

# The **RAM**PAGE

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Spring 2024  
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation

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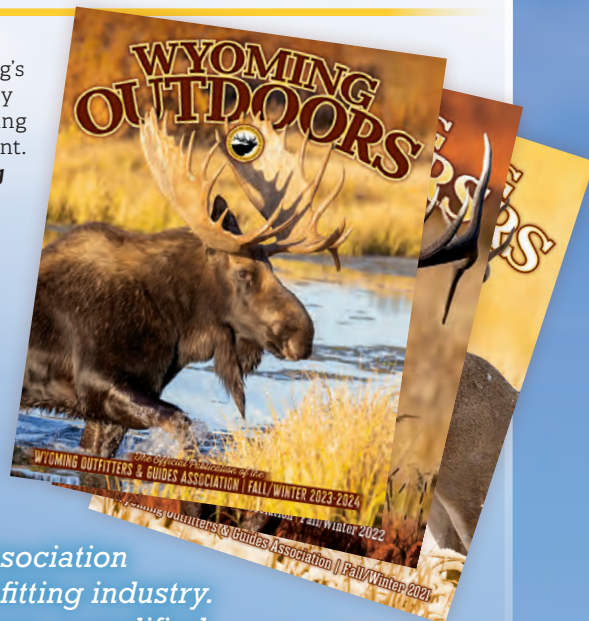
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# The **RAMPAGE** Features

## Spring 2024

### Board of Directors:

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Magazine Editor - Kendra Young

# 2024-2025 CALENDAR

June 7-8, 2024  
Annual Convention  
Cheyenne, WY

June 13-15, 2024  
WSF Chapter & Affiliates

June 20-21, 2024  
Wyoming Big Horn Sheep Summit  
Burgess Junction, WY

Dec 6-7, 2024  
Board/Membership Meeting  
TBD, WY

January 16-18, 2025  
WSF Sheep Show  
Reno, NV

## 2023-24 Governor's License Sales Totals

2024 Sale Location	2023 LICENSE SALES	2024 LICENSE SALES
WSF	\$180,000	\$195,000
Eastern	\$180,000	\$185,000
Midwest	\$165,000	
Iowa	\$150,000	
WY	\$178,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$853,000</b>	<b>\$380,000</b>

### New Life Members

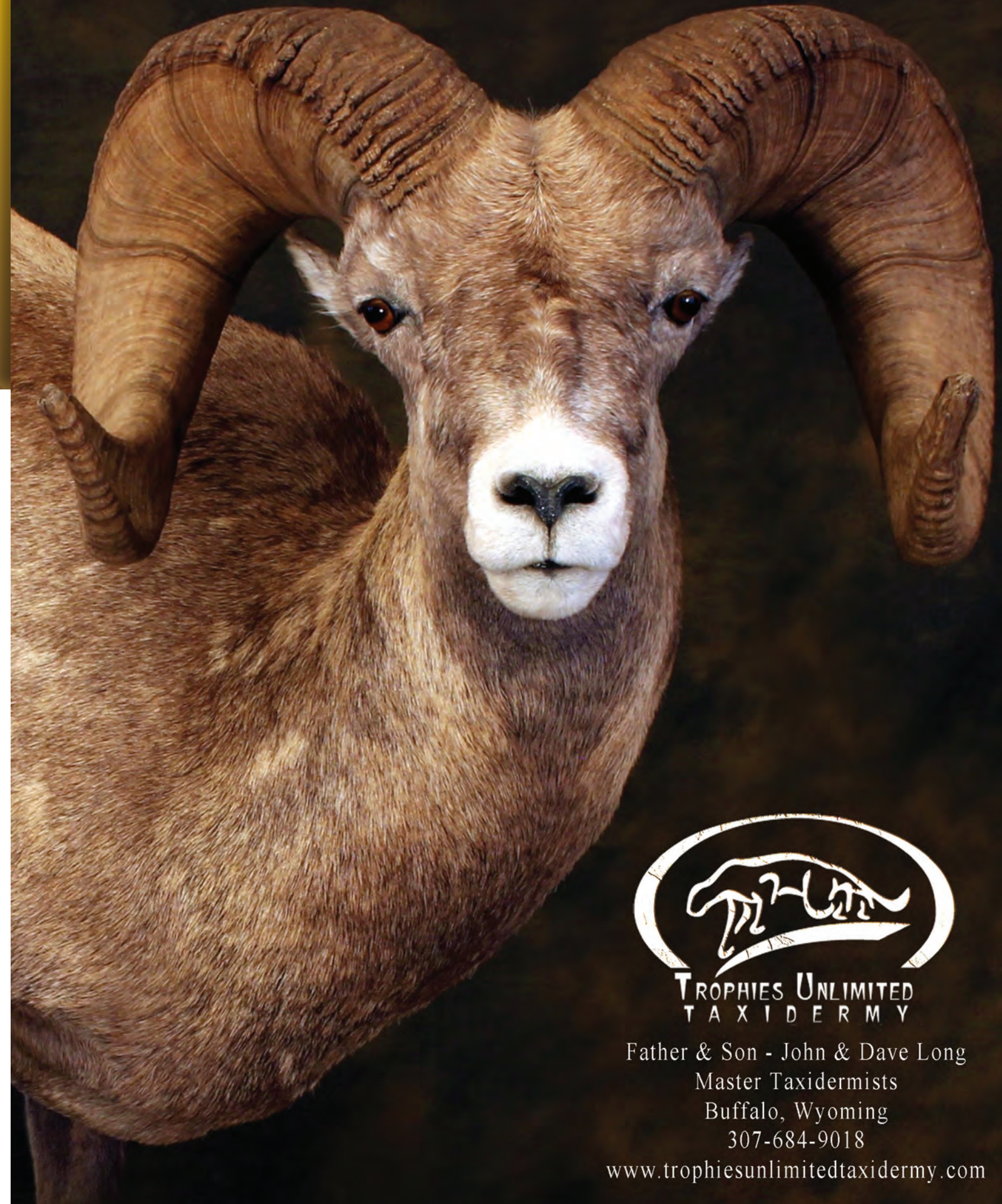
- 696 Tyler Otto
- 697 Sophia Roskowiak
- 698 Steven Thompson
- 699 Carrie Thompson
- 700 Paul Chambers
- 701 Dave Pawlicki
- 702 Chris March

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 [rampage@wyomingwildsheep.org](mailto:rampage@wyomingwildsheep.org).

Wyoming WSF would like to thank, and recognize, Life Members who have signed up since the Fall 2023 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!!

***Blast from the Past*** - RHS Life Member #410 and Past President Kurt Eisenach traveled to the Yukon for Stone Sheep in 1994. See it on page 60!



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# Executive Director's Report

## By Katie Cheesbrough

As we transitioned from a mild Wyoming winter into the wild winds of March, we hope you took notice of some email and social media traffic from the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation (WY-WSF) concerning Senate File 0118. If you're anything like me, talk of legislature and numbered bills don't tend to inspire excitement in me when it comes to bighorn sheep. However, this bill gets to the heart of our mission and is a promising path forward in getting bighorn sheep back into their native range in the Sweetwater Rocks of central Wyoming.

The WY-WSF has worked collaboratively with the Wyoming Statewide Domestic/Bighorn Sheep Interaction Working Group (IWG) for over 20 years. Our agricultural partners in the IWG have made it clear that they are genuinely concerned about the potential impact returning bighorn sheep to the area could have on their federal grazing permits. The agricultural community would prefer federal legislation and grazing protections that would impact far more than the small area surrounding the proposed reintroduction site in the Sweetwater Rocks.

To keep Wyoming's bighorn sheep from being federally managed and creating unintended large-scale impacts to federal protections of bighorn sheep across the West, we felt that this was an issue best dealt with at a localized level through state legislation. SF0118 tackles the stalemate we've found ourselves in on the issue of the reintroduction of bighorn sheep into the

Sweetwater Rocks.

Admittedly, this bill didn't strike me as being particularly wildlife-friendly on first read, given the discussion regarding removing bighorn sheep should federal actions against grazing permits be taken due to the presence of bighorn sheep. However, twice in the past, similar bills have been implemented in the Wyoming state legislature to provide assurances to ranchers near existing bighorn sheep herds. In these past scenarios, the bills sunsetted without removing or negatively impacting bighorn sheep. We are confident that in this situation, SF0118 would act to dissuade the BLM from taking harmful actions on federal grazing permit holders, and once again, bighorn sheep will not be removed.

The current Wyoming Game and Fish Department's (WGFD) policy is to remove bighorn sheep when they foray outside their established herd unit boundaries for disease transmission reasons. In the past few years, several rams have been removed from the nearby Ferris-Seminole herd as they have forayed east and westward. The WGFD has instituted ewe/lamb hunts in the Ferris-Seminole herd unit to keep the population under objective and mitigate future forays into their past native ranges in the Sweetwater Rocks and Pedro mountains. This bill would allow expansion from a herd nearing objective and being culled into its

native range without directing any policies or legislation that hasn't previously existed in the state.

Now, as of time of press, this bill is still making its way through a volatile legislature. It is not certain that SF0118 will make it out of the House. However, members of the WY-WSF board, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation Lobbyist, and I are working with legislators and the public to help folks understand why this bill is important. I want to personally thank all of our members and others who reached out to their legislators, asking them to support this bill. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed, and your support is making an impact.

It turns out bighorn sheep conservation takes on many forms; whether it be fundraising for on-the-ground projects, volunteering to remove hazardous fences or build water guzzlers, or writing our lawmakers, it is all part of how we work to put and keep wild sheep on Wyoming's mountains!



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## BY ZACH MCDERMOTT

**A**s we move forward year to year, we think more about what kind of legacy we will leave. All of us have many passions we have pursued over the years. With our passion for bighorn sheep and wildlife in general, you may want to consider leaving a legacy through an endowment. This spring, we are unveiling the WY-WSF Conservation Endowment Fund.

The investment strategy of the fund will be similar to the policy established for the Conservation Fund. Mike Porter will be doing a seminar at the summer meeting to define the details of the Fund and answer questions regarding the Fund's policy.

There are many ways to accomplish leaving your legacy.

Below are examples of the different avenues you can pursue for giving.

1) Give a gift in your will or trust to the WY-WSF Conservation Endowment Fund. This is probably the most popular way to support wildlife or other passionate endeavors. You can give a specific asset, dollar amount or percentage of what remains of your assets after your loved ones are provided for.

2) You can make a gift by naming the WY-WSF Conservation Endowment Fund as a beneficiary of all or a portion of your

bank account, brokerage account, retirement account, and/or your life insurance policy. All these options are available by contacting the financial institution where your assets are held and requesting the appropriate forms.

3) Using assets in your retirement account to make a charitable gift can be very tax efficient. If left to your family and friends, assets and tax deferred retirement accounts such as 401K's or IRA's are subject to income tax. If left to the Endowment Fund, those assets will pass tax free.

4) You could also consider a charitable gift annuity,

which will pay you income throughout your lifetime. This will reduce your tax burden and help the sheep and wildlife you love. This type of structure allows you to earn the income from those assets during your lifetime.

The above is just a small sampling of options you may want to consider. You can explore other avenues with your tax advisor, lawyer or you could contact Mike Porter and his team at Ashton Thomas at (307) 235-7786.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the Summer Banquet in Cheyenne on June 7th and 8th.



# "Barefoot Sheep Serenade"

By: Shelby Carlson

**I**t was September 2, 2023, the seventh day of my Wyoming bighorn sheep hunt.

My hunting partner and daughter Ceirra and I were enjoying our "high mountain charcuterie board" lunch - prepared by my outfitter and hunting guide Dustin Stetter -- when we saw two bighorn ewes and a lamb moving quickly across the mountain face. A young, white ram appeared, joined the ewes and all wandered out of sight.

We waited, but no movement on the mountain. "Well, you just passed up your first ram," Stetter said.

