

The RAMPAGE

Fall 2022

Wyoming
Archery Dream
Page 21



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Fall 2022

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Address Changes

Become a member to receive your own copy of the RamPage. Dues are \$40 per year or \$750 for a Life Membership. Subscribe at: <https://www.wyomingwildsheep.org/shop>.

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Donations netting WY-WSF >2500 entitle donor to a free full page ad in the next 2 issues of The Rampage. Ads must be received in camera ready format by 09/25 & 3/5!!



Photo Courtesy of Josh Metten

Magazine Editor: Dean DiJenno

2022-2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Dec 2-3, 2022
Board/Membership Meeting
Cody, WY

January 11-14, 2023
WSF Sheep Show
Reno, NV

June 2-3, 2023
Annual Convention
Cheyenne, WY

June 15-17, 2023
WSF Chapter & Affiliates
Rapid City, SD

June 22-23, 2023
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 2022 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:

If you would be interested in signing up or upgrading to Life Member or Ramshorn Society Life Membership status with WY-WSF, please visit our store or membership pages on the website.

We thank all of our past, current, and future Life and Ramshorn Society 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@www.wyomingwildsheep.org.

2022 Governor's License Sales Totals

2022 Sale Location	2021 LICENSE SALES	2022 LICENSE SALES
WSF	\$120,000	\$305,000
Eastern	\$200,000	\$199,500
Midwest	\$127,750	\$170,000
Iowa	\$135,000	\$190,000
WY	\$130,000	\$115,000
Total	\$712,750	\$979,500

New Life Members

- #646 Matt Faupel
- #647 Renny Foster
- #648 Bill Vacek
- #649 Marjorie Pope
- #650 TY Alexander
- #651 Melody Nielsen
- #652 Casey Cheesbrough
- #653 Clayton Tanner
- #654 Jacob Sims
- #655 Emersyn Eisenach
- #656 Matt Hoobler
- #657 Aspen Doege-Hamblin
- #658 Royce Hampshire
- #659 Kyle Koster
- #660 Keenan Kremke
- #661 Lincoln Kremke
- #662 Kannon Kremke
- #663 Wheaton Kremke
- #664 Olin Machen

Blast from the Past - RHS Life Member #006, Frddie Goetz looking very relaxed back in 1975. See it on page 60!

Raven's Throat Outfitters/WY-WSF Raffle

Win a NWT Caribou hunt during the 2024 season
\$100 per chance. 300 tickets available.

A winner will be drawn at Wyoming's WSF Annual Convention in Cheyenne, WY on June 3, 2023. You need not be present to win. The contest is open to everyone.

A 10 day guided helicopter assisted backpack mountain caribou hunt for 1 hunter. The hunt is for the 2024 season with dates to be agreed upon between the hunter and Raven's Throat. Included in the hunt: Round trip float plane charter from Norman Wells, NWT to camp (\$2,600 value), all meals, lodging and transportation during the hunt.

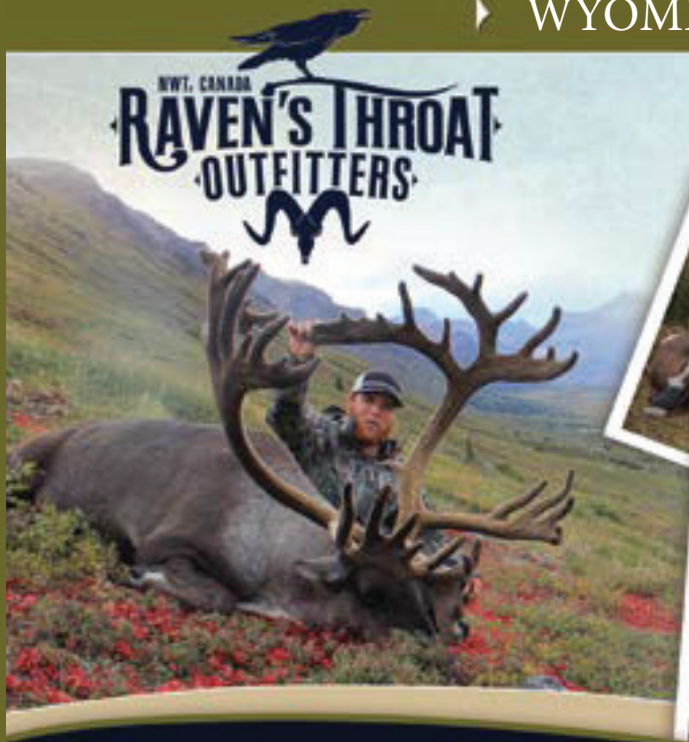
Not included in the hunt: transportation to/from Norman Wells, NWT, lodging before & after the hunt, license fees, taxes, harvest fees, expediting of trophy & gratuities.



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Executive Director's Report

By Katie Cheesbrough

Wyoming has a unique way of handling complex wildlife management challenges. In a state with diverse landownerships, rich natural resources, and industries that depend on those resources, responsible management takes a level of cooperation and coordination that few other states have achieved. These progressive and collaborative management efforts are evidenced by Wyoming's novel sage grouse conservation plan, their cutting-edge migration science and corridor protections, and, most recently, the convening of a diverse group of stakeholders to work through challenging wildlife issues with the Wyoming Wildlife Task Force.

But, prior to the novel wildlife conservation efforts listed above was the Statewide Domestic/Bighorn Sheep Working Group. Established in 2000, Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer and U.S. Senator Craig Thomas convened a group of interested parties (including the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation) to develop a collaborative statewide approach to address the long-

term stabilization of Wyoming's bighorn sheep populations and the domestic sheep industry. For four years stakeholders worked cooperatively to come up with the Final Report and Recommendations that we now refer to as the Wyoming Bighorn/Domestic Sheep Interaction Plan or as we refer to it, the Wyoming Plan. Out of this seminal plan, Wyoming's bighorn sheep management areas were delineated and defined. These bighorn sheep management areas fall into four categories: Core Native Herds, Cooperative Review Areas, Non-Emphasis Herds, and Non-Management Areas (see the below table and maps).

All of Wyoming's Core Native Herds are located in the northwest corner of the state and include the Targhee, Absaroka, Jackson, and Whiskey Mountain bighorn sheep herds. These herds have never been extirpated, reestablished, or augmented through transplants. Additionally, these four large herds make up approximately 85% of Wyoming's total bighorn sheep

population and represent some of the largest meta-populations of bighorn sheep throughout North America. In fact, the Whiskey Mountain herd was used as a source population from 1949 to 1995 with over 1,900 bighorn sheep translocated to reestablish and augment bighorn sheep populations across the West.

Given the importance of these Core Native herds not only to Wyoming but West-wide, it's imperative that we continue to make these herds our highest management priority. The WY-WSF has continued its funding efforts to help elucidate disease dynamics in these populations, reduce growing recreation and development conflicts, work with the agricultural community to reduce disease transmission between domestic and wild sheep, mitigate highway mortalities, and continue to improve bighorn sheep habitat. Please enjoy the articles about our Core Native herds submitted by Wyoming's top-tier bighorn sheep managers and help us to support them in conserving these native icons.

Wyoming Bighorn Sheep Management Areas

Core Native Herds

- Herds that have never been extirpated or reestablished via transplants
 - Highest priority for bighorn sheep management
- All efforts will be made to prevent contact between domestic and bighorn sheep

Cooperative Review Areas

- Areas of suitable bighorn sheep range where proposed changes in bighorn sheep management or domestic sheep use are cooperatively evaluated
- Includes most suitable bighorn sheep range in Wyoming not within Core Native or Non-Emphasis areas.

Non-Emphasis Areas

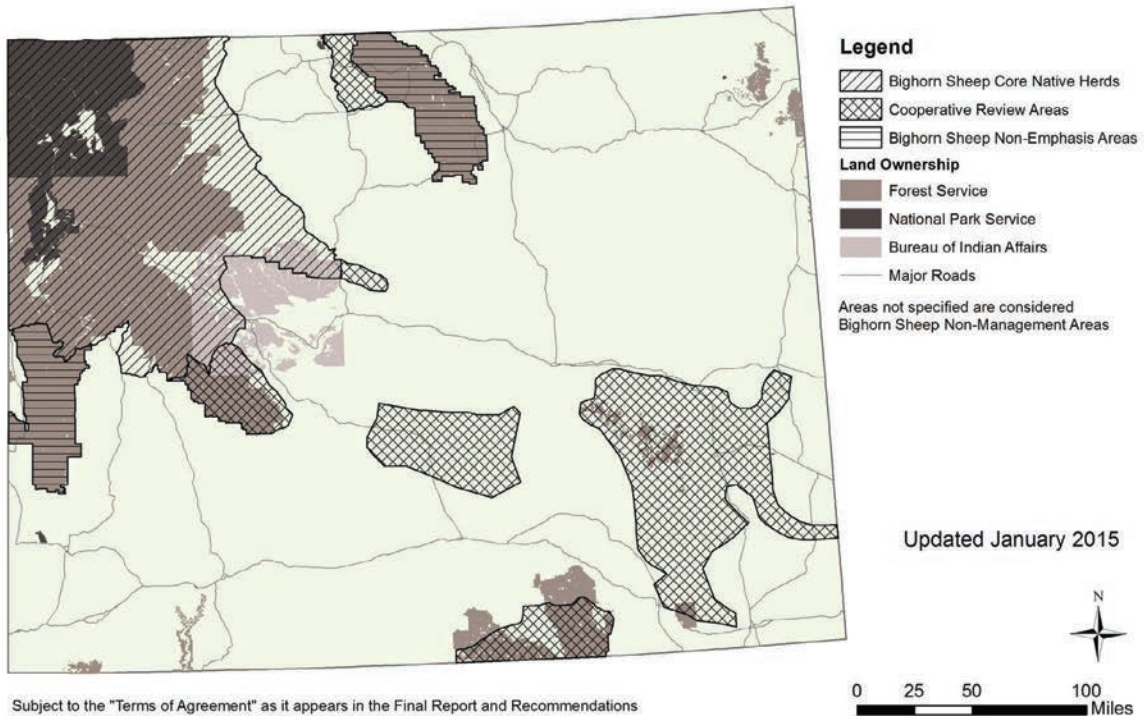
- Lowest priority areas for bighorn sheep management
- No effort will be made to prioritize/emphasize bighorn sheep unless agreed to by the statewide Domestic/Bighorn Sheep Interaction Working Group

Non-Management Areas

- Areas outside of identified management areas



Wyoming Bighorn Sheep Management Areas



Subject to the "Terms of Agreement" as it appears in the Final Report and Recommendations from the Wyoming State-wide Bighorn/Domestic Sheep Interaction Working Group



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY ZACH MCDERMOTT

Sometimes we all struggle to embrace change, but we all know Change can be a good thing. In the case of WY-WSF, change has been a great thing! The biggest change came with relocating the summer banquet to Lander. Once again we had a sold out event with record breaking attendance. We hit an all time high in both gross and net revenues. Beating our previous net record by over \$100K! The highlights of the evening were the custom Weatherby WY-WSF rifle, 1 of 1, going for \$100K, the Rancho LaGuarida Desert Sheep hunt sold for \$70K and the Gunwerks ClymR rifle system for \$25K. The night had a great energy! A special thank you to the Lander crew for creating a special evening. Another change we recently completed is moving our investment funds from Wells Fargo over to Ashton Thomas. Ashton Thomas is led by LM and former Board President Mike Porter. Mike and his team have already provided us with very knowledgeable guidance and strategies. They helped us develop Investment Policy Statements for each of our 3 funds, short term investments to have our money always working for us and structure taking us long into the future. Our next step is we will be creating an Endowment/Legacy Fund for our membership. This will include utilizing Estate Planning, Life Insurance policies, retirement plans etc.

to ensure WY-WSF for the next generation and beyond. This year's winter meeting will be held in Cody. Our Cody crew led by Dean has already been working hard on facilities, field trips, presentations and sponsorships. We have also been collaborating with several other organizations to help put on the film "My Wild Land." At the winter meeting, we will also be unveiling our Rebranding. Our board has been hard at work dialing in our Mission Statement, Conservation Vision and a new Logo. We see this as another opportunity to set us apart from other organizations and be an innovative leader in the Sheep world for the future.

In January 2023, come see us in Reno. We will be at booth 452. We will have several new raffles going on headlined by the Raven's Throat Caribou Hunt. Only 300 tickets are available and they are going fast. A sneak peak to Summer Banquet 2023. The event will be held at Little America in Cheyenne. Once again, we have several great hunts already lined up for the Live Auction. This includes a ¾ slam with hopes of landing the last sheep hunt in Reno. As usual, I can't thank our board, volunteers and membership enough for all the hard work and dedication in making this an amazing organization.





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All current annual members may renew for another year at \$100 upon notification that their annual membership is expiring and remain in the contest.

Existing annual members may upgrade to the incentive raffle by purchasing a \$100 raffle ticket. Their current membership expiration date will have one year of eligibility in the raffle added to it.

All ages may play but the prize recipient must be over 18 and must pass an FFL background check.

You must be eligible to receive these items at your location. Void where prohibited by law.

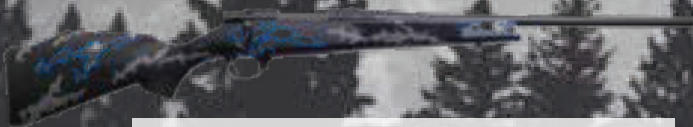
To order tickets on line; www.wyomingwildsheep.org.

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Phone: (307) 213-0998

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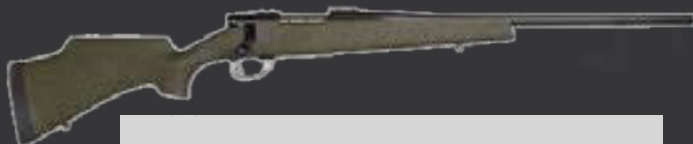
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McWhirter caps distinguished wildlife career with Director's Award!

By Mark Gocke for Wyoming G&F Department

After a distinguished 35-year career with the State of Wyoming, Game and Fish Department Jackson Wildlife Management Coordinator Doug McWhirter will be wearing the signature red uniform for the last time. And fittingly, at the recent Game and Fish Commission meeting in Evanston, Doug was honored with the prestigious Director's Award from Wyoming Game and Fish Director Brian Nesvik.

"Doug has been an exceptional leader and mentor to many over the course of his career," said Director Nesvik. "Doug has been able to successfully navigate some of the state's most contentious wildlife issues due to his outstanding professionalism and credibility. I have worked with Doug in several different capacities over the years and Doug has always been one of my mentors."

