoming hunt. I had covered a fair portion of the hunt unit and had seen rams in almost every corner of the range, but I couldn't begin to zero in on where I would go first once the season arrived. Perhaps I was spoiled by the abundance of opportunity I had uncovered, but I was reluctant to settle on one area having witnessed so much potential.

Finally, on a hunch, I decided to return to the area I had seen the three rams in July. Having only previously viewed them at a great distance, I was anxious to get a closer look. Five days before the season opened, and still unsure of my initial plan of attack, I set out again with Dean and his canine companion Lucy to try to locate the sheep I hadn't seen in over a month.

We chose a route that took us far from the beaten path, up timbered slopes into a basin that gave us a glance at the mountain I had seen the rams before. Darkness arrived on the first day without any sheep. Our first sighting came early the next day as a large ram was spotted on the skyline above us. A second ram would make a brief appearance before vanishing over the crest. Later that morning, a warning growl from Lucy would draw our attention to three additional rams hugging the timber below us, and before we left, a lone ram was spotted in the drainage above us. I was thrilled, the unlikely ram location I had stumbled upon in July had led us into a proverbial “ram hole”. Six rams, scattered across a small drainage, away from any trail and far from any other hunter. We would be crazy to abandon this location. We opted to leave our gear and return in four days for the opening of the rifle season.

A lot goes through your mind in four days while you ponder the thought of mature rams holed up in a small isolated drainage waiting for your return. Did I make the right choice? Will the rams still be there, or will they pick up and leave like they seem to do so often? An entire summer had come and gone and all I had thought was what an amazing experience sheep hunting had become, now on the eve of opening day, the weight of everything began to sink in.

On the morning of August 31st, my companions and I donned our packs and set our sights on the remote drainage I had been in four days earlier. Joining me on the final leg of the hunt were Dean, and my other good friends Jordan Kraft and Luke Schultz. There's a saying that goes: “A friend is anyone who is willing to help you on a sheep hunt, a real friend is someone who volunteers.” All three had asked to join me, and I was more than willing to have them along. Also accompanying me for the first time was my trusty Kimber Montana and the weight of the tag I had received

in the mail earlier in the year.

The trip in was quick, adrenaline must have aided in our climb, for we were on top of the mountain in no time and on top of a small glassing knob with plenty of daylight left. Knowing the rotten terrain would keep the rams hidden from almost any vantage, I settled in and began to scan the granite landscape wondering if we would ever see them again. Within minutes I spotted the unmistakable white rump of a sheep cresting a rock outcropping. With the spotting scope dialed up, three more rams quickly came into view. Four rams had come together at the head of the drainage and we immediately recognized them from earlier in the week. Three of them would make likely targets, but one especially got all of the attention. He was a dark bodied ram with a thick chest and a low back. His horns curled up past his nose and came to his base on his right side. We stared at them for hours, admiring the group as they moved in and out of piled granite and over boulders with ease. Darkness ultimately led to our retreat, as we reluctantly put the optics away and dropped elevation to our camp.

A warm fire kept us up well into the night as we recounted the evening's discovery and planned our attack for the morning. Restlessness took over as I tried to will myself to sleep that night. Morning slowly began to brighten the horizon when I finally sat up and stop pretending to sleep. The day I had been dreaming about for a lifetime was upon me, and I had work to do before its arrival. Joking and adolescent banter helped lighten the mood amongst us as we made preparations for the day ahead. First light found us perched atop our now familiar glassing position as we began the search for the previous evening's quarry. Hours passed, and no sheep had been located. An experienced mountain hunter, I had played this game before, persistence was the key to locating anything in the rock fractures and granite piles. Finally, after ascending a rock spire and crawling to a precarious vantage, I was able to locate the four rams we were after. Tucked between rock outcroppings and boulder tailings, the rams had moved but 200 yards from their position the night before. However,

it had taken four skilled glassers a full four hours to locate them, owing to the incredible challenge of finding sheep in this unforgiving terrain.

As the rams made themselves comfortable in the shade of a granite wall, we considered the best approach. We planned a route that would take us up the bottom of the drainage to a position below them, knowing they would likely remain there to avoid the intense heat from the sun. There was potential risk, spooking them and pushing them up the basin into the vast alpine where they would likely disappear, but the opportunity was too valuable to pass. For nearly two hours, we slid, climbed, crawled and snuck through the broken timber and uneven terrain to the top of an ancient moraine where I could peer up the drainage and glimpse the sheep. All four remained bedded, the full curl ram farthest to my right. At six-hundred yards, this would be my last view of the sheep until I was at my shooting position below them. The next thirty minutes would take me across the side of the basin to a rocky outcrop I had identified as my final position. Thirty minutes of intense reflection and emotion, the moments hunters dread, but relish in the end. Moments later, a single shot from my .270 brought the magnificent 12 year old ram to his end. I sat down and laid on a large flat rock, the same flat rock he had stood

on the night before as we stared in admiration through the spotting scope. I waited for my friends to join me as I processed what had just transpired.