After 5 hours of sitting Ceirra became nervous, "I feel like we need to make a move on these sheep, the day is slipping away."

Stetter and I responded. "No, let's wait. Let's be patient."



Heading Back to Base Camp with Sheep in Tow

### A WEEK HAD PASSED...

Skies were dark on the morning of August 27th, but hopes were high at the trailhead as we mounted our horses and tied the string of pack mules together for the journey to base camp where our hunt would truly begin.

The anticipation could not have been higher as we embarked on the hunt of a lifetime! Nearing timberline that first morning, the rain beat a steady rhythm on our raingear, and on the packs of the mules as thunder boomed and echoed around us. That morning's weather foreshadowed what we could expect from mother nature for much of the trip.



The Team: Shelby, Dustin, & Ceirra

The next morning broke clear and cool. Ceirra walked into the cook tent and asked for a cup of coffee. "We don't drink coffee in this camp," Stetter said. Ceirra, thought, "This is going to be a long 10 days!"

Stetter laughed and handed her a cup of rich, black camp coffee.

### THE HUNT BEGAN, AND IT WAS SLOW...

The following few days were filled with grueling climbs, long hours of glassing, and the pure joy of being in some



Shelby with her Ram

were younger rams. As dusk approached and the shadows of adjacent peaks stretched out their dark embrace, Ceirra spotted a sheep moving steadily through a boulder field. We turned our focus to that area but were unable to find him again despite moving closer and setting up a shooting position. Threatening thunder and lightning shooting across the sky gave us the motivation to make our reluctant way back to camp. We made our decision too late and were caught in a downpour that tested the best rain gear. We arrived at camp wet and cold.

**HARD WORK AND PERSERVANCE PAYS OFF...**

The next morning dawned much the same, crisp and clear. As we made our way to a glassing point, Dustin suddenly dropped to his knees and threw off his pack.

“Sheep” he said, as he feverishly broke out his scope and tripod. “There’s a good one! Shelby, you need to come tell me if you’d shoot this ram.” He rolled away to give me a chance to look. It took less than a moment to know that I would be more than happy with the mature ram.

“We’ll travel as fast as we can while we have cover, and then we’ll go slow once we approach our shooting position.” Stetter said as we packed up. Frustratingly, as we gained altitude and distance so did the rams, until, just when it seemed we had closed the distance, and may have the chance for a shot, they disappeared. Straight up into a crevice in the middle of a sheer cliff face.

We crept into a covered position as close as possible to where we last saw them and settled in to wait at 11:00

a.m. Time slowed to a crawl as we waited hopefully for the rams to reappear, scanning constantly the forbidding landscape they call home.

The sun appeared, and it warmed me. The wind speed dipped. The change was comforting, as I was shivering. I was concerned about my ability to be steady with my aim and shot.

*Stetter said, “I know what’ll do it. I’ll take off my wet boots, nothing like being unprepared to make critters show up.”*

He promptly removed his wet boots and socks, propping them in the sun. In protest, Ceirra declared that she would be glassing in the other direction. Where she promptly found a ram.

The minutes had dragged by, and to be honest everyone was getting bored and frustrated, despite our confidence in the wisdom of our plan. We had set up a shooting and elbow rest with Dustin’s backpack and some coats, so that when the moment of truth



Ceirra & Shelby Carlson

arrived, we would be prepared. Ceirra’s ram disrupted that as Dustin removed his pack to free his tripod and spotting scope, which were integral to the support of our shooting structure.

As he finished setting up his scope and began to take measure of the ram, I adjusted my position and looked up to find our rams spilling out of their hidey hole.

“The rams are out! They’re out!” I whisper screamed. “I see them!” Stetter whisper screamed back. Mayhem ensued.

So began the game of red light, green light with Ceirra directing while Dustin and I rebuilt the shooting rest. “Move, heads down,” she’d say. “Stop, head up”. Slowly but surely, we erected the gun rest. We’d discussed the shot while we waited, and Dustin talked me through the rams’ movements, making sure we were on the same page.

The biggest ram started to move away from the group. Ceirra whispered, “There he comes, there he comes.” Stetter coached me, “Wait ‘til he stops for sure ... Make sure he is broadside ... There, he’s stopped ... Take him if you want him. That’s a good one.” Finally, the words I’d been waiting to hear for a lifetime.

The shot broke from my .270 Weatherby Magnum and Ceirra immediately whisper screamed, “You DROPPED him Mom!”

Dustin confirmed and said “Reload, get back on him. He is in the same spot. He has not moved. Nice shot, Shelby.” Ceirra responded, “Oh, he is rolling. He fell - Oh my gosh.” The ram came to rest behind a boulder with only



Packing off the Mountain

the tip of a horn showing.

Ceirra exclaims, “That was a hell of a shot mom.” I had made the most difficult, yet best shot in my hunting life! All those hours at the range had paid off. A series of congratulations started, complete with high fives and hugs. We did it. “Patience works, patience is a virtue.” Ceirra said.

As the enormity of the moment, and the realization of my sheep hunting dreams threatened to overwhelm me, I looked to my daughter, and to the country around me and felt peace, and everlasting gratitude.

*The full weight of my accomplishment was waiting up that mountain face. Although we couldn’t get up there until Dustin put his boots back on.*

As we ascended, the smaller rams were perched high above, watching us. We climbed within 30 yards of the ram, when finally, Ceirra said, “There he is.”

I thought to myself, “No wonder I couldn’t find him in my scope. I can see one back hoof, one front hoof and about half of one horn.” There he was,

lying upside down in the rocks.

We snapped photographs of the 10-year-old ram, processed and loaded him into our packs, and began hurrying off the ridge. Nighttime was approaching in Hunt Area 9.

We arrived at the horses in the dark, loaded the pack mule, and left for camp.

As we neared a large meadow that spectacular evening, numerous eye reflections watched us. Cow elk chirped and called. A young bull tried his luck at a bugle.

The herd never spooked. They watched us ride by, another cool experience to top off an unforgettable day in the Wyoming high country! All that remained was to crack open the whiskey flask and celebrate!

*Note from Ceirra Carlson: “I’m gonna call this one “The Barefoot Sheep Serenade”. Thank you, Stetter Outfitting, for the absolute experience of a lifetime in the Wyoming Wilderness! This trip was everything, from grit, hard work to lots of fun and fulfillment! I hope one day I’m as cool as you Mama!”*

# “The Bighorn Hunt Story of 2023”

By: Joel Giorgis



The Group Picture: Joel, Jacob, Kelsey, Bill, Jak

I was two points short of the maximum score for a resident bighorn sheep in Wyoming. For years, I patiently bought and slowly accumulated points, waiting for the opportunity to draw this tag. I knew I was right on the bubble in the years leading up to 2020. During this time, I meticulously researched hunting areas, looking at places I knew I could pull off without a guide, and hoped for a successful draw. Finally, in 2023, the moment arrived - I had drawn the coveted tag! Logging into the Game and Fish website, the word “successful” popped up. I couldn’t believe it, I rubbed my eyes and had to double-check, “successful.” The excitement, nervousness, and anticipation overwhelmed me. Excitedly, I shared the news with friends and family, immediately inviting them to join me in scouting.

As June approached, I felt a growing sense of excitement as I planned scouting trips to the mountains. Numerous calls and conversations with fellow hunters, locals, and Game and Fish agents provided valuable insights. Connecting with a seasoned local hunter, Bill Tanner, known as the “Governor of Darby,” added another layer of excitement. With Bill on board and my family eager to participate, I knew I was in for a memorable hunting experience.

Bill’s passion and knowledge fueled my enthusiasm, and we set out on early trips to familiarize ourselves with the terrain.

On the initial expedition, my wife and father accompanied me on horseback. I was very excited that my dad was going to join us. I grew up hunting with my dad, but we haven’t been able to hunt together much in the past 20 years due to life’s circumstances. Despite not encountering a single sheep,

the ride was memorable, set at over 10,000 feet elevation with abundant snow. Some of the memories from that day are my dad falling off his horse as it lunged through the deep snow and me rolling my rookie horse down the mountain and then chasing him down the trail. Several more hikes took place during the summer, offering glimpses of ewes and young rams. Each outing contributed to my understanding of the bighorn sheep’s behavior. A particular hike with my daughters and nephew provided a close encounter with a band of rams. We were about 300 yards away in the trees, and they picked us out with ease, quickly understanding the eyesight and intelligence of these animals. Seeing them and sizing them up from that distance was amazing.

After several scouting



Joel & His Father Horsepack in Mid-Late June



Joel with his Ram

excursions, it was finally time for the hunt of a lifetime. I loaded the camper with hunting gear and headed out. My daughter Kelsey and her boyfriend Jacob were meeting me in a couple of days. I was holding out hope that my dad would be able to join us. Before the first horseback trip, he wasn’t feeling well, and later, the doctor found blood clots in his lungs. Unfortunately, these health issues prevented his participation in the big hunt. This was a let-down for me because I wanted to share this experience with my dad. Still, throughout the week, I kept in contact with him and kept him updated. During this time, some of my hunting contacts called or texted me to let me know that a large band of mature rams was crossing from one mountain down the drainage to another in an area I had been scouting. This information about the rams undoubtedly diminished my disappointment about my dad and increased my anticipation and excitement.

Once we established camp, I

followed Bill’s directions to locate the sheep on the mountain. Once located, I observed them until darkness fell. I counted sixteen rams in the group, three of them were undoubtedly shooters, and a couple more were noteworthy. Among them was the ram I had seen earlier in the summer with my nephew, identifiable by his flared horns and restlessness. Around midday, archery pressure from September 2 prompted us to join forces with Bill and his son Jak at a vantage point overlooking the mountain. Jak skillfully used his spotting

scope to spot some more sheep. Setting up, everyone took turns observing, and the count reached eighteen rams. The decision was made to watch until dark, then locate them in the morning.

Five of us; including Bill, Jak, Kelsey, Jacob, and myself; embarked on the journey to the mountain’s summit. With no rush, it took us about two and a half hours to reach the top. Taking in the view, we approached cautiously to avoid spooking the sheep. Jak reached the rim and spotted them about 350 yards down the mountain, bedded down. We strategically positioned ourselves with a lone pine tree for cover. Now I faced the challenge of locating the shooter from

the eighteen rams. It was a challenging task. Eventually, we identified the ram, and it was time to act. After ranging him and adjusting the scope, I took a careful shot, only to miss. However, the silver lining was the emergence of another ram, catching my eye as the one I wanted. The rams milled around and bedded down again. Hours passed before I could make a bullet and the ram connect. When a bullet finally met its mark, I was overwhelmed with emotion, feeling blessed and grateful for everyone involved in making this hunt happen. Descending the mountain, we located the ram’s position just over a cliff bank. I couldn’t wait to get my hand on it, magnificent! After a few photos, we loaded up packs and started the hike out. We didn’t go back to the top, instead we just bushwacked off the face of the mountain. At this point the sun was down and the rain made it a little more challenging. A fitting end to a remarkable and fulfilling hunt.



Scouting Trip with Joel’s Daughters: Kelsey and Katie



# “Let’s Make a Bigger Pot”

By: Jim Collins

Getting pretty long in the tooth, I tend to reminisce on our great Wild Sheep Chapter, and it never fails to put a smile on my face. But then I realize that with all our efforts, we are drawing from a smaller pot of ram tags than we were 20 – 30 years ago. This is despite the fact we have added three new, mostly thriving sheep herds, removed all domestic sheep from forest allotments in the core native herds and dumped every dime we can on habitat and disease issues.

So, what’s up? Simply put, we keep having all-age die-offs caused by multiple pathogens and/or poor nutrition.