Throughout his career, Doug has played critical roles in many important wildlife management issues across Wyoming, ranging from bighorn/domestic sheep co-mingling issues, to elk-wolf relationships in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem,



McWhirter is recognized as the leading bighorn sheep expert for Wyoming and one of the most knowledgeable and respected in the Rocky Mountain States. Doug has served as the co-chair of the Department's Bighorn Sheep Working Group since its inception in 1997. Doug helped coordinate statewide research projects involving pneumonia surveillance in bighorn sheep. This on-going research has involved large-scale capturing, collaring, disease surveillance and body condition measurements for several core bighorn sheep herds across the state.

Doug has also served as the co-chair of the Statewide Bighorn/Domestic Sheep Interaction Working Group since 2010. The interaction working group is a public group comprised of diverse stakeholders

to energy development on mule deer winter ranges, to management of issues associated with elk feedgrounds.

including livestock permittees, the Wyoming Wool Growers Association, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming Stockgrowers

Association, state legislators, the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, and partnering federal agencies, among others. Under his leadership, this diverse group has successfully worked through many challenging issues involving both domestic and wild bighorn sheep in Wyoming.

McWhirter is a Kansas native, and after earning a Bachelor of Science degree from Wichita State University, he earned a Master's Degree from the University of Wyoming researching bighorn sheep in the Cody Region. Upon completion, Doug was hired as a wildlife biologist by the Game and Fish Department in Cheyenne. After short stints as a wildlife biologist in Cheyenne and Wheatland, Doug transferred to Pinedale where he served as the wildlife biologist for 10 years. He then transferred to Cody where he served as a wildlife biologist for an additional 15

years. Doug was then promoted to the Wildlife Management Coordinator position in Jackson where he served for the past five years.

Doug has been honored with many awards throughout his illustrious career. Within Game and Fish, in addition to the recent Director's Award, Doug has received the Outstanding Leadership Award, the Wildlife Division Employee of the Year Award and the Peer Recognition Award in both the Cody and Pinedale regions. In addition, Doug was honored as the Wildlife Professional of the Year from the Wyoming Chapter of the Wildlife Society, the Wildlife Conservationist of the Year from the Wyoming Wildlife Federation,

Wildlife Manager of the Year from the Wyoming Game Wardens Association and was inducted into the Wild Sheep Biologist Wall of Fame by the Wild Sheep

Foundation.

In addition, Doug also was a co-author for the recently released book Greater Yellowstone's Mountain Ungulates, a contrast in management histories and challenges on bighorn sheep and mountain goats.

"I've always considered being entrusted with managing Wyoming's Wildlife an incredible privilege and never taken that lightly," said McWhirter. "And the support I've had at all levels of the Game and Fish has been extremely meaningful to me and made my career a charmed one."



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GRANT IN AID UPDATES

The Targhee Core Native Herd

By Alyson Courtemanch and Katie Cheesbrough

Bighorn sheep have occupied the Teton Range in northwest Wyoming for thousands of years. Over 50 years ago, this migratory population of bighorn sheep ceased migrating but continues to persist on its high elevation summer range year-round. Historically, bighorn sheep summered at high elevations (9,000 – 11,000 ft) in the Teton Range of northwest Wyoming and migrated to lower elevations (6,000 – 7,500 ft) in the surrounding valleys in the winter. However, during the early 20th century, the cumulative effects of permanent human settlement of the valleys, including the construction of roads and fences across migration routes, residential development within winter range, fire suppression, and widespread domestic sheep grazing, caused bighorn sheep to abandon their historical migration to low elevation winter range. As such, a small, isolated herd of native bighorn sheep remain in the Teton Range at an estimated population level of about 175 sheep.

The Targhee herd has benefited from the extensive allotment buyout work led by the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation in the 1990s and early 2000s. Domestic sheep allotment buyouts around this, and other, Core Native herds mitigated the risk of respiratory disease transmission from domestic sheep that can result in large-scale bighorn sheep die-offs with long-term population effects. As a result, the Targhee Herd has never tested positive for the most deadly pneumonia pathogens, such as *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*, and has not suffered from pneumonia die-offs.

Bighorn sheep in the Tetons employ alternative foraging strategies, make smaller elevational movements, and minimize their energy expenditures in winter allowing them to persist at these high elevations and compensate for the loss of their traditional migrations. However, the future of this core native herd remains precarious due to its small size. It is imperative for wildlife and land managers to protect the population's limited high-elevation winter habitat and also improve

the availability and quality of mid-elevation spring, summer, and fall habitats.

The continued expansion of human recreation into backcountry areas is increasing across the west and continues to push further into higher elevations and wilder places as technologies change and people seek less crowded areas. The Teton Range is a magnet for outdoor recreation and bighorn sheep that are already living on much-reduced ranges are now also contending with increased disturbance with nowhere left to go. Expending any extra energy during the winter while trying to evade recreationists can have major impacts on herd health and survival and is especially hard on the lambs of the year and pregnant ewes.

The Teton Range Bighorn Sheep Working Group is a public-private group of biologists that have been working together since the early 1990s to find creative solutions to complex bighorn sheep challenges. Beginning in 2017 this working group initiated an intensive, community-driven collaborative process to address the issue of winter recreation in bighorn sheep winter range in the Tetons. For two years the working group met with community members and stakeholders on both sides of the Teton Range to learn about perspectives on the issue. From February to June 2020, the working group held five collaborative public workshops. From these community workshops and extensive public comment, the working group formulated the Teton Range Bighorn Sheep and Winter Recreation Strategy in 2022 and continues to work cooperatively with wildlife managers, natural resource agencies, stakeholders, and community members to find a solution that protects bighorn sheep while maintaining recreational opportunity in the area.

Creating additional issues for the Targhee bighorn sheep herd are expanding non-native mountain goat populations. Mountain goats compete for the limited resources and habitat within bighorn sheep range in the Tetons and can expose bighorn sheep

to fatal respiratory diseases. Managers with Grand Teton National Park and the Wyoming Game and Fish have worked diligently to implement a plan to reduce mountain goat populations within bighorn sheep range within the Tetons while increasing hunter opportunity.

The WGFD implemented a new mountain goat hunt area (Hunt Area 4) that overlaps with Bighorn Sheep Hunt Area 6 in fall 2019. The hunt continued in fall 2020 and 2021. Forty-eight Type A licenses were issued for this hunt area in 2019, 2020, and 2021. Twenty-three goats were harvested in 2019, 11 in 2020, and 1 in 2021. Hunters enjoyed this new hunt area and the opportunity to harvest a goat, even though goat densities were low. Grand Teton National Park also implemented a qualified volunteer program in fall 2020 and 2021 to reduce mountain goat densities. Forty-three mountain goats were removed in 2020 and 20 in 2021 by qualified volunteers as part of this effort in the park. The park also conducted aerial removals of mountain goats in February 2020 and 2022 and removed 36 and 58 goats, respectively. Through all of these efforts, mountain goat numbers have been significantly reduced in the Teton Range over the last three years, which will greatly benefit bighorn sheep.

The Core Native Targhee Bighorn sheep herd has adapted and persisted despite the many challenges they have and continue to face. However, thanks to dedicated wildlife managers, cooperative land management agencies, active community members, and engaged conservation groups like the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, this herd continues to be at the forefront of the conservation discussion in Wyoming. The management of this herd exemplifies what can be accomplished through cooperative management and the value in taking on complex conservation challenges head on.

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“Wyoming Archery Dream”

By Carson Engelskirker

After applying for nine years in what seemed like a meaningless draw, luck was on my side and I pulled one of the coveted “random draw” bighorn tags for Wyoming. After the post-draw excitement had settled, the hunt was scheduled for late August during the archery season.

One of my ultimate goals has always been to take a mature bighorn with my bow while hunting with my good friend Derek so the summer flew by and by late August, Derek and I were loading gear and assembling a game plan at the trailhead. 16 horses and 6 guys were headed into the

begin glassing. It only took a half hour before we located a group of 13 rams. It wasn't long before our outfitter and guide, Josh Martoglio became visibly excited over the potential of three rams, noting that two were shooters and one was exceptional. “We need to kill this ram” he said as he focused on my archery gear.

I think we all realized the work ahead as we began trekking across ridge lines to try to get into position. As we came over into the basin the rams were in, the wind was not great, but we hoped the morning thermals would soon switch. We were able to

a shot. It was not ideal as we were partially in view of some of the smaller outlier rams. I was comfortable with a 72-yard shot if need be, but we soon found a lower ledge that could position us about 20 yards closer to the rams. We elected to roll the dice and move to the lower ledge. We took our time and moved slow as the talus rock seemed to be extra loud that morning. As we neared the lower ledge, we dropped our packs and belly crawled to the new vantage point with just the bow, binos and range finders. This new spot put us in great position for a 56-yard shot. We discussed the logistics of drawing my bow and rolling into

Carson and his good friend, Derek Nelson (R) wanted an iconic hunt for their 40 birthdays!



Washakie Wilderness for a 10-day hunt. Heavy monsoonal storms were characteristic throughout Wyoming that summer but it seemed as though we had lucked out on a great weather window to begin our trip as we packed into some high-elevation basins.

The next morning found us packing up to some ridge lines that provided a better vantage point where we could

catch glimpses between the trees of the scattered group 300 yards below. We took our time easing down and checking a finicky mid-morning wind. We were able to quietly position ourselves out on a ledge that looked down on the rams 72 yards below. They had finally bedded for the afternoon as we laid on our backs, watching them and trying to determine logistics on drawing for

position when the bedded rams stood up to stretch. At full draw I would be in plain sight of all the rams below, so this needed to be a johnny-on-the-spot effort to get locked for a shot.

For the next two hours we laid baking on a rock ledge in that 11,300' sun, waiting for our ram to do the “2 o'clock-turn-around” as the guides refer to it. Nearly every

other ram stood and stretched several times except ours. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, our target ram awoke, picked his head up and shifted to stand. With an arrow already knocked, I clipped my release on and looked back to make sure Josh was good to go. I rolled into position and came to full draw as the ram stood. Every ram on that hillside below looked up and stared in alarm as I took a breath and eased off the release. The arrow found

its mark in what looked like a double lung shot. The ram spun around and joined the mass exodus fleeing from the bedding site as a cloud of dust arose. "You drilled him good, he's going down" Josh said as we gave high fives and celebrated the shot.

Scrambling to our packs, we radioed the news to Derek and the rest of the crew who were watching the hunt unfold from the ridge line. As we scrambled down the mountain following the fire hose of

a blood trail, we didn't have to go far. He was piled up 60 yards below his bed and he had fallen on a rock ledge with the backdrop of the incredible Wyoming backcountry below.

After photos and a quick team effort, we got the ram back to where the horses were tied and beat feet off the mountain as a lightning storm set in.

Luck was on our side to seal the deal on a one day hunt with archery equipment. The ram was estimated at 178 with massive 17 1/8" bases – a sure trophy for the unit.



2022 - Our 38th Annual



Ron Ball Award Winner, LM #492, Jack Welch(r) with President Zach McDermott

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Photos by Danyelle Pace and
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Co MCs, Josh Linebaugh and RHS Life
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NBSC Fall Update by Executive Director Sara Bridge



The National Bighorn Sheep Center in partnership with the Wild Sheep Foundation introduce the Townsend Youth Conservation Award

The Townsend Youth Conservation Award is dedicated in memory of Butch Townsend from Wyoming. This award honors both Kathy and Butch's lifetime commitment to conservation education. Butch devoted much of his life to wild sheep. A director on the Wild Sheep Foundation's board, he also supported the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation and keeping kids on the mountain. A visionary, Butch knew that there wouldn't be sheep on the mountain in the future without instilling the concept of conservation in youth today. He and his wife Kathy made considerable investments in putting and keeping kids on the mountain. This award continues their legacy. The Townsend Award provides a youth with special interest in wildlife and conservation with the opportunity to be honored at the Wild Sheep Foundation's national convention, the Sheep Show in Reno, Nevada. The awardee is also invited to receive a wild sheep conservation-related experience with his/her local chapter or affiliate.

NOMINEE CRITERIA:

To qualify for this award, a youth must be in the 7th-12th grade as of (January 2023) the year the award is presented at Wild Sheep Foundation's national convention, the Sheep Show.

SELECTION PROCESS:

An award committee from the National Bighorn Sheep Center and Wild Sheep Foundation will review applications and select the annual national awardee.

AWARD: The awardee will be invited to the Sheep Show in Reno, where the award will be presented during the Conservation Night banquet. The awardee will also be invited to receive a wild sheep conservation-related experience with the local chapter or affiliate (i.e., wild sheep capture/trans location, guzzler installation, radio telemetry monitoring, etc.) after national recognition.

will be displayed in Bozeman, MT. Individuals will also be presented with their own plaque.

For more information, contact Kendra Young at education@bighorn.org.

RECOGNITION:

The Townsend Youth Conservation Award plaque with annual awardees



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GRANT IN AID UPDATES

Trail Lake Meadow Update

By Amy Anderson, Habitat Biologist Wyoming G&F

A year ago, the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation (WWSF) helped fund a project to renovate Trail Lake Meadow, an irrigated hay meadow just above the Whiskey Conservation Camp in the Torrey Valley. Reclaiming this meadow will improve wintering habitat for the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep and other wildlife.

To reclaim this 35 acre meadow it first needed to be prepared for reseeded. It was dominated by smooth brome and basin wildrye, both are not preferred or utilized forage species. Wyoming Game Fish Department (WGFD), in partnership with the Shoshone National Forest and WWSF,

forage species beneficial to bighorn sheep and other wildlife such as mule deer. The seed mix included a number of native grasses, introduced grasses, and several higher stature legume species, all of which provide nutritious forage for wintering bighorn sheep.

The re-seeding was done using a Lawson aerator, a piece of equipment that breaks open the soil surface, broadcasts seed over the soil, and then covers the seed. The photo shows the aerator in action. The aerator broke down mid-way through the seeding, and replacement parts were difficult to find, which delayed the project by several weeks. So, the seeding

was mostly unsuccessful, and the meadow was overtaken by lambsquarters weeds.

So where do we go from here you might ask? New seed has been purchased, and will be planted this fall (2022) with a drill instead of the aerator. Drilling the seed and planting in the fall will better ensure the seed is worked into the soil profile and make it ready to capitalize on early spring moisture for germination. Once again, the gated pipe for irrigation will be laid out in the spring, and a technician will be on hand to irrigate the meadow through summer, 2023 to ensure establishment of the seeding. This second seeding, coupled with plenty of irrigation water, is expected to easily crowd out or out compete the lambsquarters and we should see much improvement over the next couple of years.