Hours later, we were back at our camp, packs heavy with meat, horns, and hide. Within a day we would be gone from the basin completely, back at our homes with only memories of the place we had become so intimate with.

In hindsight, I am grateful I waited so many years for my first chance to hunt sheep. Things are different for me now than they were when I was younger. I wonder now if I would have found the experience to be so fulfilling had I drawn the tag I so eagerly wanted when I was younger. I consider myself an avid backcountry hunter, having spent years mastering the wilderness of Wyoming. Yet, I have never prepared harder, mentally or physically, for any hunt. Bighorn sheep hunting made me a better athlete, a more proficient marksman, and a more capable mountaineer.

**My admiration for bighorn sheep will not change now that I have acquired the rank of sheep hunter, but my next encounter will certainly bring back a flood of memories from my 2018 experience.**





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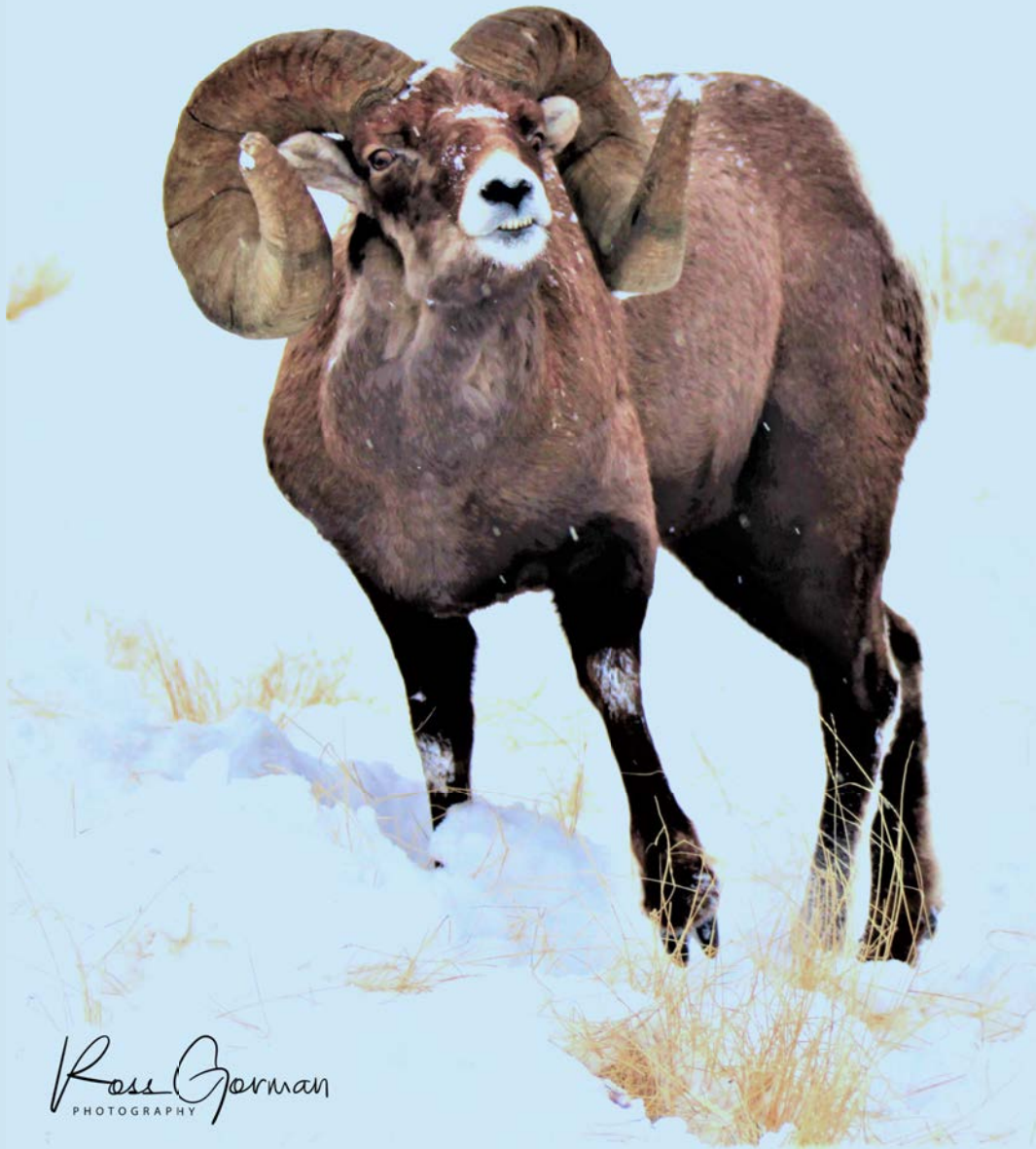
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