Most of our members are aware of the now famous Wyoming Plan. Since its inception in 2004, sheep biologists and our knowledgeable members understand the defined risks we have agreed to when it comes to commingling in partnership with domestic sheep producers. At the same time, Wyoming’s disease risks to bighorn sheep by commingling with domestic sheep are scientifically documented and well understood by our Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Given these facts on top of domestic sheep producers doing their part, why the h\*\*\* can’t we keep our herds healthy and thriving? Bluntly put, we are not doing our job!

For Wyoming to have a successful bighorn sheep program, we must keep the herds at or below objective and the ram-to-ewe ratio low enough to discourage young rams from wandering. We

need to be able to implement proper use of ewe licenses and must establish a way to harvest a percentage of these younger age-class rams. The problem is that for many of our members and many Wyoming hunters, these are fighting words.

Sheep Area 7, the Gros Ventre Herd, is cycling through a pattern of population growth beyond the objective (400-500 sheep), followed by an all-age die-off; over several years, the population is able to recover beyond the objective, and the herd repeats the cycle. A consensus is emerging that at a certain population level, there simply isn’t enough forage or habitat to maintain the nutrition for a healthy bighorn herd. Whether this is simply a nutrition issue or a compounding of several other factors, history has revealed that when this herd reaches a certain point, we incur a very significant loss of the herd. A few ewe licenses were added for the last two years with resistance.

Sheep Area 12, Devil’s Canyon, has become a jewel, raising some great rams. Used as a source herd for transplanting and supplementing other herds because it was one of the cleanest herds in the state. Being over objective for a number of years, last year Area 12 had an all-age die-off of over 50%. Good chance that somebody went wandering, commingled, and came back.

Additionally, biologists now understand that commingling is not just an issue with domestic sheep, but also between different bighorn herds. Understanding how mixing pathogens causes problems is way past my pay grade, but studies conducted in Hell’s Canyon have shown the issues

that can arise from mixing bighorns from different areas. Needless to say, bighorn sheep disease problems are complex.

Areas 17 & 26, in the Ferris/Seminole and Bennet Mountains, are home to our newest bighorn herd. This area is producing Boone & Crockett rams and, as of last year, has reached objective. With another successful lamb crop this spring, this herd could be over objective by over 100 sheep. Just this last summer, 4 rams were removed by Game and Fish on a Chapter 56 permit, many miles north in the Pedro Mountains dangerously close to domestic sheep. I see big problems if we don’t proactively and drastically decrease numbers to or below objective. These biologists need support if they request a significant increase in ewe licenses next year!

Twisting Einstein’s quote, if we are going to expect better results, let’s not keep making the same mistakes. Ewe license numbers are likely going to need to increase a lot in the near future to make an impact. We need to understand why this is an important management tool and be able to explain and justify these actions to those who don’t understand. Without our support, it’s difficult for biologists to request and implement these types of licenses.

Stay engaged and informed as the Wyoming Game and Fish Department works through the season-setting process, public meetings, and Commission approvals to harvest both ewes and sub mature rams; your help and engagement will see to it that we get it done right.

Let’s make the pot we draw our ram licenses from bigger!



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# WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION “OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONIST” AWARD

- This award is presented for outstanding, exemplary, and long-term contributions to wild sheep conservation and management.
- Awardees have made significant, impactful, measurable, and durable contributions to wild sheep conservation and management, at the local, regional, national, and/ or international scale, over an extended period of time.



Nintey percent of Wyoming’s bighorn sheep are located on four National Forests. Steve has been involved with bighorn sheep and management planning on all four National Forests and with the Bureau of Land Management, throughout Wyoming.

Steve’s career has been focused on habitat, the foundation for wildlife populations. From waterfowl to moose and elk, and from songbirds to bighorn sheep. From National Forest planning to domestic sheep grazing allotment retirements. And from bighorn sheep transplants to pathogen sureveillance, Steve has been a tireless voice for Wyoming’s wild sheep.



## “Outstanding Conservationist” Steve Kilpatrick Dubois and Jackson Hole, Wyoming



“Steve is one of the most passionate wildlife conservationists I have ever known.” Kevin Hurley.

Even in the face of adversity and challenge, Steve’s focus remains, “Keep working for wildlife, their habitats, and the kids that will inherit the world we leave them.”

(Text from the Wild Sheep Foundation’s 2024 Sheep Show Thursday Night Baquet presentation.)

Steve has been the energy for Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation’s mission update, “To put and keep kids and wild sheep on Wyoming’s mountains.” Steve was instrumental in launching the Butch and Kathy Townsend Youth Award, presented annually in Reno at Sheep Show®. During his time with Wyoming Game and Fish, then Wyoming Wildlife Federation, then Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, and now the National Bighorn Sheep Center in Dubois, Steve championed youth education and outdoor experiences, with “Camp Bighorn” as one example.



## “OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONIST” AWARD RECIPIENT

- In recognition of Steve’s 45+ year career, working for wild sheep and other wildlife, and the intact habitats they must have, the Wild Sheep Foundation recognizes and salutes Steve’s exceptional, tireless, and lifetime efforts to restore, enhance, and conserve bighorn sheep in Wyoming, and throughout their range.
- Steve’s efforts epitomize the Wild Sheep Foundation’s Purpose and Mission to “Put and Keep Wild Sheep on the Mountain®”.



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# Yukon Dall Sheep Hunt 2023

By: Garrett Wall (Chief Brand Officer - Gunwerks)



This moment had been a long time coming, a long anxious time coming. A hunt that conceptually started in 2018, didn't actually get started until Aug 2023, after delays from a global pandemic, 3 rerouted flights, and 2 lost bags. The 8 days Kregg and I spent hiking up and down those Yukon mountains in pursuit of a legal ram were arguably the hardest we had ever worked for an animal up to that point. Quinn and Matt, our guides, worked as hard as any team I have been with in the field to help crowd the odds of getting a ram in our favor. In what felt like the 4th quarter of our hunt, we found ourselves making a group decision to pick up camp and move across the valley in one last attempt to locate a legal ram

before time ran out.

On the morning that we began our final ascent in hopes to locate sheep in a nearby basin, we packed up camp at 7 a.m., put it on our backs, and climbed until 9:45 a.m when we found 4 rams on an adjacent face roughly 2000 yards away. Fast forward 12 hours, 6.5 miles, 4248 ft in elevation gain, and 3,643 ft in elevation loss and I finally got into position with my 6.5 PRC Clymr to take a shot at just under 500 yards. In the last 60 minutes of a soul crushing march up to the point that would serve as our shooting perch I stopped Kregg and said, "This is it. This is our last chance at a ram. It's not like we can just keep riding horses hoping sheep will show up, we are out of time." It was do or die - and the wind was howling. I clocked it on my wind meter at a consistent 25 mph, spiking at over 30 mph. Kregg said, "Look, you've got the best equipment in the world; you've had the best training; you've done this forever, you can do this." Then he just kept walking. Thankfully, Kregg's pep talk was exactly what I needed to hear before climbing into that gun to attempt what, up to that point, would be the hardest shot I have ever made.

Looking back, it's funny how things come together, start to finish, to make something like this work.

*This is a physically taxing hunt, you need to be in good shape, but there is just as much mental challenge as there is physical.*

This time of year, around August 1, we are extremely busy at Gunwerks with customers



trying to get out on their own hunts, so we're busy getting their rifles to them. Even though I'm hunting in the Yukon on what, for me, is the hunt of a lifetime, I have a lot going on in the back of my mind - how are things going back at the office while I'm gone for 14 days? Mentally, it's a challenge.

Physically, I lost 14 pounds; I wasn't eating well and I was stressed. I had what felt like a lot invested into this experience, both time and money. It wasn't just the personal satisfaction of me putting a trophy on my wall. There is a lot more that goes into it; we're always gathering media assets and testing product in the field, all in an effort to help tell the Gunwerks story. Not filling my tag would have meant letting down 85 very hard-working coworkers of mine.

In the end it was an unbelievable experience, especially getting to do it with Kregg. He and I have hunted all over the world together and I'm very lucky to have someone like that in my corner. I have packed his squeaky metal tripod, that he refuses to throw away, across every state in the west and a handful of some of the most beautiful countries in the world. While our next sheep adventure might be down the road a little ways, our next long range pursuit is already in the works!

Original article published in WTA Blog ([https://worldwidetrophyadventures.com/blog/the-challenge-of-dall-sheep/?utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=WtaEmail&utm\\_campaign=Annual2023&utm\\_id=2023-10-19email](https://worldwidetrophyadventures.com/blog/the-challenge-of-dall-sheep/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=WtaEmail&utm_campaign=Annual2023&utm_id=2023-10-19email))

# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## Managing Wyoming's Bighorn Sheep: Navigating Disease Risks

By: *Aly Courtemanch*, North Jackson Wildlife Biologist, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WYGFD), *Cheyenne Stewart*, Jackson Region Wildlife Management Coordinator (WYGFD), and *Daryl Lutz*, Lander Region Wildlife Management Coordinator (WYGFD)

Bighorn sheep are a symbol of resilience in Wyoming's most rugged and inhospitable terrain. Spotting these elusive creatures in the wild is a thrill for many. Others eagerly await the now once-in-a-lifetime chance to harvest a ram in the Cowboy State. We all want bighorn sheep in Wyoming and across the West to stay healthy and strong. But there's a big problem: disease. Because of disease, we are learning that more sheep is not always better.

Bighorn sheep are very sensitive to bacteria that make them sick with pneumonia, a serious lung disease. Pneumonia creates a dynamic challenge for the long-term conservation of these populations. By understanding the unique disease risks for different

herds, managers can use proactive methods to prevent and manage disease.

Take the Ferris-Seminole herd in the heart of central Wyoming, for example. While currently free from respiratory disease, they are not immune. This reintroduced herd is a success story in many ways, but continued growth above population objectives brings new challenges. Rams, driven by instinct, wander beyond their herd. This wandering behavior increases their risk of exposure to pneumonia-causing bacteria. When they return to their herd or wander into another herd, they may bring new diseases with them, triggering



widespread infection and mortality. Oftentimes, an initial pneumonia outbreak can cause more than 80% of the herd to die. Infected sheep that survive the initial outbreak can become long-term carriers of the bacteria, creating a continuous or chronic source of infection and mortality, especially among young lambs. Preventing disease from getting into this healthy herd is a top priority for Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WYGFD) bighorn sheep managers.

In the Gros Ventre Mountain range outside of Jackson, a different disease dynamic is playing out. The Jackson bighorn sheep herd has struggled with pneumonia for decades, and pneumonia outbreaks typically occur when the population exceeds 400-500 individuals. In recent years, bighorn sheep managers have counted over 500 sheep in the herd. Pneumonia-causing bacteria

are constantly circulating within this herd, and when the right conditions occur, a disease outbreak is the result. When the population swells to higher numbers, three negative impacts happen: reduced pregnancy rates, poor nutritional condition (sheep are less fat), and increased susceptibility to pneumonia. Joint research between the WYGFD and University of Wyoming has detected these signs showing up in the Jackson Herd in recent years. The data tells us that without population management, it is not a matter of if, but when the next pneumonia die-off will happen. It takes years for the population to build up again and recover from each outbreak. Two pneumonia outbreaks in 2001 and 2010 were followed by necessary reductions of over 100 bighorn sheep licenses available to hunters while the herd recovered. Preventing another pneumonia outbreak and keeping the population stable and healthy will benefit both bighorn sheep and hunters over the long-term.

Population management to balance available resources with the number of animals a habitat can sustain is a cornerstone of wildlife conservation. Because disease is so prevalent in many bighorn sheep populations, it must be considered alongside other factors that

limit population size like food, water, and shelter.