As always, we greatly appreciate the partnership through funding and support from Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation for projects benefitting Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep!



conducted a prescribe burn and treated the regrowth of the undesired species with herbicide during winter, 2020-2021. In the spring of 2022, the meadow was re-seeded with a mixture of



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Photo by Mark Gocke

WY-WSF Welcomes Matt Hoobler to it's Board of Directors

Matt joined the WY-WSF Board of Directors for a two-year term this past June. Matt's passion for bighorn sheep kicked into high gear during his recent tenure as the Director of Operations for Pathfinder Ranches. While at Pathfinder Ranches, Matt led the efforts to develop and enhance water sources throughout the properties, augment habitat features to create a wildlife / livestock balance, as well as hosted two Pathfinder Volunteer Days to improve migration corridors in a major wildlife transition area between the Seminoe and Ferris Mountain Ranges. Matt, along with Pathfinder Ranches President Ryan Lance, initiated the recent efforts to reintroduce bighorn sheep into the Sweetwater Rocks in central Wyoming. He remains instrumental in developing and contributing to the policy and procedure advancements necessary to ensure a successful reintroduction.

"I needed a place to put my passion to act on the Sweetwater Rocks reintroduction and am thankful for the board's acceptance and motivation. I'm excited to work with wild sheep advocates to help return sheep to the Rocks."

Matt has rural roots in Kansas and Colorado and eventually made his way to the University of Wyoming where he graduated with a BS in Ag Communications / Farm and Ranch Management. After UW, he obtained a MS in Ag Economics from Kansas State University. He returned to Wyoming in the late 90's where he and his family have made their home in

Cheyenne. Matt has worked for the State of Wyoming addressing matters related to federal land management, endangered species policy, and interstate water administration. While at the State of Wyoming, Matt received the Conservation Pace-Setter Award from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. Matt spent six years at Pathfinder Ranches until recently joining the short line railroad company, Watco, as their Assoc Vice President for Policy and Natural Resources. Matt and his wife Beth have two teenage girls, Jenna and Shelby, and together they frequently venture into the backcountry of Wyoming. Additionally, Matt and Beth annually volunteer at the Wyoming Casting for Recovery event supporting women who have had a breast cancer diagnosis.





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A Z Y R E



“The Dam Ram”

By Greg Clifford, RHS Life #359

In the mid 1980's my father drew a Bighorn sheep tag for the Ferris/Seminole area, I was 17 and it was last year this tag was offered. It is my understanding that this herd was supplemented through the years with sheep from Whiskey Mountain near Dubois. Unfortunately, these sheep were migratory and the herd did not maintain an adequate population in the area.

Despite many days afield, we were unable to locate a legal ram and my dad was unsuccessful in harvesting a Bighorn sheep.

for 2009 and 2010 with sheep being brought from Utah (Antelope Island) and Oregon (Diablo Mountains). These sheep, unlike the prior transplants, were non-migratory, lower elevation sheep and the Ferris/Seminole area proved to be phenomenal habitat to both maintain and expand the herd.

During the initial reintroduction period, a small portion of the herd split and moved into the Bennett Mountains on the opposite side of the river. As the population expanded and the herd stabilized, the opportunity for hunting was once again offered in limited

WSF, we were included in the winter meeting in 2021. During this meeting it was discussed that as a result of the successful herd expansion, the Wyoming Game and Fish was planning to split the Ferris/Seminole and Bennett Mountain areas into two separate hunt areas requiring hunters to apply for one side of the river or the other. I applied for one of the two available tags for the Bennett Mountain area and anxiously awaited the draw results.

Early on the morning of May 3, my wife woke me up with the news that the results of the Wyoming moose/



Fortunately, through the direct efforts of the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, the Wyoming Game and Fish and the Bureau of Land Management (to name a few), a reintroduction program was initiated

numbers combining both the Ferris/Seminole and Bennett Mountain herds into one hunt area.

As Lifetime members of the WY-

sheep/goat tags were available on line. Initially, we could not find my results we could only see that I no longer had any preference points for sheep, I had drawn!



Over the next several weeks and months we were fortunate enough to use contacts we had made through volunteering with the WWSF on Bureau of Land Management projects, to gain more insight into the area and the herd. These included Wyoming Game and Fish personal, members of the WY-WSF and fellow hunters as well as the BLM crew.

We had already been in the area since late winter, looking at sheep numbers and enjoying the country in hopeful anticipation. Later in May we officially began scouting and we spent every free day we had available in the area learning all we could. Our goal was to find the oldest ram in the area and to ensure we were harvesting a mature Bighorn. During our scouting trips we were fortunate to see a very healthy herd including young rams with great genetics and an abundance of ewes and lambs who were always playful and entertaining. The entire herd looked healthy and well established and we only encountered one ram during the entire season that had an injury.

By the end of the summer we had been able to locate two older rams which we eventually named the "Heavy Ram" and the "Dam Ram". After much consideration, we determined the Heavy Ram as 8-9 years old and the Dam Ram was 9-10. During archery season, the older of the two rams

was often found alone and near the Seminole Dam. One such evening he was actually on top of the dam and walked through the door as if going home after a long day at work, carefully stepping over the cracks, proving he had done this exact thing many times. On the 2nd of September, after the rifle season had opened, we learned that the other tag holder had harvested a ram and eventually we realized he had indeed harvested the Heavy Ram. We were very excited for him and continued our search for the Dam Ram while ensuring we hadn't missed an older member of the herd.

After no sign of the Dam Ram for over two weeks, we were fortunate to have fresh eyes on the mountain as our friends had come out for a few days to join us. Late on the afternoon of September 9th Scott found our ram, bedded down across the reservoir.

With limited daylight, we quickly circled around the mountain and began our stalk while our friends watched from the other side. Unfortunately as the temperature started to cool down, the wind switched and we were forced to set

up in an area with limited visibility to the area where the ram had last been seen. Fortunately, we were able to visualize the ram feeding up a small, steep spine of rocks in the trees, a successful shot was placed and the Dam Ram was down.

Upon walking up on the ram there was a plethora of emotions that swept over me. The failed hunt with my dad when I was younger, the years of anticipating and application for the opportunity to hunt a sheep, not to mention the location which was 45 minutes from where I spent my childhood growing up, the appreciation and gratitude for all of the people that helped in my success especially my wife who was with me for all 48 days of this adventure.

The ram was everything that I had hoped for; 10 1/2 years old, incredible mass, beautiful shape, and a testament to the genetics that the area promotes. Without the vision, hard work and financial commitment of the WY-WSF, G&F, BLM and other agencies to put and keep wild sheep on the mountain, this hunt would not have been possible and I am grateful.

Thank you again for the opportunity to create these memories and have the hunt of a lifetime.



“Thats My Story”

By Shanie Aksamit

Here's where my story starts: my dad picked me up from Gillette and we headed to Sheridan to my house where I slept and then Sunday the 4th we headed up the mountains.

But just heading up there was a process, because we had to first wait for my grandpa and Brien who was supposed to come down

But you know the faith must have been little because I knew I was going to shoot the ram within the first few days, because I was very confident. After we got back we began scrambling around the house grabbing that, and packing this, and don't forget that. After a couple hours we decided that we had everything and we headed off toward the mountains, after

We then headed up the mountains and of course all the way up I was jamming out to music as one does. We got to this one campsite and these people came to the truck. They must have known my dad cause I had no idea who they were. And basically congratulated me and said good luck and we continued heading up. We stopped at this



Shanie Aksamit with her Dad, Dean and her HA 12 Ram.

the mountains from scouting the first through the fourth of September. They finally showed up and we then went shopping and practically bought out the store for supplies for the hunt.

filling up the gas tanks and when we were leaving the Co Op I want to point out they almost forgot Tony but I didn't because I am the responsible one.

clearing and left the trailers and a couple people in our group rode four wheelers into the campsite, because the ride was rough and they didn't want to mess up their

trucks.

We got to the cabin and it was gorgeous. It was like a dude ranch cabin but a bit dirty but who doesn't like that it's a part of the experience. We unloaded and that night we scouted but didn't find a ram that was worth shooting. So we went to sleep and the two nights we were there at night we talked about all my school stuff and just their lives till we all fell asleep. We woke up a bit late Monday because we were tuckered out from making a game plan the night before and unloading, and stuff like that. I of course ate my hunting breakfast, which is all I eat for breakfast when hunting the trusted Frosted Flakes. Then after changing into hunting clothes, because when sleeping I slept in shorts cause it was so hot.

I got on my grandpa's four wheeler with him and me and him and Brien went one way and Chris and my dad and Tony went another way, of course they sent the hunter in one direction and

the person with the gun the other direction because that makes sense. Anyway we found a group of twenty one rams and found two huge ones and saw mine, and Brien had to leave to get high enough to find my dad and them. After a while of my grandpa and me scouting and watching the group they all showed up and five hours after moving closer and sitting, and sitting some more. I finally convinced the scaredy cats to move closer.

Within ten minutes of getting closer I was getting set up and was shooting down a hill at 486 yards. The wind quit and I got the cross hairs lined up on my laid down sheep and shot and he dropped his head cause I shot him perfectly. He barely stood up and I shot again and he fell and that was it he was down.

I then walked up and all the other sheep were relatively close because that was the leader per say. And we gutted and hauled the cape, and horns, and head, and meat back on four wheelers

after driving them up to him. We got back to the cabin and celebrated and ate food and headed home the next day.

We stopped at the game and fish office and registered it, and we went to the taxidermist and he scored it at 178 and a half. It was such a fun experience and a blast and it was so cool how many people were there when I shot it. And that night I went back to Gillette and school the next day.

I mean how many 14 year old girls can say they did that and make three grown men cry because they were so proud and shoot it with a 243 improved gun with a suppressor.

I'm so glad me, Shanie L. Aksamit, Thomas Dean Aksamit, Thomas Joseph Aksamit, Tony Olsen and Brien House and Chris Apel got to go.

And I appreciate the Bischoff family and especially Pam for wishing me good luck and letting me hunt on her property and use her cabin.

And that's the end of the story.



Shanie Aksamit with her Grand dad, Tom.

GRANT IN AID UPDATES

“STEEP LEARNING”

By Jordan Seitz Encampment Teacher

Placing trail cameras effectively in our river canyons for bighorn sheep over the last 1.5 years has been a “steep” learning experience!

Sometimes our set-up angles are off, the big animals don't trigger the camera but a rodent does, or 20GB of cattle kill our batteries in mere days. With that said, it only takes one image, or a 10 second video clip of something cool (like wrestling bear cubs) to make it all worthwhile!



the predators usually traveled parallel to the river, and the prey usually traveled perpendicular to it... interesting!

As always, we continue to set new goals: (1) Find a new camera location that looks down a trail with a scenic

and were able to purchase camera batteries, two more Maven spotting scope kits, plus a new iPad with an HDMI adapter. We can download all the camera data immediately in the field for a quick look, and in the classroom we can easily display and analyze it on our big screen TV. After sorting through everything, I use iMovie on the iPad to create short films showcasing our adventures in the field and the best trail cam footage. While digging through the data for our river bottom camera, one of my 8th graders noticed that

background and is in a winter travel area for the sheep. (2) Continue looking for a pinch point where the sheep cross a stream. (3) Join G&F Biologist Teal on a collar hunt after some of the GPS collars drop off ewe necks. (4) Meet with the A-Bar-A Ranch and Platte Basin Timelapse crews to see a fence improvement project they completed with the local SER Conservation District, and learn how their camera data played an integral role in the project.

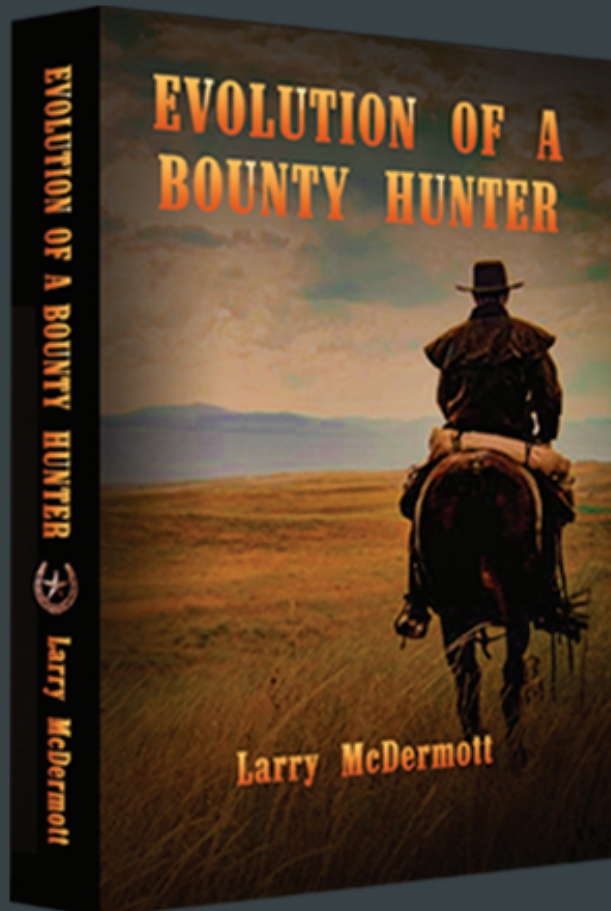
We continue to prove how the diversity of mouths on the landscape - both predator and prey - changes with the seasons. Highlights since this time last year have been multiple lions, turkeys, bear cubs, and of course sheep, specifically a young lamb! Camera data and a unique encounter with a bachelor group of bighorns (they were sparring and cracking horns) confirms we have at least nine rams of varying ages in our herd.

This year we received grant money from our local Recreation Board





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GRANT IN AID UPDATES

Bighorn Sheep Nutrition-Disease Research Project

Kevin Monteith Shop at UW

Once the largest Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep herd, the Whiskey Mountain herd experienced a pneumonia die-off in the early 1990's and has continued to decline ever since. Nearby herds have experienced similar die-offs, but have not continued to decline like the Whiskey herd. Herds infected with pneumonia can experience different fates—some slowly decline, some undergo crash-recovery cycles, and some tolerate it without significant mortality. Ecological factors such as population size, food availability, nutritional condition, immune function, and disease could all influence trends in population size and the ability for herds to re-cover after pneumonia die-offs. Untangling these complex interactions is critical to developing management plans to maintain healthy populations of bighorn sheep.