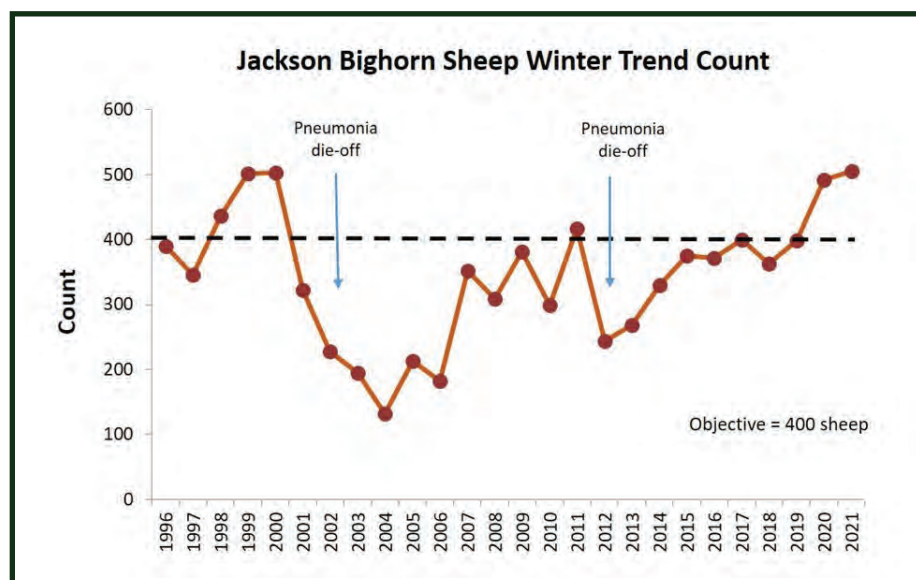
Relocating bighorn sheep from abundant and pneumonia-free herds to supplement or establish other herds has been a common and valuable practice used for decades to manage population size. However, when bighorn sheep are known to have harmful diseases, it simply is not good management practice to transplant them; the risk of spreading disease outweighs the benefit of relocating them.

Harvest is another tool in managing wildlife population size. Traditionally, bighorn sheep harvest in Wyoming has been limited to hunting rams. Limited ram harvest offers hunters a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and has minimal population-level effect. Managed ewe harvest is an effective conservation tool to curb population growth, keep herds at their management objectives, maintain herd health and productivity, and prevent large-scale disease outbreaks. Ewe harvest has been used by many states and provinces throughout the West to manage bighorn sheep populations. WYGFD offered Type 6 ewe/lamb licenses in the Jackson Herd



or over their objectives. The Department plans to propose ewe hunting seasons in these herds again in 2024. These licenses are extremely popular. For example, the draw success rate for Hunt Area 7 Type 6 licenses last year was 7% for resident applicants and 4% for non-residents. Also, these licenses are allocated through a random draw and do not affect an applicant's preference points.

Ultimately, what benefits bighorn sheep benefits us all. Stable, healthy, and vigorous populations ensure more opportunities to observe bighorn sheep in the wild and more opportunities for future hunters. Hunters play a direct role in wildlife management, and ewe hunting offers the dual benefits of an unforgettable experience for hunters, while also conserving Wyoming's bighorn sheep populations for the future. We encourage you to be involved in the WYGFD hunting season setting public process in March and April and sharing your thoughts. For more information on the 2024 seasons and to get involved in the season setting process please visit the Game and Fish website at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Get-Involved/Public-Meetings>.





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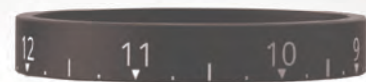
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# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## “Rambulance”

By: Tony Mong, Wyoming Game and Fish Department

*A mobile scanning platform allowing researchers and managers to see what they have been missing.*

### Potential Uses

This will be a new tool in the tool kit of bighorn sheep research and management. Because of this, our knowledge and understanding of how this tool will be used is incomplete and will evolve over time while we learn more about all the areas this tool will impact sheep research and management. Below is a short list of the most obvious potential benefits of the tool.

### Research

- Tumor rate prevalence rates in relation to lamb ratio/production
- Survival rates of



individuals with and without tumor anomalies

- Continue *P. multocida* strain research to determine distribution of “non tumor strain” and “tumor strain” and correlate that with observed tumors in live animals.

### Captive Research:

It is logistically difficult and financially expensive to incorporate upper respiratory disease monitoring into captive bighorn sheep respiratory disease research. If a CT scanner was available for these studies, researchers could capture images of individual animals’ upper respiratory sinuses more frequently throughout studies, without requiring stressful transport of animals to a veterinary hospital.

Post-mortem Diagnostics: Sinus tumors have been suggested as a possible target for selective culling in the future. If CT scanning was to be used to identify animals with sinus tumor for selective culling, it would be useful to first better understand how CT images correlate with sinus tumor lesions within the larger picture of bighorn sheep respiratory disease. For postmortem diagnostics of bighorn sheep, CT imaging could be used alongside traditional histopathology, bacteriology, and molecular diagnostics to better understand these relationships.

### Hunter-Harvested Specimen Diagnostics:

Post-mortem evaluation of hunter-harvested bighorns is limited by the availability of intact skulls when harvest animals are processed for taxidermy. CT scanning of intact heads could provide additional data regarding upper respiratory disease in samples that would otherwise be unavailable for diagnostics. Pairing CT scanning with nasal swabs could help determine the value of diagnostics from post-mortem nasal swabs as an indicator of upper respiratory disease.

### Management

- Complete “body scans” of individuals being considered for transplants.
- Tumor rate prevalence rates in relation to lamb ratio/production.
- Survival rates of individuals with and without tumor and/or lung anomalies.
- Removal of individuals with active or “early stage” sinus tumors.
- Removal of individuals with active lung “anomalies”.

### Initial Costs

\$375,000: CT scanner and all components that would go into a mobile platform. Includes installation.  
 ~\$75,000-\$150,000: “Ambulance” platform to install the mobile CT scanner into.  
 License/Registration (TBD)  
 Vehicle Wrap (TBD)  
 On-going Costs (TBD)  
 Vehicle Maintenance  
 Fuel  
 Technician  
 License/Registration

## Devils Canyon Population Status Update: February 2024

By: Sam Stephens, Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Indications of growth and recovery in the Devils Canyon population were abruptly reversed in July of 2023 after a second outbreak of pneumonia impacted the herd. Previous estimates of decline approximated a 44% reduction in herd size from the initial (2022) outbreak were confirmed with the summer 2022 Trend Count which revealed 142 surviving sheep (down from 253 in 2022). This count was paired with a promising juvenile ratio, indicating future population growth and likely recovery. Unfortunately this positive growth trajectory was stalled soon after the summer Trend Count.

Mortality notifications beginning in late July and lasting through August prompted the recovery and investigation of dead collared ewes. Field necropsies and samples submitted to the Wyoming State Veterinary Lab confirmed a second outbreak of *Mannheimia haemolytica*. Unlike the initial outbreak, the second episode seemed to primarily impact ewes. During the month long die-off, no lamb or



ram carcasses were detected despite many orphaned lambs being found in close proximity to ewe carcasses that were later confirmed positive for the pathogen. Marked individuals were drastically reduced during this period from 13 to 2 collared ewes. Our understanding as to why lambs showed resistance to *Mannheimia haemolytica*, could be due to a passive immunity



developed through nursing. Lamb mortality could have resumed later in the year but was never detected.

In the late summer, rams are typically sexually segregated in Devils Canyon. Rams often congregate in bands at higher elevations away from ewe/lamb groups. This behavior likely protected them from the die-off. Based on recent observations, rams

seemed to be unaffected from last year’s outbreak. This phenomenon, when combined with a loss of many sexually mature ewes has rendered a higher ram ratio that could compromise the future recovery of the herd. Options to reduce the ram ratio in order to discourage future dispersal are being explored.

Monitoring efforts to determine the full extent of last summer’s outbreak are still being conducted. Recent counts have totaled 40-60 sheep with rams accounting for the relative majority. Efforts to determine lambing and recruitment rates will be conducted in May and July of this year.



# WYOMING

## Whiskey Basin Core Native Herd

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



Forage studies were conducted to confirm there is sufficient food available to the Bighorns.

and Fish Department (WGFD) and they have diligently tackled implementation of several of the action items. Over \$1.6 million has been generated for research and habitat enhancements within this herd unit. Our bighorn sheep managers and researchers are now at a point where their findings are pointing to specific management tools to help this herd. I'm proud to say that the Midwest Chapter has chosen to fund this important Test and Remove management strategy that is a direct result of the Whiskey Mountain Plan and the ongoing research in that herd.

In the past I have described the different bighorn sheep management areas in Wyoming and the importance of our Core Native herds in Northwest Wyoming. Of particular interest to our partners at the Midwest Chapter is the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Herd (WMBS), which your chapter graciously adopted back in 2019. Midwest's partnership and fundraising efforts helped to kick off the creation of the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn

Sheep Plan. This plan was generated by an assemblage of wildlife managers, land managers, and scientific experts working to identify the complex issues that continue to cause this herd to dwindle and provide action items for each challenge. The general issues examined in this plan cover health/disease, habitat/nutrition, and population management. Since its completion, the plan has been adopted by the Wyoming Game

Test and Remove is a relatively novel management tool that has been heavily researched and is starting to be implemented in diseased bighorn sheep herds throughout the west. In bighorn sheep herds infected with the primary pathogen responsible for prolonged respiratory disease, *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi), certain sheep (most often older ewes) can harbor the pathogen without dying from it. These sheep that carry the pathogen have been termed



A large meadow used by BH Sheep in the fall and winter was replowed and seeded to provide better habitat.

about 25% of what the population was prior to the all-age die-off in the early 90s. Test and Remove in combination with continued habitat enhancements could potentially be the management actions that end the downward trajectory of this very important Core Native bighorn sheep herd.

**We can't thank you all at the Midwest Chapter enough for your continued support of the Whiskey Mountain bighorn sheep herd and we are excited to share in more future good news for this herd.**

in second year) have been removed and Movi prevalence in this sub-herd has declined from 71% in 2021 to 29% in March 2023.

The preliminary success of Test and Remove in the Red Creek sub-herd has encouraged managers to expand this program to the western segments of the WMBS herd. The WMBS herd is currently estimated to have a population of 300-500 sheep which is

“Chronic Carriers” and can infect immune deficient lambs who then pass it to other lambs, causing, in some cases, little to no lamb recruitment in the population. Test and Remove is just that; identifying chronic carriers through disease testing and then removing them from the population to improve lamb survival and herd health.

In the winter of 2021-2022, the WGFD in cooperation with the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes, the University of Wyoming, and US Fish and Wildlife Service implemented Test and Remove in the Red Creek sub-herd by removing seven ewes who were identified as chronic carriers (all ewes). Classification surveys conducted in January 2023 revealed more lambs in this sub-herd than have been observed in the past six years combined. Although preliminary, this increased lamb survival post Chronic Carrier removal is encouraging. To-date, a total of 11 chronic carriers (4 more ewes

Photo by Mark Gocke, WYO G&F Dept.



Lamb Collaring has been conducted over the past three years to better understand survival rates and why they are perishing within the first six months of life.



# Wyoming Outfitters and SCI Join Together To Support Winter Elk Conservation In Court

By: Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association

The Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association (WYOGA), Jackson Hole Outfitters and Guides Association (JHOGA), Sublette County Outfitters and Guides Association (SCOGA) and Safari Club International (SCI) jointly intervened in a case in which anti-hunting groups are challenging the U.S. Forest Service's (Service) approval of supplemental winter feeding of elk on National Forest System lands in Wyoming.

The federal district court in Wyoming granted the Hunting Coalition's motion to intervene, despite the anti-hunting groups' request that the Coalition's participation be limited.

The petitioners—including Sierra Club and Western Watersheds Project—want the Service to stop the winter supplemental feeding. Animal rights groups have sued to stop the feeding several times before, alleging that the concentration of elk on feed grounds increases the risk of disease transmission, including a recent concern that supplemental winter feeding would increase the risk of Chronic Wasting Disease. In a different, ongoing case, the Coalition (except SCOGA) intervened to defend supplemental elk feeding authorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the National Elk Refuge.

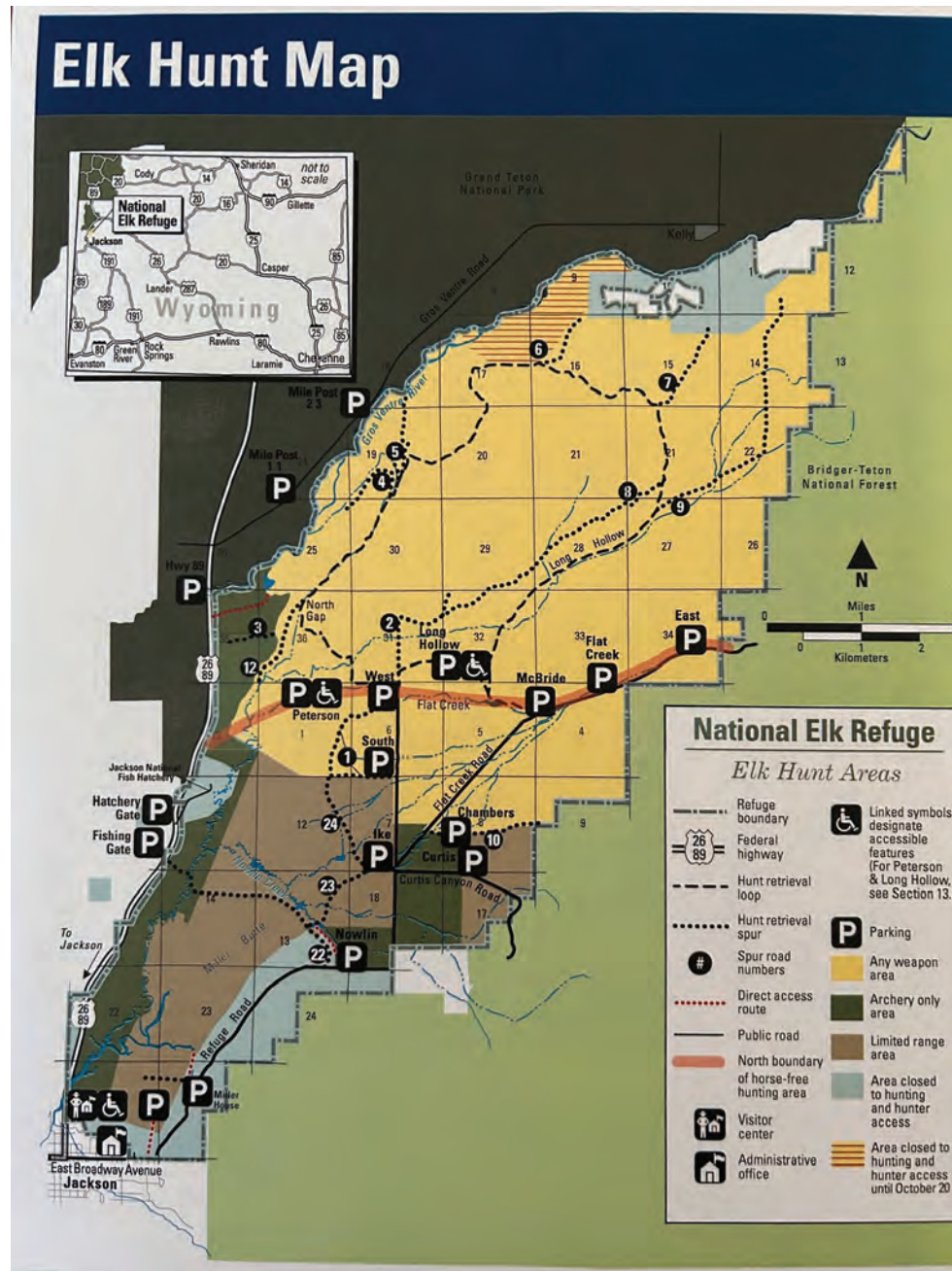
Feeding on National Forest System lands and state feed grounds

has occurred for more than 100 years. Without the supplemental feeding, many elk would starve.

The intervention of WYOGA, JHOGA, SCOGA and SCI is step-one in the litigation process. Parties will eventually file briefs and likely participate in a hearing to resolve the merits of the case.

Wyoming's elk herds provide high-quality hunting opportunities for hunters, and outfitters in Wyoming depend on those hunts for their clients.

WYOGA, JHOGA, and SCOGA are represented by attorneys from the Falen Law Offices, LLC. SCI is represented by in-house counsel.



# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## “Laramie Region Telemetry Equipment (2021)”

By: Teal Cufaude, Wyoming Game and Fish Department



The purpose of the Laramie Region Telemetry Equipment project was to equip wildlife managers in the Saratoga Wildlife Biologist District with radio telemetry equipment for bighorn sheep research, population monitoring, and collar recovery efforts. There are several ongoing bighorn sheep research studies in the

District. Each of these studies involves tracking/collecting location information from bighorn sheep fitted with GPS collars. Detailed location information is stored on each of these collars. Throughout the studies, the collars are retrieved from the field after a collared animal dies or once the collar is released from the

animal on its programmed release date. The telemetry equipment purchased with WY-WSF GIA funds was essential in locating the final resting place of these collars. This telemetry equipment was also used to locate collared bighorn sheep for disease monitoring, population monitoring, and educational field trips.



Smiley

## Bighorn Sheep Nutrition Disease Project

Exploring how nutrition and disease affect bighorn sheep.

Pneumonia—a respiratory disease originally introduced by domestic sheep and goats—remains one of the greatest issues for conservation of bighorn sheep populations across North America. Herds infected with pneumonia can experience different fates. Some slowly decline, some undergo crash-recovery cycles, and some tolerate it without substantial mortality. Ecological factors such as population size, food availability, nutritional condition, immune function, and disease all could influence population trends and the ability for herds to recover after pneumonia die-offs. Because 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.

### Project goals

Understand how ecological factors, including habitat quality, pathogens, and social dynamics influence the effect of pneumonia on bighorn sheep populations.

Evaluate management strategies aimed at mitigating the effects of pneumonia on populations.

### Approach

With GPS collars, disease assessment, and intensive field studies, we study the same animals through time to track pathogen presence, nutritional condition, adult and lamb survival, causes of mortality, and forage availability.

### Recent finding 1: Pneumonia negatively affects both mothers and their lambs.

When bighorn sheep are infected with pathogens, they gain less fat over the summer and lose more fat over the winter. Bighorn sheep require fat to survive and raise lambs, so less fat may mean that they can't meet their energetic needs. Not only do pathogens mean mothers have less fat to help them raise lambs, the pathogens can cause disease and mortality for the lambs. In other words, pathogens are problems for bighorn sheep both directly by causing disease and indirectly through the energy it takes to deal with them.



Gocke

Above: Weighing a bighorn sheep at captures near Green River Lakes, WY. The snot around her nose may be caused by pneumonia.

### Recent finding 2: Pregnancy rates and nutritional condition down, but lamb survival steady.

Remarkably, only 50% of the sheep we caught in Jackson this March were pregnant; pregnancy rates are typically above 95%. The sheep were also the skinniest we have seen since we began the project in 2015. This summer, we caught 5 lambs in the Jackson herd and 7 lambs in the West Side herd; 8 made it to November 2023. We are eager to continue monitoring the herd to understand the mechanisms behind these dramatic changes.



Gavin

Above: We captured this lamb in summer 2023, and we've been studying her mother and grandmother for the past few years. We have 3 generations of data in this one family group!

### Recent finding 3: Summer range forage influences disease, which then influences population dynamics.

Bighorn sheep have to spend their limited energy on fighting pneumonia infections, surviving, raising offspring, and other critical life functions. The bighorn sheep in the Jackson and Whiskey Mountain herds in western Wyoming have similar demands on their energy—both populations have experienced pneumonia die-offs since the 1900s, and pneumonia continues to circulate in both herds; however, the herds have had dramatically different population trajectories, with Jackson sheep having higher adult survival and lamb recruitment. To better understand whether nutrition is a limiting factor for these bighorn sheep herds, we investigated the differences in forage between their summer ranges.



Above: Jackson sheep can eat more high quality food, which gives them the energy necessary to fight infection, survive, and raise healthy lambs.



Above: We conducted over 700 vegetation transects and collected over 2,000 forage samples from the summer ranges of the Jackson and Whiskey Mountain populations.

Jackson summer range was better than Whiskey Mountain's. Jackson sheep had access to twice as much forage than sheep in Whiskey Mountain. Because they have more and higher-quality food, Jackson sheep likely have more resources to fight off disease, survive, and raise offspring.

Read the whole paper by searching for "Implications of forage quality for population recovery of bighorn sheep following a pneumonia epizootic," by Brittany L. Wagler and colleagues, published in Journal of Wildlife Management in 2023.

### Upcoming work: How do social dynamics affect pneumonia transmission?

Bighorn sheep are social animals, which could potentially affect the potential of pneumonia to spread. We are beginning to study how the environment shapes social dynamics in sheep, and in turn, how those dynamics influence the spread of disease. To tackle these questions we are using GPS collar data and intensive field observations of bighorn sheep on their summer range.



#### Project leads



This project is led by master's student Jack Gavin (left), PhD student Rachel Smiley (middle), and research scientist Brittany Wagler (right).

#### Partners and collaborators

The Bighorn Sheep Nutrition Disease Project benefits from being highly collaborative in development, operations, and funding. We are 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, Bureau of Land Management, National Elk Refuge, Pinto Ranch, Steve Kilpatrick, Sara Bridge, Steve and Kara Losik, and Des Brunette for assistance with logistics, lab analyses, field housing, and fieldwork.

# GRANT IN AID UPDATES

## Idiosyncrasies

By: Jordan Seitz, Encampment K-12 Teacher

### SHEEP STUDY UPDATE # 13:

Our early September '23 card pull with G&F biologists Teal and Britt continued the next chapter of the canyon's story. Spring, summer, and fall produced ample moisture, and the wildlife looked healthy by the time we checked our cameras. As hoped, we documented a great ewe-to-lamb ratio, and some bonus deer fawns were a positive glimmer on



our decimated deer herd. The new camera location from the spring of '23 produced

maturity bedding down in the same spot. The second was a ewe we dubbed The Unihorn, because she only had one full-length unbroken horn. Our third showcased Chubs, a chunky marmot that replicated his exact route many times during the summer as he hopped rock to rock.

Through a local Carbon County Rec Board grant, we were able

to purchase a third trail camera. My 6th graders went

cool footage of sheep in the rocks, so the students opted to keep both cameras in place for the rest of the winter. A few of them found white gold: shed antlers and an old ewe sheep skull! We patiently await our spring '24 card pull, wondering who made it through the hunting season and the winter.

In November we had the opportunity to share our Sheep Study with the school board. We decided to analyze all of our camera data and share some of the canyon's idiosyncrasies. One was multiple species with multiple levels of



optics we could see a highway of tracks crossing the ice...1/4 mile from our camera! Out of time, we decided to move the camera there next winter.

We also purchased a drone through our grant, and I was able to put together some unique footage for the mini-films I create about our trips. It has been a learning experience to balance regulations, battery life, camera angles, and wildlife filming ethics.

In January we were supposed to join Biologist Teal on a sheep collar recon adventure, but had to postpone due to weather.

on a "death hike" in late September to find a creek crossing for it. We had to drive in, hike to the bottom of the canyon, find a crossing, hike out, and make it back to school before 5th period at 12:30! The spot we found was satisfactory because it looked like a good place for sheep to cross the creek and for predators to stalk by. In December, our weather was so mild that we tried our death hike again, to ensure the new camera was functioning properly. We only got the suburban stuck once on the way in, and while there was snow, we didn't need snowshoes, so we hiked quickly. The camera didn't have many clips, but it did have a young ram, ewe and lamb, and a mature ram walking along the creek. We adjusted its angle and on the hike out encountered two young rams trolling the canyon. One crossed the creek upstream, and through our



Under the Wire, the conservation film I mentioned in my last update, was released in February. You can view it at <https://plattebasintimelapse.com/under-the-wire/> or by searching for the film on Vimeo. The segment with my students is at the 21-minute mark!