We are investigating how nutrition and disease interact to influence population dynamics. Our work focuses on the Whiskey Mountain, Gros Ventre, and Upper Shoshone bighorn sheep herds, which all hold the same bacterial pathogens associated with pneumonia but have drastically different population trends. By monitoring the same animals through time, we are tracking pathogen presence, nutritional condition, reproduction, adult and lamb survival, mortality causes, and forage.

Introducing: The high elevation residents of the Whiskey herd

The bighorn sheep on the west

side of the Wind River Range live around 10,000 feet year-round. We might expect that living in these harsh conditions would make life tough for these sheep, which may mean they need to be equipped for it. The West Side sheep were impressively fat—and much fatter than the Dubois portion of the Whiskey herd whether in December or March. We handled the fattest bighorn sheep seen in this project from the West Side: 32% of her body mass was comprised of fat, and all that after having reared a lamb! Surviving all year in such a harsh, rugged environment may well require that sheep store incredible fat reserves, which differs from bighorn sheep that migrate throughout the year.

In March 2021, we collared 14 adult females from the herd, eleven of which were pregnant. The Wyoming State Health Laboratory detected 4 out of the 5 pathogens that we test for in the West Side sheep. We detected both *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* and *Pasturella multocida*, which are the primary culprits in pneumonia mortalities in lambs in the Dubois segment of the Whiskey herd. This suggests that it is not an absence of pathogens that allows for high rates of lamb survival in the West Side sheep.

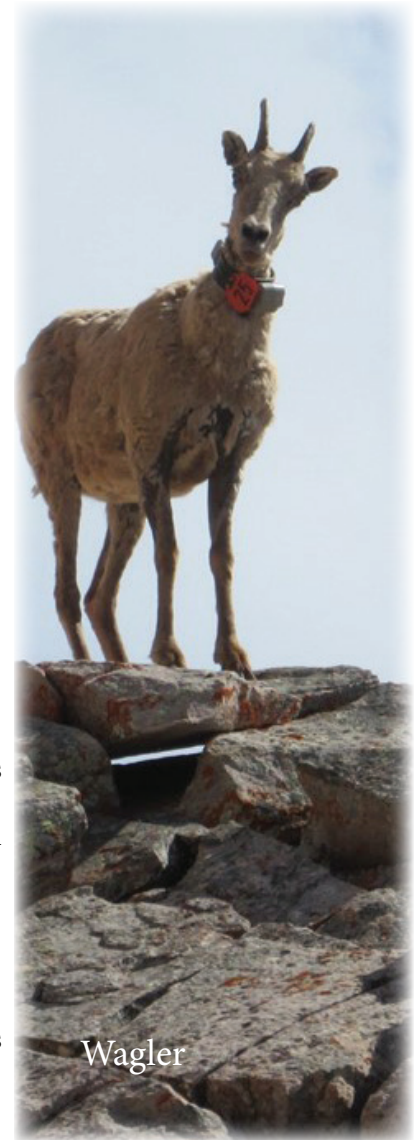
These sheep present a fascinating contrast to the declining segment of the Whiskey herd and are an opportunity to better understand why lamb survival in most of the Whiskey herd is so low.

The role of habitat

How much fat a sheep has likely reflects the quality of its habitat—a

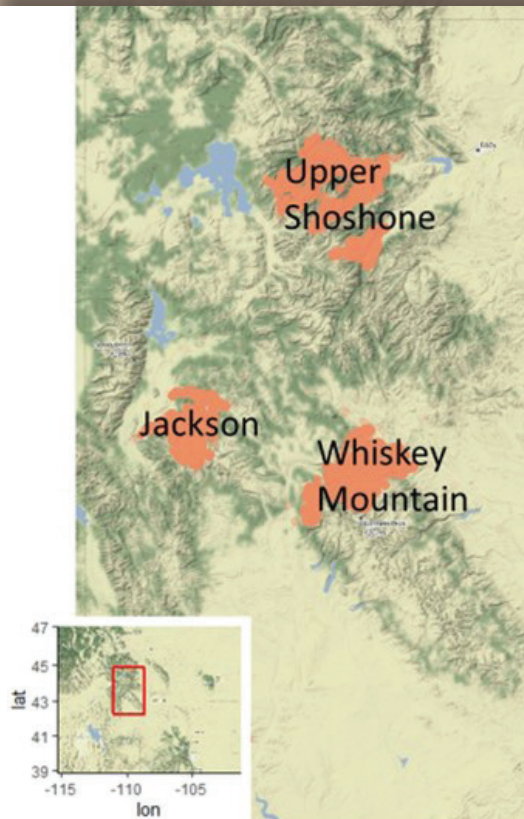
high quality summer range is extremely important for bighorn sheep to build fat reserves to help them survive through the winter when resources are limiting. There are obvious differences in nutritional condition in the three herds, and these differences are especially noticeable in

autumn, after they have migrated off summer range. Individuals in the Dubois portion of the Whiskey Mountain herd consistently come off summer range in poorer condition than those in the other three herds. To identify why the Whiskey Mountain herd seems to have poorer summer nutrition than the Jackson herd, we are piecing together the quality of each sheep's summer range by analyzing forage clippings to look at digestibility, crude protein, and micronutrients. Biomass seems to be driving increased availability of digestible



Wagler

GRANT IN AID UPDATES



dry matter, protein, and trace minerals on the Jackson summer range. For- age samples that we've collected from the past 3 years have just been sent out to the lab, and we hope to share more results in 2022.

Leading cause of lamb mortality

We captured 29 lambs during the 2021 summer. Two lambs (16%) from the Dubois herd are still alive as of February 2022. The two segments of the Whiskey herd that we're studying—sheep in Dubois, and sheep in the West Side — had different lamb recruitment. Similar to previous summers, most of the lambs in Dubois segment of the Whiskey herd eventually succumbed to pneumonia. Two lambs, however, survived throughout the winter in this part of the herd. Four lambs (40%) are still alive in the West Side, and pneumonia was the primary cause of lamb mortality in that portion of the herd. Though our work is

just beginning on the West Side, it seems that West Side lambs are more resistant to pneumonia than Dubois lambs. Lamb survival remains the best in the Jackson herd, with four lambs (57%) still alive.

Next Steps

We will continue monitoring adults and lambs in the Whiskey Mountain, Upper Shoshone, and Gros Ventre herds to understand the interaction of disease and nutritional dynamics in these herds. With this long-term dataset, we have an excellent baseline knowledge of the conditions of these herds that will help to identify potential management options that could improve population growth and health. One potential management action is testing and culling chronically infected individuals, which attempts to alleviate pathogen burdens within populations. Another is a ewe harvest, which aims to reduce population densities to improve overall condition of individuals of the herd. Using these herds as case studies, we hope our research and continued monitoring will help to inform bighorn sheep management

throughout the West.

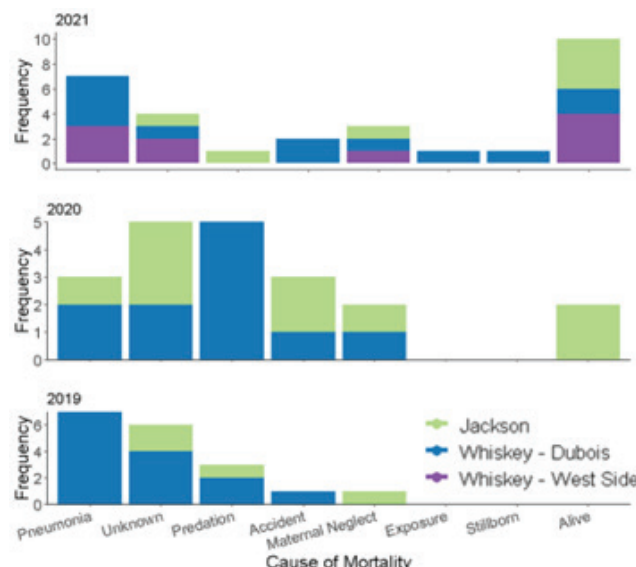
Project Leads

This project is led by PhD student Rachel Smiley and master's student Brittany Wagler.

Collaborators, partners, and funders

The Northwest Wyoming Bighorn Sheep Project benefits from being highly collaborative in development, operations, and funding. We fortunate to partner with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory, a collaboration through which we can pull expertise from managers, disease specialists, and ecologists. Funds have been provided by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, National Wild Sheep Foundation, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition, Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board, Wyoming Wildlife Livestock Disease Research

Partnership, Teton Conservation District, and Bowhunters of Wyoming Inc. Special thanks to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, United States Forest Service, Wyoming State Veterinary Lab, the Pinto Ranch, Steve Kilpatrick, Sara Bridge, and Des Brunette for assistance with logistics, lab analyses, field housing, and fieldwork.



Muley Fanatic Foundation and Maven present

My Wild Land

Produced by Wyoming Migration Initiative

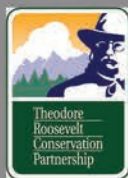
**3 ranches. 3 films. 3 inspiring stories
of commitment to preserving
western heritage and wildlife,
come hell or highwater.**

**When: December 3rd | Doors open at 5:30pm
Dinner is served at 6:30pm, Films start at 8:00pm**

Where: Holiday Inn | Cody, Wy

**Tickets must be purchased in advance
by November 25th. Tickets are \$40
and include dinner. You can purchase
tickets at <https://www.wyomingwildsheep.org/>.**

Hosted by:



Contact Dean DiJenno (307) 213-0998 for questions

Wyoming Wild Sheep Winter Meeting to be held in Cody on Dec 2&3, 2022!

Friday, December 2nd

9:00-4:00 PM: Board Meeting at the Holiday Inn located at 1701 Sheridan Ave.

6:30-10:00 PM: No host cash bar and light snacks at the Holiday Inn. Executive Director Katie Cheesbrough will update our grant in aid projects plus a slideshow of 2022 projects and rams harvested. Silent Auction, Gun Raffle, Cornhole!

Saturday, December 3rd

7:00-9:00 AM – Coffee and Pastries at the Holiday Inn.

9:00-3:00 PM – Field Trip - Meet at the Holiday Inn lobby located at 1701 Sheridan.

We will travel to National Forest land on the Shoshone and look for Bighorn sheep on the way.

Sandwiches, chips, cookies, and water/soft drinks will be provided for lunch which will be in the field.

4:00-5:00 PM - Membership Meeting at the Holiday Inn.

5:30 PM - Cash Bar, Raffles, Silent Auction items, Booze and Gun Raffles - The Holiday Inn.

6:30 PM - Buffet featuring: Roasted Beef & Wild Mushroom Demi-glace and Seafood Alfredo with Pasta. Garden salad with assorted dressings and toppings, Rolls & Butter, Potato, Vegetable and Carrot Cake Desert.

Formal Presentations During/After Dinner include:

The Wyoming Migration Initiative will present “My Wild Land” featuring 3 inspiring stories of commitment to preserving western heritage and wildlife, come hell or highwater.

The members only all-inclusive cost for the weekend is \$50 per person and children 12 and under are free. Rooms may be reserved by calling the Holiday Inn at (307) 587-5555. Ask for the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation rate of \$109.95. This special rate is good through November 25.

Register on line at: www.wyomingwildsheep.org/shop by Nov 25th, send a check to WY-WSF at P.O. Box 666 in Cody, WY 82414 or contact Dean DiJenno at (307) 213-0998.



Join us for some fun and information sharing regarding our work of “Putting and Keeping Kids and Wild Sheep on the Mountain”.

GRANT IN AID UPDATES

A CENTER FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION THE NATIONAL BIGHORN SHEEP CENTER

BY SARA BRIDGE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Healthy environments support healthy wildlife. Twenty-first century threats to our environment—including invasive species, diseases, pollution, and a warming climate—are putting wildlife populations at risk” -- per the National Wildlife Federation.

The National Bighorn Sheep Center educates the public about threats to wild sheep and other wildlife and their habitats by using the Whiskey Mountain Herd as an example. Through our narrative and educational programs, we invite individuals, youth specifically, to develop a personal relationship with wild sheep, wildlife, and wild lands. Situated in the Wind River Valley, we employ our location as a teaching tool of one's role in conservation. The Center offers experiences in the outdoors through Camp Bighorn and habitat tours where individuals are invited to develop a personal relationship with the wildlife and wild spaces. We thereby transform 'Conservation' from a concept to a deeply ingrained value. The National Bighorn Sheep Center provides programming around key areas that affect wild sheep and wildlife today: disruption of migration corridors, disease, and habitat impacts. A key theme of our programming is that conservation is a collaborative effort. We highlight the efforts of key partners such as the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation and Wyoming Game and Fish. Components of our education program vary by structure, theme, and audience. We offer traditional, place-based, hands-on, and virtual education programs to both youth and adults. Through

these programs, we reach nearly 20,000 individuals a year.

PLACE-BASED:

Camp Bighorn is our trademark place-based education program. In the words of Gregory A. Smith who wrote Place-and Community-Based Education in Schools, "Place-based education is learning that is rooted in what is local—the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place." With over 20 local volunteers who have trailed the valleys and hills of the Wind River Valley for over 30 years, we provide authentic experiences to youth in Whiskey Basin. We introduce youth to the stewards of its wildlife and wild spaces—to the unique history and culture of this area (its wildlife habitat and resources) and to the passion of those committed to this area, some for their whole life. We continue to broaden our audience for Camp Bighorn to host youth from other areas of Wyoming (outside of Fremont County) and the nation. In 2022, Camp Bighorn featured programs led by volunteers such as: Fire Ecology in Bighorn Habitat, Ecosystem Exploration in Torrey Creek, Taxidermy, Backpacking 101, Kayaking, and Archery.

HANDS-ON:

We have designed unique curriculum and interactive games to teach youth about bighorn biology, habitat, and disease e.g., Migration Strategy of Wildlife, Mock Sheep Captures, Tracks and Scat: "Who am I?". Educators utilize these games with youth groups and large-scale events such as the Outdoor Expo held in Lander each year (5,000 people over a single weekend) or the Youth Conservation Experience in Reno Nevada as an effective way to teach key concepts in conservation.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION:

We offer tours to youth and adult groups at our museum facility. On average, we host over 25 youth groups and 20 adult groups per year.