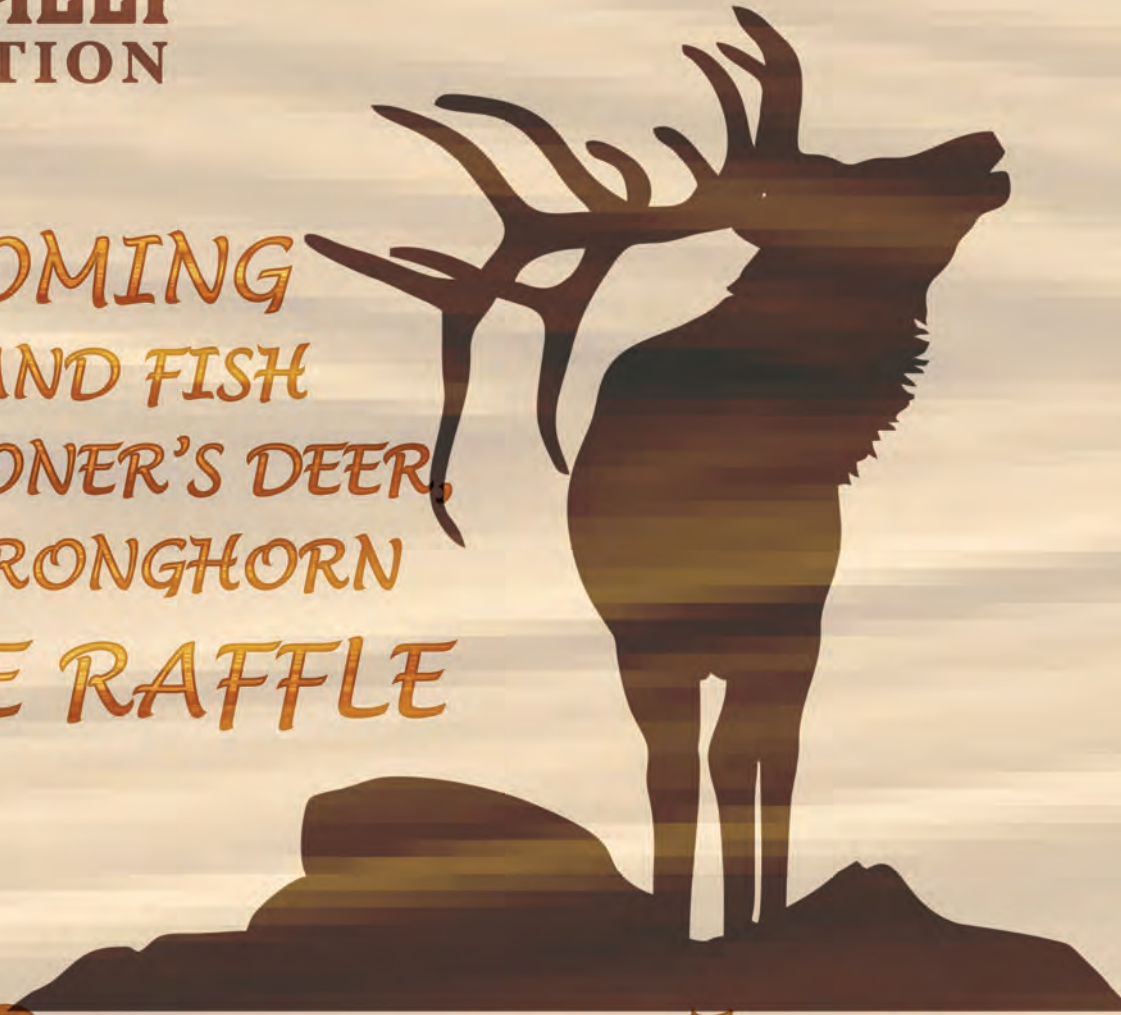


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# 22nd Annual Life Member Breakfast

Life Members may win \$2500 in Banquet Spending.

RHS members may win a fishing trip for two to Costa Rica!

*New! All LMB donors will be entered into a special prize drawing*

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*Become a Life Member or upgrade to Ramshorn Society today!*

*Life Memberships are \$750, Seniors over 65 are \$500.*

*Ramshorn Society Membership is an additional \$500.*

*In addition to the LMB attendance prizes, the chapter is offering the "Climb to the Peak" incentive. For every 10 new members/upgrades, a winner will be drawn. Each winner chooses their prize from Weatherby, Maven, Stone Glacier, Vortex or Banquet Bucks totaling \$1500.*

## Thank you Shoshone Rose Casino! Our LMB Sponsor for 2024!

June 8, 2024 beginning at 7:30 at the  
Little American Hotel & Resort, Cheyenne, WY.

*Note: You must be a Life or Ramshorn Life Member to attend and qualify for the prize drawings!*

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## Fishing in Costa Rica

By: Gary and Jo Butler



At the 2023 Summer Meeting, the Life Member Incentive drawing was won by Gary Butler (LM230). The prize was Deep Sea Fishing for two in Costa Rica, through Hunt The World with Guide, Tom Hunt. Gary wisely chose his wife, Jo Butler (LM 539), as his companion. Also on the trip from Wyoming was Dan Hinz (LM 182) who had experienced this trip the year before and was very helpful with advice. We joined with others to total eight, guided by Tom Hunt. A private driver drove the group from San Jose to the Pacific coastal fishing village of Quepos. The group was divided between two boats, allowing plenty of opportunities to reel in Sailfish, Dorado (Mahi Mahi), and Tuna.



Our boat was named the CARIBSEA, manned by the captain and two crew members. Every morning the boats left the dock at 7:00 a.m. and headed out to sea, traveling for about an hour. The fishing was a swift troll with several reels rigged with teaser lures and reels with bait fish. Sailfish were catch-and-release only, but Dorado and Tuna could be kept. Fresh tropical fruit was a mid-morning treat and the hot lunch was prepared by a crew member with chef experience. At 3:00 p.m. the boats headed back to the dock, taking from one to two hours, depending on how far out into the ocean we had ventured. The catch for the day was filleted and the whole group shared the fish prepared for our dinner by the restaurant near our motel. The total catch for our boat was 30 sailfish, 2 Dorado, and 3 Tuna. That was "A Good Way To End" the four exciting days of fishing.

The Butlers, however, added several days to their trip to take advantage of sightseeing more of all the diversity Costa Rica has to offer. With a private driver for transportation, we experienced a boat excursion at the Tarcoles River for birding, crocodiles, and other wildlife, hiking in the Cloud Forest National Park, enjoying Los Lagos Resort at the base of Mount Arenal Volcano, and the beauty of the Peace Lodge with its waterfalls and pavilions containing a variety of live birds, butterflies, orchids, frogs, snakes, and wild cats rescued from illegal captivity. The biodiversity there is unbelievable, 33% of Costa Rica is protected in National Parks and preserves, there



are 26 species of hummingbirds (more than any other country in the world), and they can grow anything ranging from rice, bananas, pineapple, mangos, papaya, coffee, strawberries, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, onions, carrots, etc. You name it, they can grow it. Our capable driver hosted us through the rural countryside, taking in agricultural methods, dairy and beef production with electric fence rotational grazing, conservation and ecological sustainability practices of the country, every-day dining among the people, and visiting important cultural places.

A special thanks to Dan Hinz and Dean Dijenno and the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation for this incentive drawing for life members! It was an unbelievably special experience. Muchas Gracias y Bien Venido! Gary and Jo Butler



## WY-WSF 2024 Live Auction at Little America Hotel Cheyenne, WY

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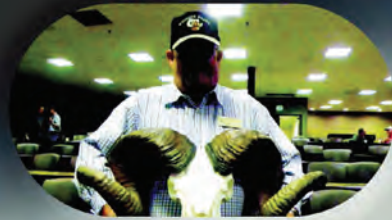


Photo by Mark Gocke

Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation  
40th Annual Convention

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Our success rate runs close to 100% due to these qualified guides. They are the foundation of Grizzly Outfitters, LLC. Our hunts are four days hunted on private, BLM, and State lands. You will be guided 2x1 or 1x1 which ever you choose with four wheel drive pickups and on foot. These are spot and stalk hunts. We offer both rifle and archery hunts. We can handle any type of hunt regardless of your age or physical condition.

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Ross Gorman  
PHOTOGRAPHY .COM



# Friday Night Rendezvous

June 7, 2024

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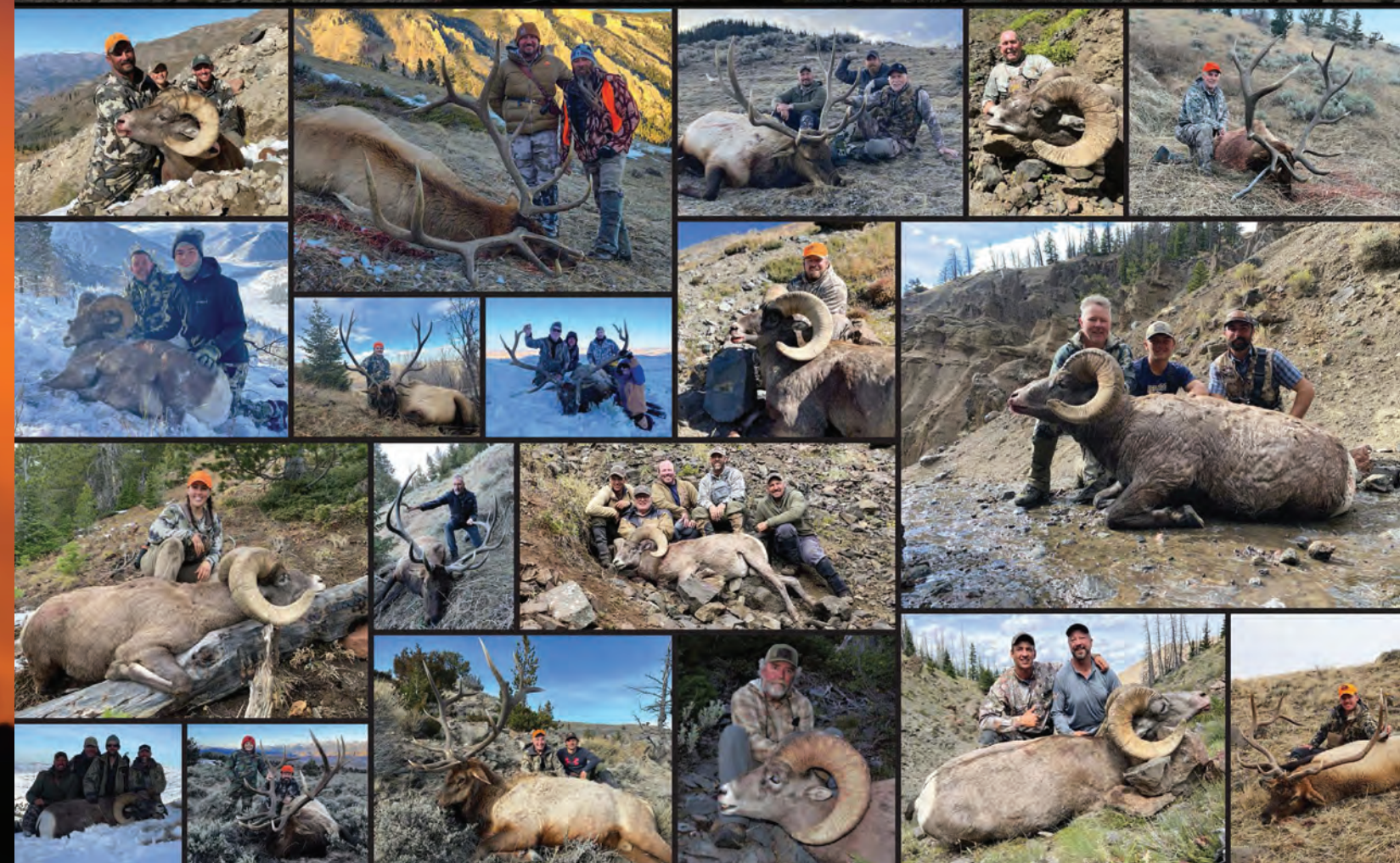
Photo By Mark Gocke  
Wyoming G&F Dept

A photograph of a man with a grey beard, wearing a camouflage jacket, sitting on a rocky, mountainous slope. He is holding a large ram's head with thick, curved horns. The background shows a vast, hazy mountain range under a blue sky with light clouds.

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# “Careful Conservation and Preservation”

By: Greg Clifford

*Conservation is simply defined as careful preservation and protection of something.*

On May 9th 1988, compliments of the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, I received my first Bighorn Sheep tag in the mail. As I looked at the tag in my hand, I can tell you I wasn't thinking about conservation. I was thinking about holding those large, golden horns in my hands! I had never hunted sheep in the Absaroka Range of Wyoming but I was certainly excited for the opportunity and a chance to harvest my first bighorn sheep.

Four months later I found myself at the East Fork trailhead, out of Dubois, getting on a horse for the first time in my life. After bouncing along the trails for a few days and taking in some of the most incredible scenery the mountains of Wyoming can offer, we finally spotted some rams. After a steep climb and evaluation of a band of rams, I was able to harvest my first North American wild sheep. It's been said many times that after a person's first sheep hunt you either love it or you hate it. As I

sat on the mountainside next to my ram all I could think about was how I could do this again!

Over the next 25 years I was fortunate to hunt sheep in British Columbia, the Yukon and the



Northwest Territories. During that time a common theme emerged from the outfitters and guides I hunted with. Careful preservation and protection were required to maintain healthy sheep populations...conservation. It also became very apparent that in these wild, isolated parts of the world, managing for healthy wild sheep populations was extremely challenging. Habitat destruction and loss, adverse policy from

governing bodies, resident hunting pressure, disease, and predation to name a few that constantly affected the sheep population dynamics. I gained a tremendous amount of respect for those individuals fighting to maintain healthy, hunt-able populations of sheep, despite all of the challenges.

And then there was Mexico. As my hunting career progressed, I never imagined I would get an opportunity to hunt a desert sheep. After visiting with a friend in 2011 about his recent desert sheep hunt experience, I decided to pull the pin and booked a hunt in Mexico to hunt desert sheep. The first day of my Sonoran hunt, in March of 2012, began like most sheep hunts do with lots of glassing. Sheep can be difficult to see in any location, but I have to say, desert sheep can be almost impossible to see at times due to their ability to melt into the surrounding terrain. Later that same day, a mature ram was located and after a successful stalk, I had my 1st desert sheep. Despite harvesting a gnarly 12 1/2 year old ram I felt a bit cheated, after all the years of dreaming about a Sonoran desert sheep hunt



and the building anticipation, it was over in less than 24 hours.

It was after this hunt that I began to learn about the Artee family and Alcampo Hunting. More importantly, I learned about the conservation efforts they had been implementing in the Sonoran Desert. Through years of careful preservation and protection of desert sheep, the Artee family was able to reintroduce and maintain a healthy, free range, population of sheep in the Sierra El Alamo Range. In recognition of their efforts, the International Council for Game & Wildlife Conservation presented the Artee family, along with 2 additional constituents, with the 2022 CIC Markhor Award. This prestigious award honors conservation projects that link the conservation of biodiversity and human livelihoods through sustainable use. Between the three individual entities who received this award, over 1500 desert sheep have been relocated into free range habitat among their respective states in Mexico.

In February of 2023, my wife harvested a desert sheep with the Artee family in the Sierra El Alamo Mountains. It was a fantastic hunt with amazing people and excellent accommodations. In January of 2024, we were back with the Artee family and it was now my turn. The first few days were spent behind the glass. The weather was perfect and we spotted lots of sheep, including several very nice, but young, rams. The fourth day, a big heavy ram was located but unfortunately we bumped him during

our stalk and were unable to relocate him. The next morning found us evaluating a ram bedded on the side of a rocky ridge. After some discussion, I decided to try to sneak onto a small hill adjacent to the ram and get set up for a shot. The approach was perfect, the wind was calm and I had a prone rest with a nice shooting lane. The ram was bedded at 380 yards. After about 30 minutes, the ram stood to stretch and it was the moment of truth. At the shot, the ram immediately turned and ran over

the edge of the ridge out of sight. I missed... Careful follow up and review of the video my friend BJoe had taken, confirmed the suspicions. I was disappointed but thankful for a clean miss.

That evening, we located two rams and felt that due to their location it was likely the same two rams from our earlier encounter. A plan was made for morning and we called it a day. Early the next morning found us climbing up a steep ridge adjacent to where the two rams had been spotted the night before. As we looked down into the next canyon, my guide, Javier, spotted a lone ram looking up at us. It was now or never, I crawled through and onto some cactus and got set up on a small rock. The ram was 180 yards, Javier confirmed it was our ram and I felt the recoil of the rifle. The ram immediately began tumbling down the hill.

We set next to the ram waiting for the rest of the team to arrive to celebrate and take photos. Unlike 35 years earlier, when all I could think about was how I could go sheep hunting again, this time I thought about how the careful preservation and protection of desert sheep by the Artee family and others like them had given me this opportunity as a hunter to harvest such an incredible animal.



# National Bighorn Sheep Center

By: Amanda Verheul  
Interim Executive Director

Dubois, WY – The National Bighorn Sheep Center (NBSC) is entering its 4th-decade providing education and outreach for the national conservation of wild sheep, wildlife, and wildlands. The Center is located 200 miles from the nearest interstate and 80 miles from the nearest stoplight. This is wild sheep territory, once home to the largest herd of Rocky Mountain Bighorns in the Country. This year, we are heavily emphasizing our educational outreach and impact.

Through the museum, wild sheep webinars, and outreach programs, the NBSC teaches about wildlife, habitat, and the collaborative efforts required for wildlife management programs. The Center is the official outreach and education arm of the National and Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation. This is the third year of the Center's Wild Sheep Webinar Series, where we host expert panelists who discuss relevant topics related to species conservation. Upcoming webinars will feature key wildlife biologists and disease specialists

sharing their work. On March 21st, we are hosting a webinar on disease transmission, and on April 11th, we will be presenting a webinar on migration corridors.

July 1st through 6th, NBSC will hold its sixth year of Camp Bighorn. It is a place-based education program for youth ages 9-12 and held in the home of what was once the largest herd of Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. This year, the schedule includes archery, atlatl, large carnivore awareness training, taxidermy, history of hunting, backpacking 101, edible & medicinal plants, kayaking, fishing, and much more. We are currently taking registrations and spots are limited. Visit [bighorn.org](http://bighorn.org) for more information.

*Austin, Age 10, Maryland — "I loved Camp Bighorn and it was one of the highlights of my summer. Thank you so much for sending us the fishing poles. It was a great surprise. I will use the fishing pole a lot . . . I made lots of memories at camp."*

*Abigail, Age 9, Pennsylvania — "I loved Camp Bighorn. One of my favorite things was meeting wildlife journalist Chester Moore."*



*What he showed us changed my perspective of the different animals in need of help and made me want to find a way to do more conservation for the animals."*

*Candy McDermott, Adult Chaperone, Arizona - My interaction with such willing and excited youth cements the need for this wonderful program to continue. From the book, Last Child in the Woods, by Richard Louv . . . "We have such a brief opportunity to pass on to our children our love for this Earth." Here's an opportunity to sow the seeds of the future.*

NBSC spent the last seven years working on a capital campaign to add a classroom in honor of conservation educators Charlie and Sue Beck, named the Beck Learning Center (BLC). Through their youth programs, the Becks were stewards of conservation education for the Torrey Valley. These themes are still being used today by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the National Bighorn Sheep Center, Ring Lake Ranch, and other educational groups. The BLC was intended to provide a sit-down classroom to complement the growing number of place-based

programs at the NBSC. Due to construction costs doubling to over one million dollars, a lack of contractor bids, and logistical issues; we had to halt the classroom construction. The project committee determined that it was not fiscally responsible to move forward. Rest assured, we are still creating a space for programs dedicated to wild sheep conservation for the National Wild Sheep Foundation and its 35+ Chapters and Affiliates across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. We are refocusing our efforts to reach out on a virtual level with educational trunks and interactive videos within our Center. In addition, we are updating the current space to a state-of-the-art media classroom.

The Center is taking more kids and adults out into the field. Our ecotour program takes you on a 3-4 hour journey through Whiskey Basin Habitat Management Area to educate about local history, wildlife habitats, and wilderness. We had 22 times more participants in this program this year than last year.



The Wyoming Game and Fish (WGF) has been working on a conifer clean-up project in the Whiskey Mountain Area. Anecdotal evidence shows improvement and use in areas of the winter range to expand ranges and bighorn sheep migration paths. More research is being conducted to help the sheep in their summer range. It is a challenge due to the rugged and rocky landscapes. The WGF lists the Bighorn Sheep as a species of greatest conservation need based on the Native Species Status Matrix in the 2017 Wyoming State Wildlife Action Plan. In February, 25 sheep were captured and tested. Seven of these sheep tested positive for M. ovi. WGF is working to remove these sheep and collar more sheep. We hope the test and remove program and habitat improvements will be part of the solution for the Whiskey Mountain herd. The sheep herd in Red Creek, where the test and remove program has been implemented for several years, is improving. Last year, six lambs made it to winter, more than WGF has counted in the previous six years combined.

NBSC Vice President Steve Kilpatrick was awarded the Wild Sheep Foundation's "Outstanding Conservationist" award at the Sheep Show banquet in Reno, Nevada, on January 18th, 2024. This award is not given every year and is only given for outstanding, exemplary, long-term contributions to wild sheep conservation and management with a significant impact. This award was in



recognition of Kilpatrick's 45+ year career, working for wild sheep and other wildlife and the intact habitats they must have. The Wild Sheep Foundation recognizes and salutes Steve's exceptional, tireless, and lifetime efforts to restore, enhance, and conserve bighorn sheep in Wyoming. Kilpatrick worked for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Teton Science School, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, and as Executive Director of the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation. Steve's focus as a habitat biologist has always been on the foundation for wildlife populations, "If you don't have habitat, you won't have wildlife, from waterfowl to big game." He was heavily involved with National Forest planning on domestic sheep grazing and allotment retirements.

We work towards our shared mission of conserving, enhancing, and protecting wildlife resources and the habitats that support them through educational programs. Through expos, education, and outreach, the National Bighorn Sheep Center changes "Conservation" from a concept to a reality impacting nearly 20,000 individuals annually.

Visit the National Bighorn Sheep Center in Wyoming's Wind River Country!