We employ traditional teaching methods in these programs, using the exhibits and hands-on props to teach about wild sheep and the ecosystems that support them.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS AND OUR WILD SHEEP WEBINAR SERIES:

In our effort to become truly a national resource for wild sheep and wildlife interest groups and individuals, in 2022, we launched a webinar series to inform and educate the public about "anything and everything" dealing with wild sheep ecology, research, management, and trivia. A few examples of topics include: Dr. Lauren Christensen 'Preserving Bighorn Health by Vaccinating and "Tackling" at the Source', "Bighorn Archaeology: When Wilderness & Culture Collide" with Lawrence C. Todd from Meeteetse, Dr. Frances Cassirer - Test & Remove as a Management Strategy, and Mike Cox on "The Collaboration Required in Wild Sheep Management" the head of the Western Association of Wildlife Agencies Wild Sheep Working Group. Do you work with youth and are interested in what we do by way of wild sheep? Please call us at 307- 455-3429 to schedule a tour for your local school group!



**NATIONAL
BIGHORN
SHEEP
CENTER**

GRANT IN AID UPDATES

Jackson Core Native Herd

By: Alyson Courtemanch and Katie Cheesbrough

The Jackson Core Native Herd is located to the east of Jackson in the Gros Ventre Mountain Range. This herd is made up of serval population segments that winter in different areas. Some of the sheep that winter at low elevation can be spotted foraging on the National Elk Refuge in Jackson Hole and around Hoback Canyon.

Unlike the other Core Native Herds in Wyoming, the Jackson Bighorn Sheep Herd has been increasing since its last pneumonia related die-off in 2012, when an estimated 30% of the population was lost to disease. More recently, the herd has surpassed its objective of 400 sheep and numbers have been 20% above objective (480 sheep) for the past two years (2020 & 2021). The Jackson herd continues to show signs of growth as 505 sheep were counted during the 2022 mid-winter trend count. During the February 2022 survey, fifty-seven rams with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl or larger horns were observed. Due to the increasing overall population numbers and the number of mature rams, managers decided the herd could support more hunting opportunity and increased Type 1 licenses from 12 to 16 in 2022.

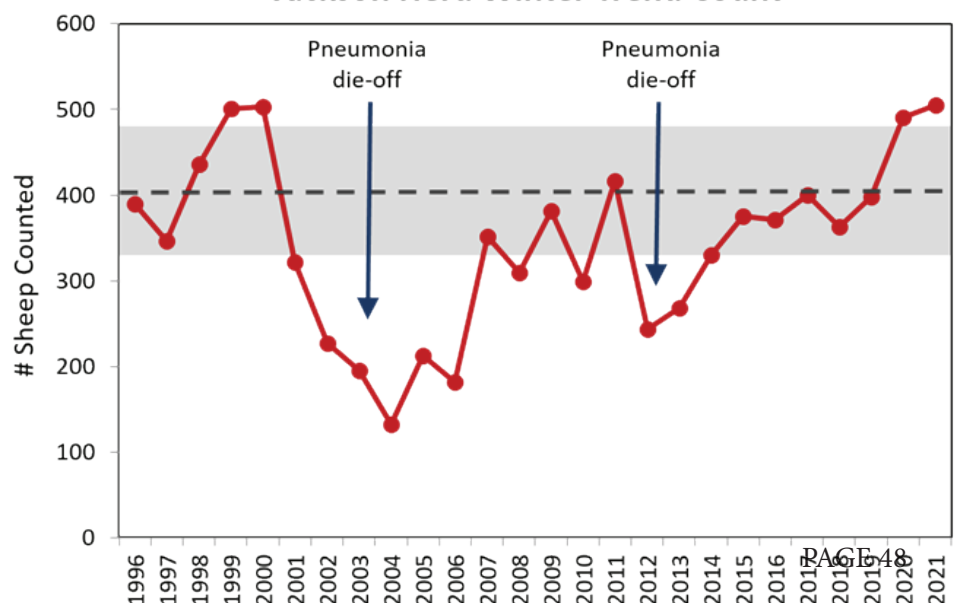
In addition, managers added a Type 6 ewe/lamb license in 2022 with 16 licenses, valid for the Gros Ventre drainage. In the past, this sheep herd has experienced pneumonia die-offs when the population reaches approximately 500 sheep (Figure 1). Instead of sitting back and waiting for another pneumonia outbreak to occur, managers wanted to try to prevent

it by reducing the population through ewe harvest. Although removing ewes may seem counter-intuitive, reducing the population slightly and preventing another pneumonia die-off will result in more Type 1 ram licenses over time. If the population plummets from pneumonia, Type 1 licenses would have to be cut back substantially for at least several years. Ongoing research with the University of Wyoming has shown that the body fat of collared ewes on the Gros Ventre winter ranges has declined during the past two years, while ewes on the Curtis Canyon/Flat Creek winter ranges have remained relatively stable. Managers believe this decline in body fat may be a signal that bighorn sheep are competing for resources due to the growing population and may be a precursor to another pneumonia outbreak.

The 2022 decision to implement a ewe/lamb season is a management tool to reduce the population density in an effort to quell the potential for a disease outbreak. Ewe/lamb licenses do not count

against preference points and provide additional bighorn sheep hunting opportunity. Demand was high for the first year of this license type with 343 applicants and 4.7% draw success. February 2022 counts suggest that a 100% harvest of the allotted 2022 ewe/lamb licenses would result in a 9% decrease in the ewe population in the Gros Ventre herd segment and a 6% decrease in the overall Jackson Herd ewe population. Concurrent research will continue with the University of Wyoming to monitor how the ewe/lamb season affects body condition, population demographic rates, and disease in the Gros Ventre drainage, compared to the segment of the population that winters in the Cutris Canyon and Flat Creek areas. Managers hope to continue offering ewe/lamb licenses for several more years to slowly bring ewe densities down. Closely monitoring the outcome of this management hunt, will help inform future management decisions for this herd and others around the state.

Jackson Herd Winter Trend Count



“In an Instant”

By Kelvin Finney

This story starts almost 60 years ago. I remember being a little kid and reading Jack O'Connor's stories about sheep hunting in Outdoor Life, and ever since then I've dreamed about this hunt. Fast forward to the early 80's and I began putting in for Wyoming sheep tags until they switched to preference points. In the late 90's I realized that preference points were here to stay in most states and I needed to start playing the game. After accumulating 22 preference points and talking to Cody Brown of Wind River Backcountry Outfitters like I do every year, I decided to put in for a different unit because 90/10 is coming in 2023.

Fast forward to May 3rd and early in the morning I received an email from Wyoming Game and Fish that I had successfully drawn a tag and we began preparing for the hunt. I met Cody and some members of his family in Dubois on the 13th of August for dinner and he asked me what I was looking for in a ram, to which I said I didn't care about the score, just that we found an older ram.

The following morning we took a 3 hour ride into base camp on Cody's mules and horses. The next morning after all these years of waiting the hunt would finally begin. Day 1 was mostly uneventful, glassing a high mountain basin but finding nothing except a couple of elk. Day 2 however was a much different story.

We decided to go up to the opposing side of the big basin up above the timberline. We stopped and glassed several times along the way and the third time Cody thought he saw several rams a couple of miles away. After we got the spotter out we found 8 rams bedded above a snowy patch. We quickly got the mules out of sight and determined to make a stalk on the rams.

Kendra, Cody's assistant, stayed with the mules while we pursued the rams. When Cody peaked

above the top of the ridge we were moving across we found that the rams had moved about half a mile from where they were bedded. We ducked back down and continued our advance, just for them to move another mile away to the middle of a rocky flat. We started a new stalk and found ourselves within 70 yards of the rams before we could get a visual on them. If you have ever tried to crawl through a field of basketball sized rocks, you'll understand why they probably heard us.

But in any event, they all stood up and none presented a good shot. 5 rams bolted one way, 3 the other.

At this point we decided it was best to return to Kendra and the mules who were about 2 miles away on a ridge line. After 400 yards or so of walking back suddenly a ram ran into sight in front of us, quickly followed by 2 more. 2 of them were definite shooters, and they kept walking at an angle closer to us. They moved from about 450 yards away and were going to cross around 350 yards in front of us. We made a rifle rest out of a backpack and a rock, then got ready for the shot. Cody whispered to me that I should take the lead ram, and that whenever I was ready he would



stop the rams. I told him I was ready when he was. He let out a whistle, and I took my shot.

It was over in an instant, the ram dropped on impact. As we approached the ram just seemed to grow bigger and bigger. Before we got to the ram Cody turned and asked me if I knew what I had here, and all I could muster was “A really nice ram.” That ram turned out to be one of the bigger rams he had ever helped to take, and to me 60 years of dreaming came to reality. After taking the ram into the Riverton Fish and Game office and talking to the biologist it really did sink in how lucky I was to have taken a big 11 ½ year old ram. I think this hunt proved to me that the old adage is true. It really is better to be lucky than good.

GRANT IN AID UPDATES

The Legendary Absaroka Bighorn Sheep Herd

By Tony Mong, Wildlife Biologist, Wyoming G&F Cody Office

“Legendary” may seem like a bit of a presumptuous word to use in describing a bighorn sheep herd but for one of the largest Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep herds in North America that is a core native herd that covers 3,889 square miles of some of the most rugged, remote country in the lower 48 states, “legendary” is what should come to mind. Our current population estimate for the entire herd is around 4,500 sheep. This herd covers 6 WGFD hunt areas and at its peak of limited quota licenses, offered opportunity to as many as 227 sheep hunters. As with many sheep herds across the west the Absaroka Bighorn Sheep Herd (ABSH) is not immune to issues associated with disease including fluctuating population numbers and slow population recovery from difficult weather events. The ABSH is broken up in to 6 smaller hunting areas in order to manage harvest and hunters across the landscape. In this article we give some historical perspective on bighorn sheep production and harvest as well as updates on the current status within each hunt area.

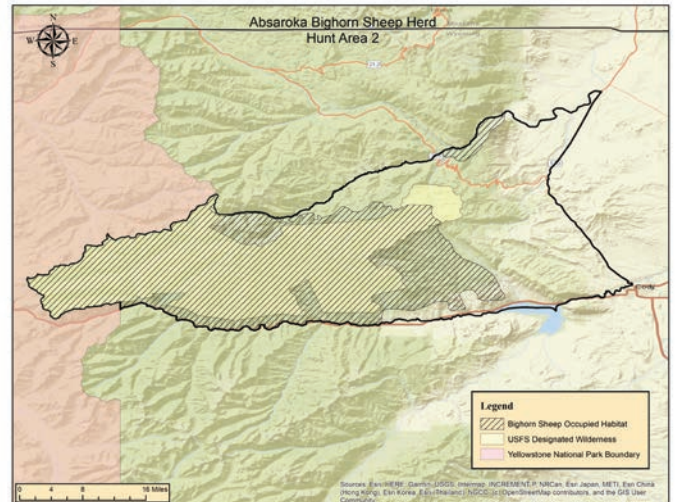
Hunt Area 1 (Clark's Fork)

This rugged hunt area has a total of approximately 515 square miles of designated occupied sheep habitat of which about 298 square miles occur within US Forest Service designated wilderness area. Rams in this

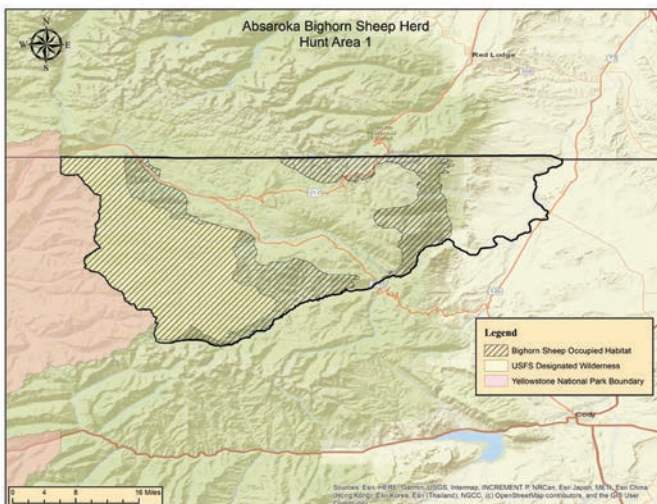
area are considered “timber rats” by many and without snow or significant weather finding them in this area can be tough because of their affinity for the trees. There is movement from the Yellowstone National Park into the hunt area when winter weather occurs. Hunter opportunity has ranged from a low of 12 to a high of 24. The last 4 seasons have had the lowest license numbers available due to a combination of a tough winter in 2017/18 and generally low recruitment. Harvest success in the area has ranged from a low of 25% in 1976 to a high of 100% in 2003 with the last 10 year average being 81%. Harvested rams over the last 10 years in this area are an average of 7 year old, have an average horn length of around 31.5 inches and average horn base of around 13.9 inches. The places where sheep like to live in this hunt area make it difficult to conduct our normal post-hunt winter classification flights to determine lamb and ram ratios and because of this, classification flights typically take place in the late summer. Over the last 10 years, we were able to fly classification flights 9 of those years. Average lamb ratio is 35 lambs per 100 ewes (35:100) and average ram ratio is 29:100 over that time period. We have seen an increase from the average in lamb ratios over the last 4 years to 42:100 indicating that we should see better recruitment for sheep in hunt area 1.

Hunt Area 2 (Trout Peak)

This hunt area has a total of

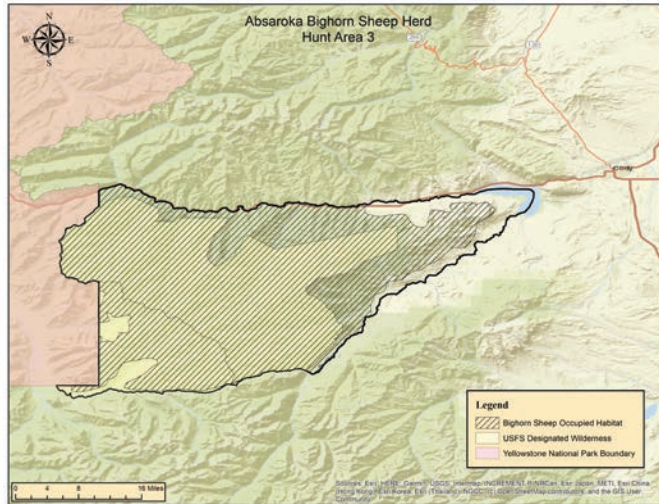


approximately 653 square miles of designated occupied sheep habitat of which about 443 square miles occur within US Forest Service designated wilderness area. This area has seen good numbers of rams over the last several years. Hunter opportunity has ranged from a low of 15 to a high of 32. We have seen a 28% decrease in license availability in hunt area 2 since 2009, however the last few years have had encouraging harvest statistics. Harvest success in the area has ranged from a low of 22% in 1974 to a high of 92% in 2006, 2013 and 2017 with the last 10 year average being 80%. Harvested rams over the last 10 years in this area are an average of 8 year old, have an average horn length of around 32.4 inches and average horn base of around 13.7 inches. Wintering sheep in this hunt area are usually accessible for winter classification flights. Over the last 10 years, we were able to fly classification flights 8 of those years. Average lamb ratio is 34 lambs per 100 ewes (34:100) and average ram ratio is 34:100 over that time period. We have seen an increase from the average in lamb ratios over the last 4 years to 38:100 indicating that we should see better recruitment for sheep in hunt area 2.



GRANT IN AID UPDATES

Hunt Area 3 (Wapiti Ridge)

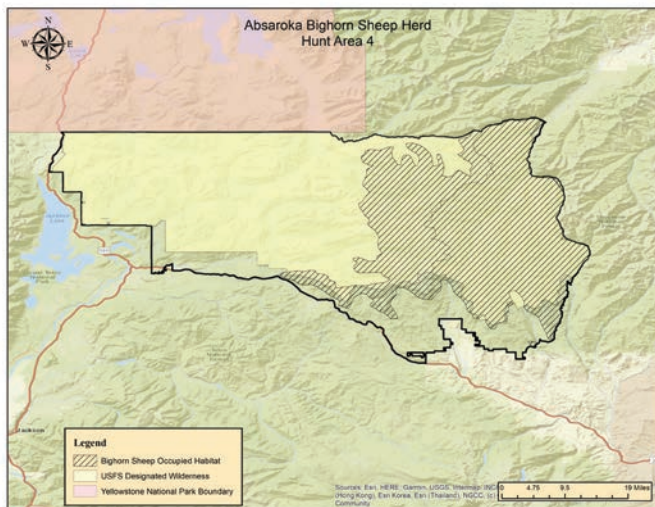


This hunt area has a total of approximately 858 square miles of designated occupied sheep habitat of which about 612 square miles occur within US Forest Service designated wilderness area. This area has been struggling with hunter success and overall ram numbers over the last 5 years. Hunter opportunity has ranged from a low of 28 to a high of 48. We have seen a 30% decrease in license availability in hunt area 3 since 2017. We feel that the low numbers of rams available in this area is a direct result of very difficult winter conditions in the 2017/18 winter and persistent disease issues causing both adult and lamb loss. Harvest success in the area has ranged from a low of 65% in 1978 to a high of 95% in 2013 with the last 10 year average being 82%. Harvested rams over the last 10 years in this area are an average of 7 year old, have an average horn length of around 30.7 inches and average horn base of around 13.8 inches. Wintering sheep in this hunt area are usually accessible for winter classification flights. Over the last 10 years, we were able to fly classification flights 10 of those years. Average lamb ratio is 32 lambs per 100 ewes (32:100) and

average ram ratio is 39:100 over that time period. We have seen an increase from the average in lamb ratios over the last 3 years to 45:100 indicating that we should see better recruitment for sheep in hunt area 4 over the coming several years.

Hunt Area 4 (Yount's Peak)

This hunt area has a total of approximately 739 square miles of designated occupied sheep habitat of which about 657 square miles occur within US Forest Service designated wilderness area. This



has the highest proportion of wilderness area of the hunt areas in the ABSH at 89% of the designated occupied sheep habitat being wilderness area. This area typically has lower success and is most likely due to the remoteness of the unit as well as the ruggedness of the country. Hunter opportunity has ranged from a low of 24 to a high of 100. We have seen a 48% decrease in license availability in hunt area 4 since 2011. We feel that the low numbers of rams available in this area is a direct result of persistent disease issues

causing both adult and lamb loss as well as difficult wintering conditions for these sheep that winter mostly in high elevation winter ranges. Harvest success in the area has ranged from a low of 30% in 1971 to a high of 91% in 2013 with the last 10 year average being 74%. Harvested rams over the last 10 years in this area are an average of 8 year old, have an average horn length of around 31.9 inches and average horn base of around 14.1 inches. Wintering sheep in this hunt area are usually accessible for winter classification flights. Over the last 10 years, we were able to fly classification flights 10 of those years. Average lamb ratio is 29 lambs per 100 ewes (29:100) and average ram ratio is 28:100 over that time period. We

have seen an increase from the average in lamb ratios over the last 2 years to 40:100 indicating that we should see better recruitment for sheep in hunt area 3.

Hunt Area 5 and 22 (Franc's Peak)

Although separate hunt areas, because of the small number of

sheep and limited access to the sheep in hunt area 22 there is opportunity for area 22 permit holders to hunt in area 5 after . This combination has occurred in 2004 to 2008 and 2013 to current. These hunt areas have a total of approximately 1124 square miles of designated occupied sheep habitat of which only about 575 square miles occur within US Forest Service designated wilderness area. This has the lowest proportion of wilderness area of the hunt areas in the ABSH at 51% of the designated occupied sheep habitat being wilderness area. Hunt area

GRANT IN AID UPDATES

22 has always had 4 licenses available with much variation on which hunt area those 4 licenses actually harvest. In hunt area 5, hunter opportunity has ranged from a low of 32 to a high of 76. We have seen a 54% decrease in license availability in hunt area 5 since 2012. This decrease is due to a large die off from 2010-2013 which seems to have had lingering impacts into the most recent years. Harvest success in hunt area 5 has ranged from a low of 38% in 1977 to a high of 96% in 2008 with the last 10 year average being 86%. Harvested rams over the last 10 years in this area are an average of 8 year old, have an average horn length of around 31.6 inches and average horn base of around 14.2 inches. For hunt area 22 the 10 year average age for rams is 5, they have an average horn length of around 30.1 inches and an average horn base of 14.3 inches. Wintering sheep in this hunt area are usually accessible for winter classification flights. Over the last 10 years, we were able to fly classification flights 10 of those years. Average lamb ratio is 28 lambs per 100 ewes (28:100) and average ram ratio is 56:100 over that time period. We have seen a slight increase from the average in lamb ratios over the last 3 years to 31:100 in hunt area 5. Despite lower reproduction rates, we have seen an increase in harvest success and hunter satisfaction with the sheep hunt in hunt area 5. Hunt area 22 classifications are highly variable year to year and most

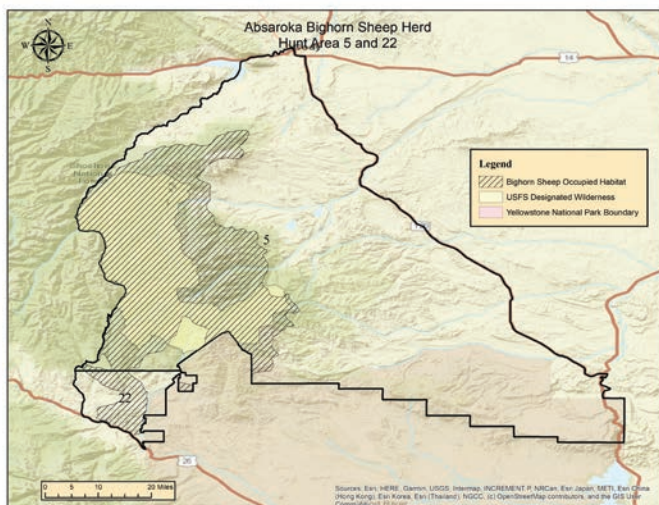
likely are reflected in the larger sample size of hunt area 5.

Absaroka Big Horn Sheep Herd

The unique and overwhelmingly majestic ABSH encompasses an amazing 3,889 square miles of designated occupied sheep habitat and of that is comprised of 66% US Forest Service Wilderness Area, is home to approximately 4,500 bighorn sheep and provides sheep hunting opportunities to 120 (plus Governor's licenses) sheep hunting enthusiasts. Those numbers are epic, impressive and astounding in today's environment of typically small bighorn sheep herds and low license availability however, as mentioned in the Spring 2020 RamPage. We do not want to be lulled into a false sense of security but must look at the most recent declines in this population. Since 2010, managers believe this herd has declined by an estimated 38% and this has concurrently resulted in a 43% decline in available hunting licenses. Despite the size of this population, we cannot become complacent with rigorous data collection and exploration of this population. Currently, movement and survival information using collar data has been collected within the ABSH unit however, the majority (94%, 372 total sheep collared, 23 in wilderness, 349 outside of wilderness) of collared sheep have been collared outside the wilderness boundary during the

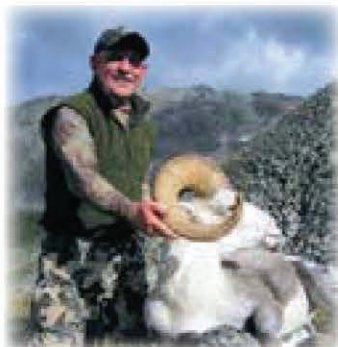
winter months. Winter classification flight data over the last 5 years has revealed that nearly 66% (2018 to 2022, 5,147 total sheep counted) of the sheep physically counted from the helicopter occurred in wilderness areas, with a range of as high as 85% (2018, 880 total sheep counted) to a low of 58% (2019, 611 total sheep counted). In addition, all of our movement and

survival information has been from ewes in the population with no rams fitted with movement or survival identifying technology. In addition to movement and survival information our ability to track populations and understand numbers of rams available for harvest has not been based on the best available science. The Absaroka Bighorn Sheep herd is a legendary herd that is the quintessential example of rugged, remote, high elevation Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep and personifies every aspect of Jack O'Connor's description of the wild ram: "The wild ram embodies the mystery and magic of the mountains, the rocky canyons, the snowy peaks, the fragrant alpine meadows, the gray slide rock, the icy, dancing rills fed by snowbank and glacier, the sweet, clean air of the high places, and the sense of being alone on the top of the world with the eagles, the marmots, and the wild sheep themselves." ("The Bighorn," March 1960). This herd has always been here, but seems to be stumbling a little bit as of late. We must remain diligent in supporting sound data collection and the best methods available to track the population over time. Understanding our legendary herd from the population level, from the movement level and from the survival level will allow us to make more informed decisions on how best to try and handle declining populations and opportunities across the Absaroka Bighorn Sheep Herd.



“THE RON BALL MEMORIAL AWARD”

THE WYOMING WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION’S HIGHEST HONOR



By Kevin Hurley, LM #20
Vice President of Conservation
and Operations
Wild Sheep Foundation
Bozeman, MT

Each year since 2003, the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation has presented what is known as the “Ron Ball Memorial Award”, in recognition of one of the Chapter’s original five founders.

Ron Ball was a rancher and outfitter from the Big Piney area who served as either President or Vice-President of Wyoming FNAWS (at that time) for 11 of our first 14 years of existence. Ron was a big man, whose presence and contributions were also huge. Ron and his family were dedicated volunteers who organized many early Chapter events, meetings, and live/silent auctions. Wording on the Ron Ball Award speaks highly of the type of individual Ron was, and what he did for wild sheep in Wyoming. This award reads:

**“Presented Annually, In
Recognition of Outstanding
Achievement Toward the
Betterment of Wyoming’s
Bighorn Sheep”**

I was fortunate enough to be the first recipient of this special recognition in 2003, and this award holds a special spot on my wall. As you can see, over the past 17 years, a virtual “Who’s Who” of dedicated individuals have been recognized by the Wyoming Chapter for their contributions to Wyoming’s bighorn sheep.

2003	Kevin Hurley
2004	Jim Collins
2005	Gov. Dave Freudenthal
2006	Melanie Woolever
2007	Steve Kilpatrick
2008	Terry Cleveland
2009	Gary Butler
2010	Fritz Meyer
2011	Cole Benton
2012	Dennis Claman
2013	Bob Sundeen
2014	Tom Easterly (D)
2015	Doug McWhirter
2016	Lynn Stewart
2017	Freddie Goetz
2018	Ryan Amundson
2019	Joni Miller
2020	Dean DiJenno
2021	Jerry Galles
2022	Jack Welch

The Ron Ball Memorial Award is presented during the annual June banquet. Nominations may be made by the WY-WSF Board of Directors and/or past award recipients; selection of the recipient is made by the past winners. So, if WY-WSF members know of someone they would like to see nominated for this award, please notify one of the current Board of Directors, or one of the past recipients.

None of us do what we do for wild sheep to receive credit or recognition. However, there are some individuals that do so much, and help lead the way, that taking a moment to look back, helps all of us move forward!





Our 2022 Ron Ball Award Winner is RHS LM #492, Jack Welch flanked by fellow Ron Ball award winners RHS LM #265, Steve Kilpatrick(l) and RHS LM #230, Gary Butler(r).



Conservation and Access Priorities for Wyoming Sportspeople

Most Wyoming lawmakers have made it clear that they support our Second Amendment rights and our right to hunt. We the undersigned organizations believe the following actions will help lawmakers go even further in supporting wildlife, hunting, and angling in the Cowboy State:

1. Keep Public Lands and Wildlife in the Public's Hands

Public lands, waters, and wildlife are central to our way of life in Wyoming. Any proposal to transfer or privatize these resources is a non-starter for sportsmen and sportswomen.

2. Commit to Science-Based Management and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

Science-based management guided by the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation has proven itself as the most effective approach for recovering and sustaining wildlife populations. Decision makers can build on our conservation legacy by supporting the state agencies and dedicated biologists who manage our shared wildlife resources.

3. Open Access to Inaccessible Public Land

In Wyoming, 4 million acres of state and federal lands are surrounded by private holdings with no legal means of public access. Lawmakers should support cooperative solutions—including funding for voluntary access agreements—that respect private property rights and open access to these landlocked parcels.

4. Partner with Landowners to Increase Access to Private Lands

Public-private partnerships such as Access Yes have opened over 2.6 million acres of private land to hunters and anglers in Wyoming. Lawmakers can continue to financially benefit landowners who steward wildlife habitat while providing public access by expanding funding for these programs.

5. Lead the Fight Against Wildlife Diseases

Wyoming's robust big game populations and the hunting opportunities they provide are threatened by the spread of wildlife diseases such as pneumonia in bighorn sheep and Chronic Wasting Disease in elk and deer. To address these issues head on, wildlife managers need support and funding from lawmakers.

6. Conserve Big Game Migration Corridors and Winter Range

Migration corridors and winter range support wildlife abundance that maximizes hunting opportunities and supports our rich outdoor heritage. Wyoming Game and Fish needs the tools necessary to conserve these habitats on public lands while also providing financial incentives to landowners to voluntarily conserve key habitats on private lands.

7. Invest in Habitat Improvement and Conservation/Stewardship

Wyomingites recognize that many of our best wildlife habitats need continued investment in on-the-ground stewardship work, such as habitat restoration and invasive weed control. Continuing to expand and support state programs such as the Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust will secure essential funding for these projects, while improving access to federal matching grants: a win-win for Wyoming's fish and wildlife.

8. Recover Pronghorn Populations by Conserving and Restoring Sagebrush Ecosystems

Wyoming's pronghorn populations are declining, as are hunting opportunities. Supporting science-based management and policies that conserve the sagebrush ecosystem will help recover pronghorn and support other species, including greater sage grouse and mule deer.

9. Expand State Land Conservation and Stewardship

4.2 million acres of state trust land in Wyoming provide important wildlife habitat and opportunities for outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing. By utilizing wildlife friendly options to generate revenue in appropriate areas—such as conservation leasing—decisionmakers can support public education and steward the landscapes and wildlife that drive tourism and outdoor recreation, Wyoming's second largest economic sector.

10. Support Multiple Use and Sustained Yield

Multiple-use management includes resource extraction, habitat stewardship, and outdoor recreation. Sportsmen and sportswomen support the balanced use of our public lands—which includes both responsible development and the conservation of our natural resources—so that future generations can experience the same opportunities we enjoy today.

Conservation Coalition Building with the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

By Josh Metten, Wyoming Community Partnerships Coordinator

“There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country.” - Theodore Roosevelt, 1912

No president has done as much for conservation as Theodore Roosevelt, and it was with his legacy in mind that the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership was **founded 20 years** ago.

Our mission is to guarantee all Americans quality places to hunt and fish, which we achieve by uniting and amplifying our partners’ voices to advance America’s legacy of conservation, habitat, and access. The TRCP works nationally by building coalitions with partner organizations, including the Wild Sheep Foundation, to achieve durable conservation wins like the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020, which both dedicated funds to address maintenance backlogs on our public lands and, most notably, secured full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Earlier this year, the TRCP celebrated the passage of the MAPland Act, which directs federal agencies to digitize and make publicly available recreational access easement data. This legislation,

which was developed by the TRCP, championed by a broad coalition, and passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, will help improve access to landlocked public land across the West.

Here in Wyoming, the TRCP and our partners, including the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, joined engaged conservationists like you to successfully lobby for the inclusion of \$75 million in funding for the Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust in this year’s state budget bill. This Wyoming solution to conservation funding will benefit wildlife and habitat across the state for decades to come.

Be a Voice for Conservation in Wyoming

Through our past efforts here in Wyoming and across the country, we’ve learned that an active and engaged coalition of sports people is key to achieving lasting conservation wins. As the Wyoming Community Partnerships Coordinator, I work to grow, develop, and empower sports people and partner organizations to act on issues that are important to them.

Recently, we worked with WWSF and other partners to

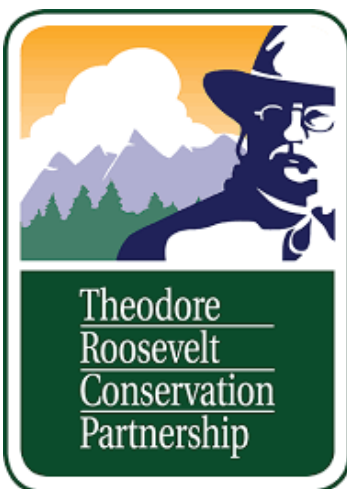
develop a “Conservation and Access Priorities for Sports people” document to share with candidates for state offices. (Read the document on to your left.)

We’re grateful for our partnership with the WWSF, which amplifies our collective voices and helps drive a positive conservation agenda across Wyoming. We hope that you will join us as WWSF members and look forward to meeting you at the Annual Meeting in December.

WWSF member Josh Metten is the Wyoming Community Partnerships Coordinator for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, whose mission is “to guarantee all Americans quality places to hunt and fish.” Prior to joining the TRCP, Josh produced the WWSF sponsored film **“Denizens of the Steep.”**

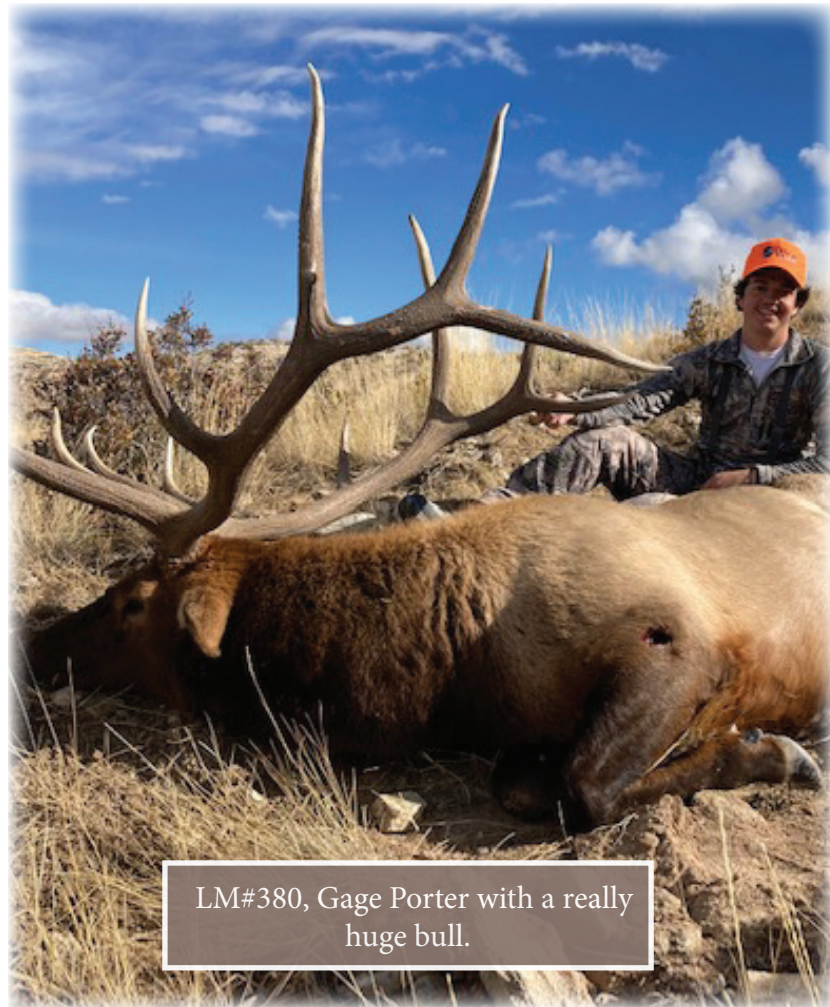
Josh lives in Cody and looks forward to photographing bighorn sheep and other wintering wildlife along the North Fork Shoshone this winter.

Jmetten@trcp.org
@TheTrcp

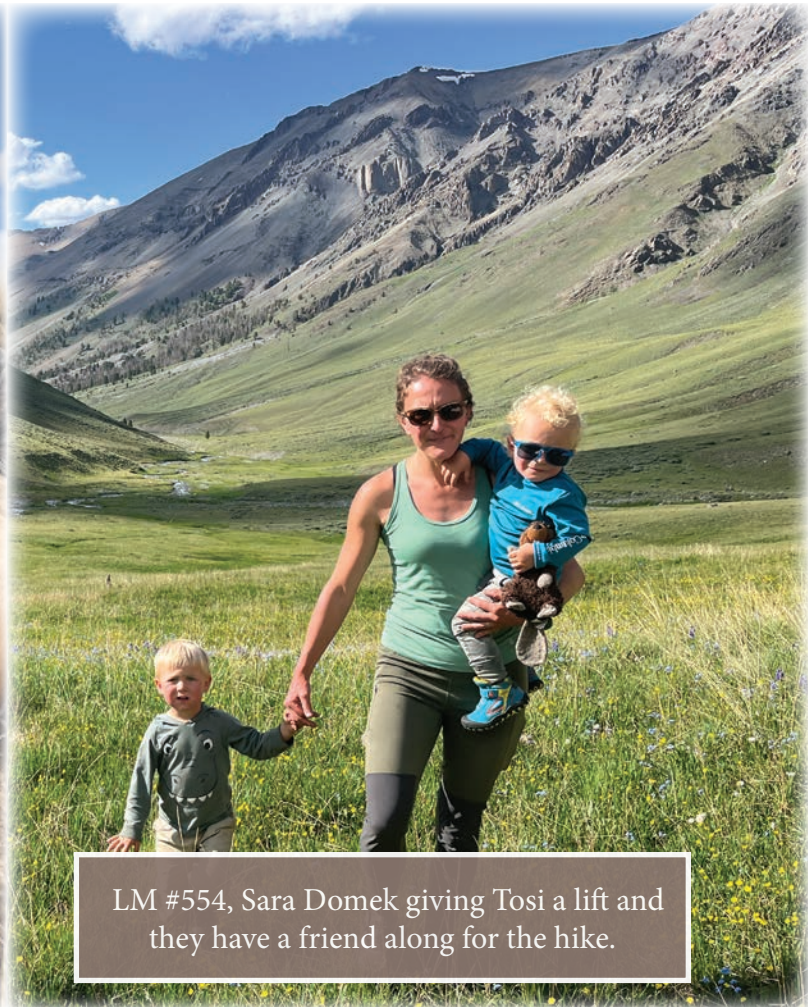


Scan this QR code to stay in touch with Josh and the TRCP by joining our email list:





LM#380, Gage Porter with a really huge bull.

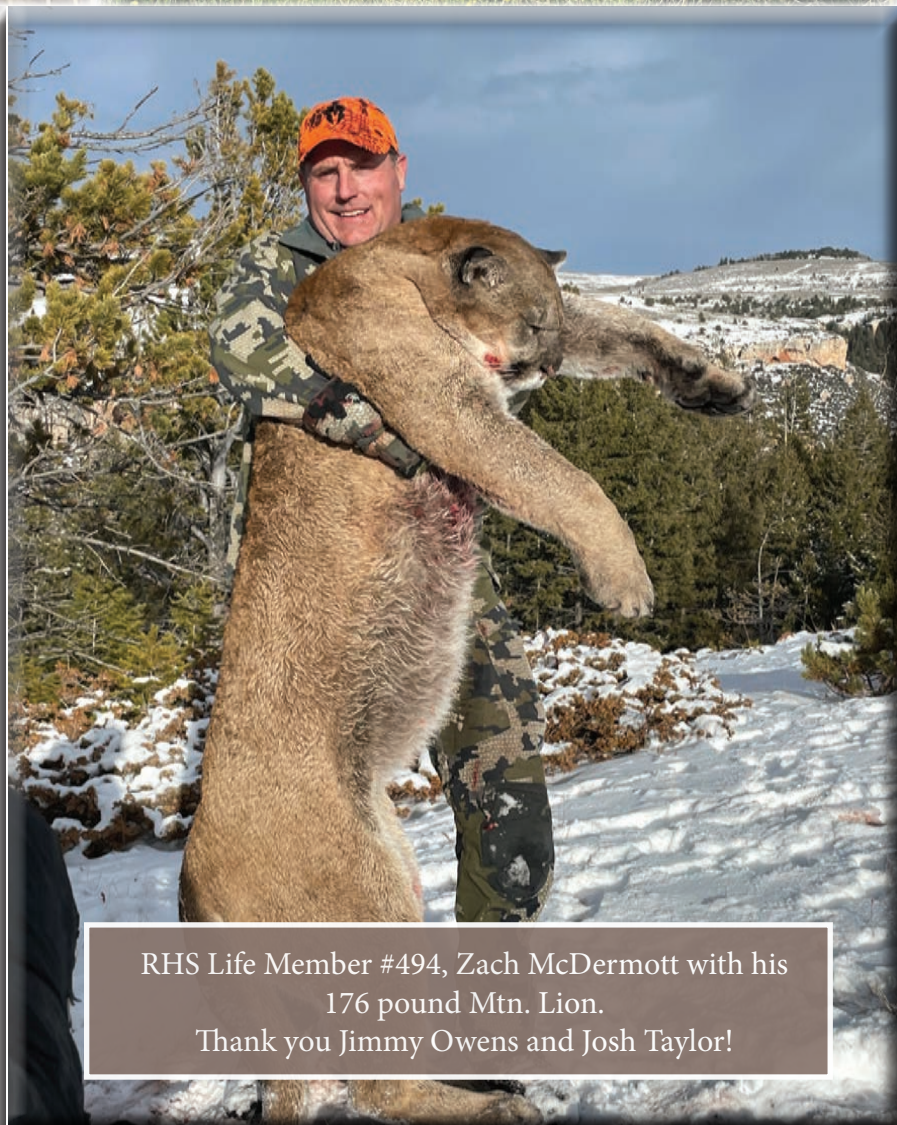


LM #554, Sara Domek giving Tosi a lift and they have a friend along for the hike.

Phillip Lennox sent this photo and info via text.



Was lucky enough to be the first person to fill the new WY area 7 ewe tag with my bow on opening day 8/15. Promptly got her to Game and Fish the next morning for inspection and data collection etc. Grateful to actively participate in the conservation of this incredible species and to organizations like Wyoming Wild Sheep for helping to ensure their survival.



RHS Life Member #494, Zach McDermott with his 176 pound Mtn. Lion.
Thank you Jimmy Owens and Josh Taylor!

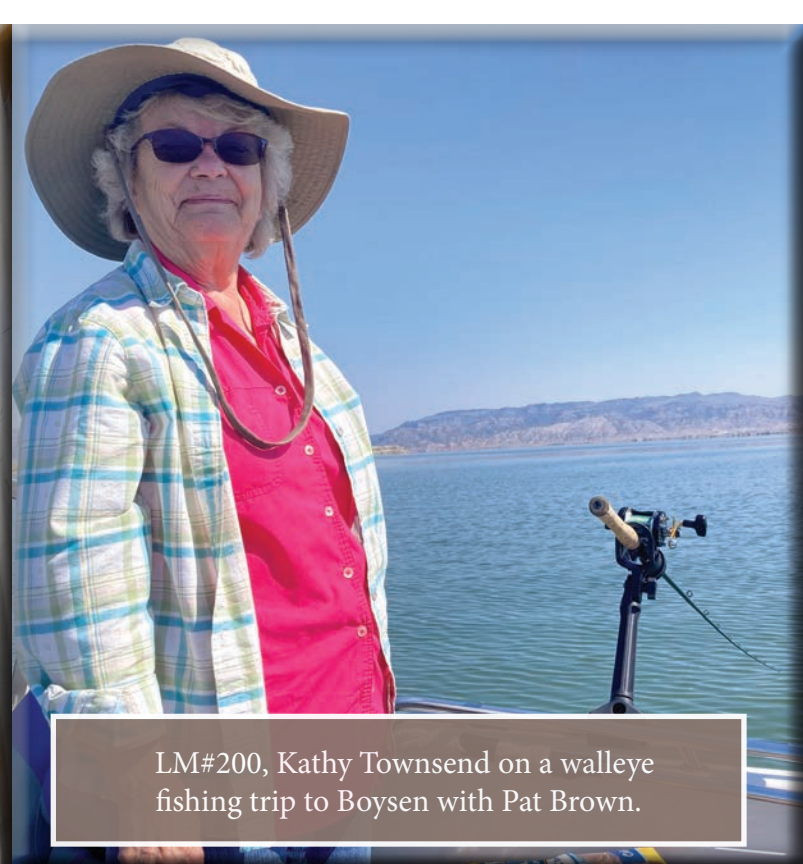


Message...





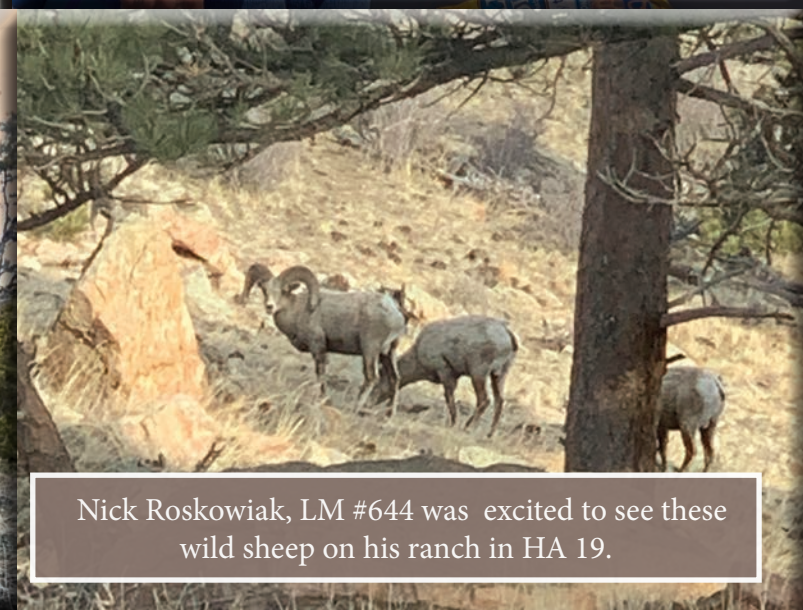
LM #655, Emersyn Eisenach. The 3rd Generation of Life Members. Congratulations Calvin and Delaney!



LM#200, Kathy Townsend on a walleye fishing trip to Boysen with Pat Brown.



RHS LM#269, Patrick Mooney with a really nice bull.



Nick Roskowiak, LM #644 was excited to see these wild sheep on his ranch in HA 19.



RHS Life Member #267, Scott Butler



Cooper Perryman with a nice buck, assisted by his Dad, RHS LM#592, Bruce Perryman

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@www.wyomingwildsheep.org.



Chance Butler, RHS Life Member #393 with his Spring Gobbler.



Dan Hinz, RHS LM#182 after a Canadian Snow Goose Hunt.



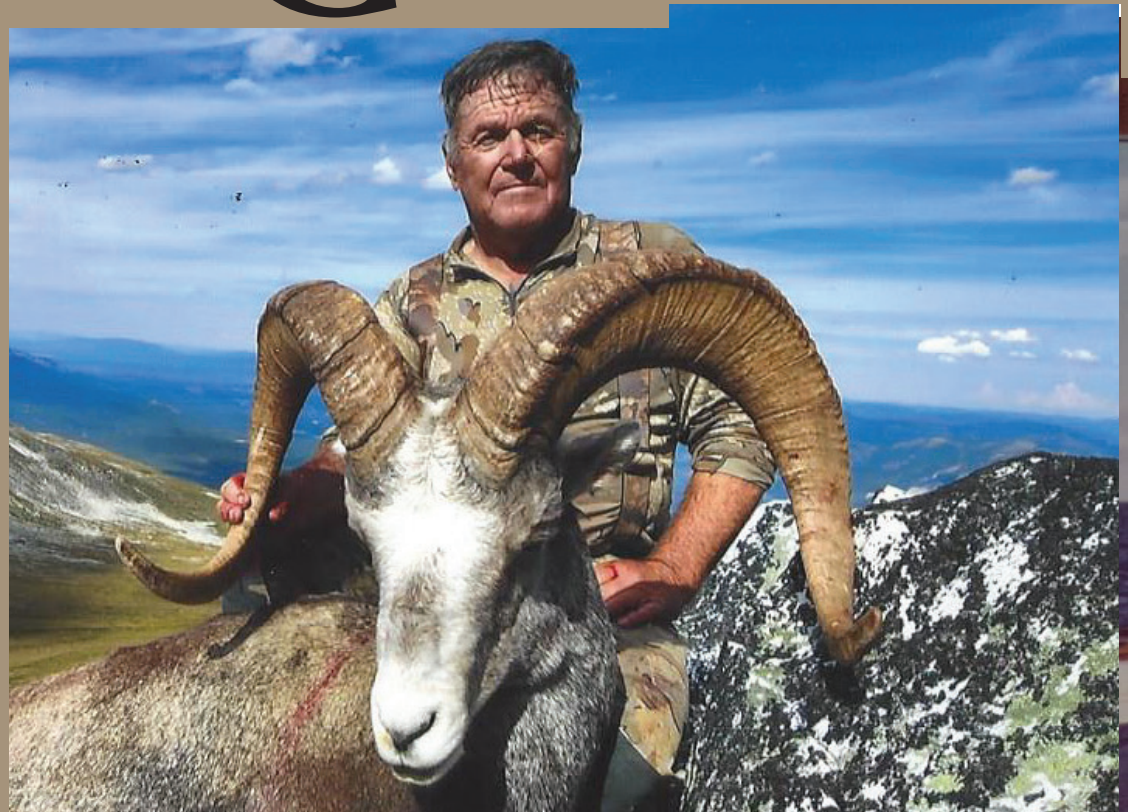
Jeff Brock with a South African Kudu.

Member's Gallery

RHS LM#541, Rocky Yargas with the Stone Sheep that completed his FNAWS Grand Slam.

Rocky tells us "I went with Scoop Lake Outfitters in Northern British Columbia with guides, Sam & Will (from New Zealand). We saw a pack of 13 wolves which forced us to go to the tops of the mountains where we found 2 legal rams on top of the highest peak in the region.

It was an 11 hour day from when we left the horses until we returned to them. I made a 330 yard shot and brought my ram into the Grand Slam on the 9th day of my hunt adventure."





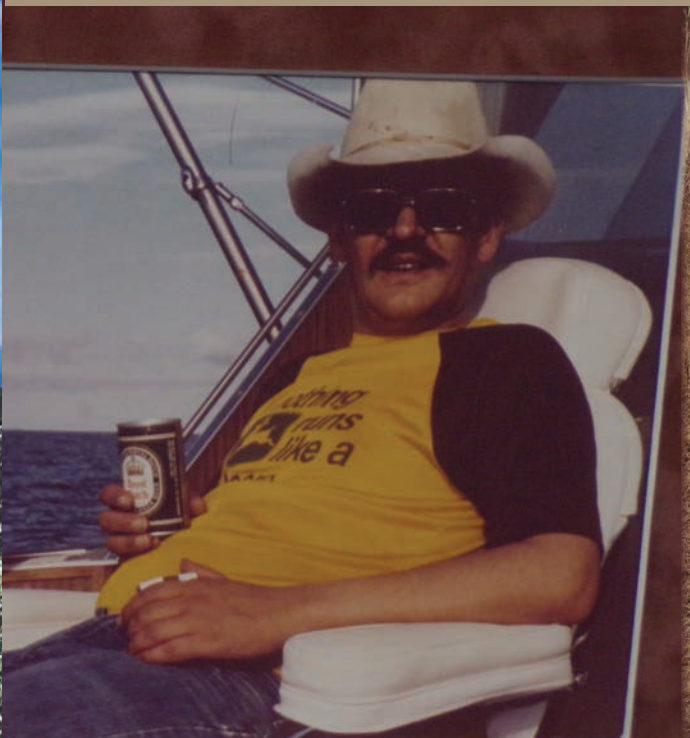
RHS LM #610 with his Stone Sheep that completed his FNAWS Grand Slam. On the right is LM #557, Jimmy Owens..

RHS LM #483, Steve Brock with his Cape Buffalo.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

DO YOU KNOW THIS

GUY? (Answer on Page 3)



'Sheep of the BT - Bighorn sheep herds of the Bridger-Teton National Forest and How We Conserve Them'

By Nat Paterson of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation

If there is one animal that evokes the spirit of the high lonesome, it is the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. These mountain monarchs are symbolic of true wilderness and inhabit some of the toughest terrain in North America where few other species can make a living. Perhaps equally as inspiring as the sheep themselves is the high country of Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) in northwest Wyoming where Bighorn Sheep have resided since time immemorial. Like most wildlife species, Bighorns face a variety of threats to this day.

When settlers arrived in western Wyoming in the mid 1800's, the first human impact on the species was observed. Heavy market hunting, occupation of winter range by humans and competition and disease transfer from livestock all played a role in their decline. Domestic sheep can transfer pneumonia causing bacteria to wild Bighorns, which can cause catastrophic population level impacts in the realm of eighty percent mortality. Bighorns continued to maintain populations in the higher elevations but still faced competition from domestic sheep encroaching on their habitat.

Today, the BTNF sheep population is divided into three separate herds. The Targhee herd occupies Grand Teton National Park and the western slope of the Teton Range, the Jackson herd occupies the Gros Ventre Wilderness and the surrounding area, and the Darby Mountain herd calls the eastern flank of the Wyoming Range home. The

Targhee and Jackson herds have never been supplemented with sheep from other herds and therefore have been designated as "core native herds." The Darby herd, on the other hand, has a more tattered past.

The Darby Herd

Following decades of conflict with domestic sheep and intense poaching, the Darby bighorn population was extirpated in the 1960's, and then re-established in 1981 and 1987, respectively, with a total of 60 sheep from the Whiskey Mountain herd near Dubois. Wild sheep numbers gradually increased and, in 1988, the first regulated hunting season occurred with four ram licenses offered. The population peaked in the mid 1990's at about 150 animals, but soon started to decline and hunting was closed after the 1997 hunting season when no sheep were taken. Hunting resumed in 2008 until closing again in 2013 due to a lack of observed mature rams. In 2016, a hunting season was reestablished with one resident ram license offered. Mature rams, all older than 8.5 years, have been harvested every year since. Due to strong mature ram observations over the last few years, Wyoming Game and Fish added a nonresident ram license in 2022. Considering the cost of a nonresident Bighorn ram license is over \$2300, this is a big benefit to conservation funding.

The Jackson Herd

Sheep from the Jackson herd can be found licking salt off tourists' cars on the National

Elk Refuge in the winter and, in the warmer months, they occupy some of the prettiest alpine basin country in the west. This herd is strong and offers great hunting opportunities with a population that has grown to over 500 animals in recent years. In 2022, wildlife managers boosted ram licenses from 12 to 16 and even added 16 ewe/lamb licenses.

Adding ewe/lamb licenses was the result of a study by the University of Wyoming that showed declining body fat in collared animals. As has been observed in the past, when the population reaches about 500 animals there is an increased risk of a pneumonia outbreak amongst the herd. The last of these outbreaks occurred in 2012 and knocked the herd down by about forty percent. Additional female harvest is aimed at alleviating this issue. While this herd is currently thriving, sheep in the iconic Teton range, just to the west, face unique challenges and numbers have been declining.

The Targhee Herd

Having lost their historic winter range in the mid 20th century to human development in the valleys of Jackson and Grand Teton National Park, this herd scrapes

by year round in the alpine. Typically over 100 strong, recent population surveys put the current population around 80 individuals. Additionally, due to a lack of mature rams observed in the herd, hunting licenses were reduced from two rams to one in 2018. Interestingly, while success rates on Bighorn sheep usually run quite high, typically above 75% statewide, tags in this unit often go unfilled - further illustrating how difficult it is to find a mature ram. It is unclear the exact reason for the decline, but it likely includes a number of factors.

Invasive mountain goats compete with sheep for available habitat and can transmit respiratory disease. Exploding recreation, specifically backcountry skiing, creates stress and causes sheep to avoid good habitat during critical times of the year. The small size and genetic isolation of this herd also puts it at risk for extirpation.

How Can You Help?

Bighorn Sheep in the Bridger-Teton National Forest face a number of challenges and their future remains uncertain. To ensure that these majestic animals continue to occupy the mountains and valleys of this landscape in numbers that support robust hunting opportunities, it is imperative that we adopt strong conservation measures.



Photo Credit: Mark Gocke.

Last revised in 1991, the BTNF forest plan provides the framework for management decisions throughout the entire 3.4 million acre forest. This document is in preplanning and is slated to begin a revision process in 2023. During this planning process, we have an opportunity to acknowledge the threats to Bighorn Sheep and their habitat and include management prescriptions that minimize those threats. Working to maintain distance between domestic sheep and wild bighorns as well as limiting development and human recreation in wild sheep habitat are just a couple of management strategies that can be implemented to help boost their populations.

When my friends and I get together and talk hunting, the topic of dream hunts usually arises. There is talk of moose and caribou in the Yukon, Dall's sheep in the Brooks Range and bull elk in the Gila National

Forest. My answer is always the same: I want to one day hunt Bighorn Sheep in the northern Rocky Mountains. To me, this is the epitome of classic mountain hunting in the United States. It could easily be thirty years or more before I get the chance and I intend for there to be sheep on the mountain when that opportunity arrives. Working collaboratively, we can ensure the BTNF is managed properly to help expand sheep populations and enhance hunting opportunities for the future.



Scan this QR code to stay in touch with Wyoming Wildlife Federation by visiting their website.

Save The Dates



**WY-WSF 39th Annual Convention
June 2 & 3, 2023
Little America Hotel & Resort
Cheyenne, WY**



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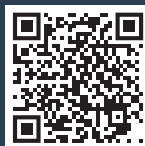
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LM #94, Doug McWhirter set to retire. Full story on page 13.

Join us in Cody on Dec 2 & 3, 2022 for our winter meeting. Info on page 46