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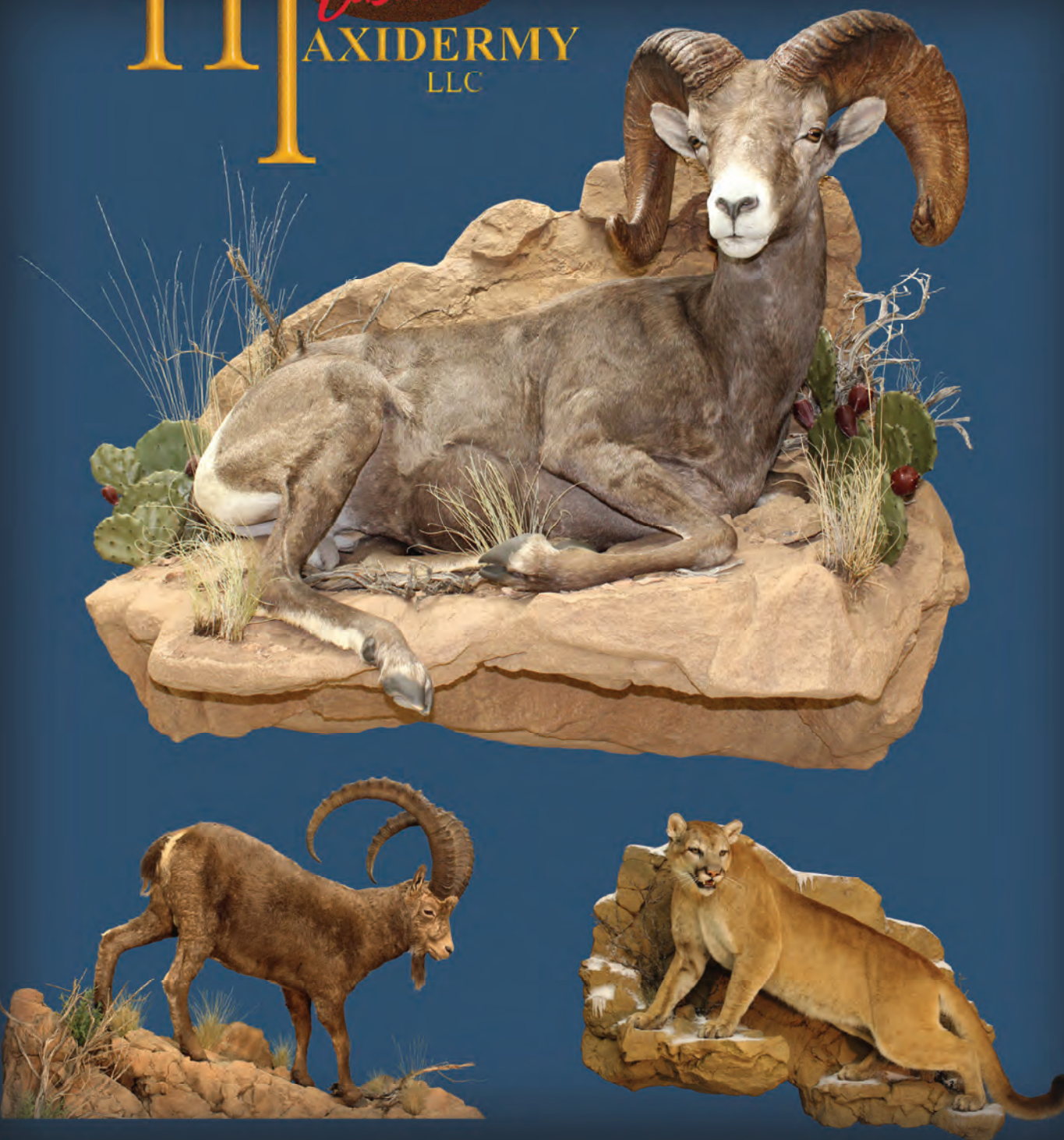
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# “The Absaroka Range is a Special Place”

By: Richard Carosone

The Absaroka Range is a special place. Having spent over 4 decades in the mountains, it was hard to believe all the new experiences that I was witnessing; pronghorn at 12000 ft, pronghorn giving birth at 10000 ft and even one giving birth within several hundred yards of me. Elk ranging from 5k-over 11k, elk sheds at 9500 ft. Mule deer, whitetails, fox,

scenery, or both. I had all of this essentially to myself while only seeing one other sheep hunter. My experience was nothing short of spectacular.

*“After spending 17 days in Sheep Unit 5, I concluded that when Noah unloaded animals from the arc, he unloaded them 20 miles west of Meeteetse, Wyoming.”*

been done without my friends Layne Hacking and Richard Green. Unlimited thanks to both for accompanying me. Also, a huge thanks to Bart Kroger, biologist for Wyoming Game and Fish, he is a true professional. Bart’s advice was instrumental to my success.

I want to thank your organization, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation,



turkeys, pheasants, black bear, moose, you name it. This alone would make for a fantastic adventure. But when 31 grizzly bear sightings are added in along with the stunning geographical features, the outing becomes epic. Without exception every single basin I entered was eye candy from the perspective of animals,

Choosing to hunt unguided limited me to the non-wilderness portion of the unit, which has fewer sheep and typically younger sheep. My goal was to harvest a 7-8-year-old ram, average for the area. I was blessed having harvested a 9.5-year-old class IV ram which exceeded my expectations. It could not have

for putting and keeping sheep on the mountain.

*“It was a 25 year wait and worth every second of it.”*

Keep up the great work so future generations can cherish and share the once in a lifetime adventure I had.

# “Out of the Blue”

By Luke Schultz

One doesn’t expect to share a Dall sheep hunt; typically, these seem to occur for most as an abstraction from the land of make-believe. I lived most of my life fully expecting to never see a white ram, but one day I got a call from my graduate school buddy Will Schreck. We had shared several hunts together, planned a few more for times not yet told, and dreamed more than a few that seem unlikely to pan out. Will was living in Cordova, Alaska and I knew he had an upcoming sheep hunt on the docket. I asked him how the planning was going, and he said, “Well, my buddy dropped out unfortunately and I’m in need of another - can you go?”

Even just to tag along and play pack mule, there is still just one answer to that question (yes; but one problem with it as well (timing). Since the hunt took off in 3 weeks and was 4,000 miles away, I assured him that he could count on me to... ask. I try to maintain some semblance of gainful employment in the hunting season, but two weeks off on 3 weeks’ notice seemed like a stretch.



However, fortune smiled down on me. My boss easily recognized the opportunity and forbade me not to go (I’m forever indebted to her!). So, three weeks, a completed work project, many days of working harder than a one-legged man at an a\*\*-kicking contest, a Covid test, and two flights later, I met with Will face to face in Anchorage to start the driving portion of our journey.

We traveled north to Tok and were to meet with our surreptitious bush pilot to lay the groundwork for where he would fly us and to handle the first formal confidentiality agreement of my life (no joke - I can’t tell you where he took us for 15 years). So that was a first. He also weighed out our gear which we were strictly limited to 50 pounds of each - no small task. If you are wondering, we flew

with Zach Knaebel of Tok Air Service. I’m sure there are lots of other pilots around, but he was a good one and I would recommend him. Having now flown with one Alaskan bush pilot, take that recommendation with a grain of salt I suppose.

We crammed in the plane the next morning and both Will and I agreed that the bush flight was an experience in and of

itself. I’ll not forget clapping every time we landed safely at a new location. In many regards, we were fortunate to have a low ceiling the first day in our valley - Will had booked an 8-day hunt, so the slow lifting of cloud cover over the first couple days revealed additional parts of our adventure as needed and didn’t spoil any endings.



It's not hard to hike up an alluvial valley there and not reflect on how many stars must align to be able to experience that: health, opportunity, flexibility, and yes, affordability. We didn't break the bank, but it was certainly beyond the means that Will or I could have afforded in our graduate school days. The green hues of grasses, mosses and forbs, and grey rock in the form of jagged spires, avalanche chutes and valley bottom we were walking on was unlike any landscape I've had time to stomp around in, but Will was a bit more comfortable with it. Turns out, glassing white sheep on that backdrop is a bit like locating skid marks on fresh porcelain. However, finding a legal ram (8 years of age, double broomed, or full curl) was the challenge. And for every band of sheep, you can glass for three miles and a few thousand feet out, you can almost assure yourself you'll be walking most of that distance to find out that none of the boys are quite up to snuff.

However, fortune was again on our side. On the evening of the first day of hunting (no hunting on the same day you fly!), Will



spotted a likely candidate on a mountain a mile and change from camp. We climbed in the tent and had a plan for the morning. Heavy D was in the same bed that morning. So, no problem: Will said we just have to walk down the river valley below him and his cadre, get around their collective vision, ascend the next drainage and its waterfall, trudge to the back side of the mountain, climb it, and then descend the knife ridge to hunt the sheep from above. Simple enough.

I had doubts at times, but it turned out to be one of the most meticulous and most fun stalks I have ever been on. We left the tent around 6:30 in the morning and summited the mountain around 2. Slowly descending that knife ridge on a mountain made of crumbling, vertical shale the shape and size of nature's arrow points is something I will never forget, and consequently avoid doing for close to as long. Will moved like a mountain goat and never wavered, though I might have a time or two. We eventually worked until we saw the rams bedded on small bench the size of a pickup bed with 1000+' avalanche chutes trickling off either side; there were now 5. Eventually the rams got to moving, and three of them actually spent 25 minutes beating their heads against each other. As they worked off the skier's right side of the ridge. We worked down the ridge to where they were bedded and eventually located the big one coming out of a chute within 125 yards of us. For two hours we were there as we studied the ram, or he dropped out of sight into the



bottoms of the avalanche chutes. Ultimately, we were satisfied and when he bedded at 80 yards, a single shot ended our looking.

Bittersweet, to be sure. It was an earlier than anticipated conclusion, and taking a life is never something either of us relish in any way. This one was particularly difficult because the challenges presented by these sheep and the gnarly place they call home, makes it seem unfitting that they should go out this way.

As is common in sheep hunting, gravity made things interesting. He tumbled several hundred feet down one of the avalanche chutes, so it took a bit to get to him. However, we located him and had enough light for some pictures and close to enough to get him processed for the trip down. Will said he had a route scouted going down, and I had no reason to doubt him now. Still don't. It was steep, crumbly, dark, and little dicey, but ultimately a clean descent. Even made some nice figure 8s on the scree. Around midnight we hit the creek bottom and made a quick meat cache before trudging back up the valley to Camp 1.

Because we got the ram on day 2 of an 8-day hunt, we had some time on our hands. We soaked in the country that



following day, reflected on the opportunity we were granted, took care of meat and the cape, and experimented with starting fires from soggy willow and cooking sheep ribs with ramen noodle packets. The fire wasn't the finest, but the ribs just might have been. In the following days, we slowly perfected stone cooking tenderloins over a fire.

We tooled around a few more days picking berries, watching grizzly bears get fat, finding moose sheds and commiserating about what a few days straight of dehydrated meals will do to a fella's gastrointestinal tract. By the



time we left, we had also read the aging/evaluating rams guide in the Alaska Fish and Game handbook daily to see if we thought the ram was gonna "count" (turns out it wasn't even close to not being legal, as it was a magnificent ram).

And of sheep hunting in general and this place in particular, I am not sure there is any going back.

As an Alaskan resident, I'm sure Will would like to give it a go again. For me, I don't think so. Not only that the opportunity doesn't come along that often, but also that perhaps it wouldn't be so special if it did. We didn't see a single other human for 10 days. It just seems that if I were to go again, it would ever so slightly tip the odds against someone else of having that same solitude. An odd paradox of finiteness really; knowing that you were extremely lucky to have gotten to, and thinking everyone should as well, but if more people did, would it be the same?

And to the idea of a once in a lifetime experience. If I were to luck out again, would it enhance the experience that "first" or tarnish it. I'm not sure I want to find out. I will say, I plan to commit a lot of my personal time and resources to see that we have wild sheep around, so folks can hopefully be pitted with that conundrum.



Members are encouraged to submit photos for publication in the RAMPAGE as well as our website galleries by emailing to: [rampage@wyomingwildsheep.org](mailto:rampage@wyomingwildsheep.org).



RHS LM Eric Johnson  
Colorado Mule Deer.



LM Steve Haberland  
Columbian Blacktail Deer.



RHS LM Zach McDermott  
Desert Sheep.



Father & Son!  
Jeff Brock(r) with RHS LM Steve Brock  
Yukon Moose



RHS LM Steve Brock  
Colorado Mule Deer.



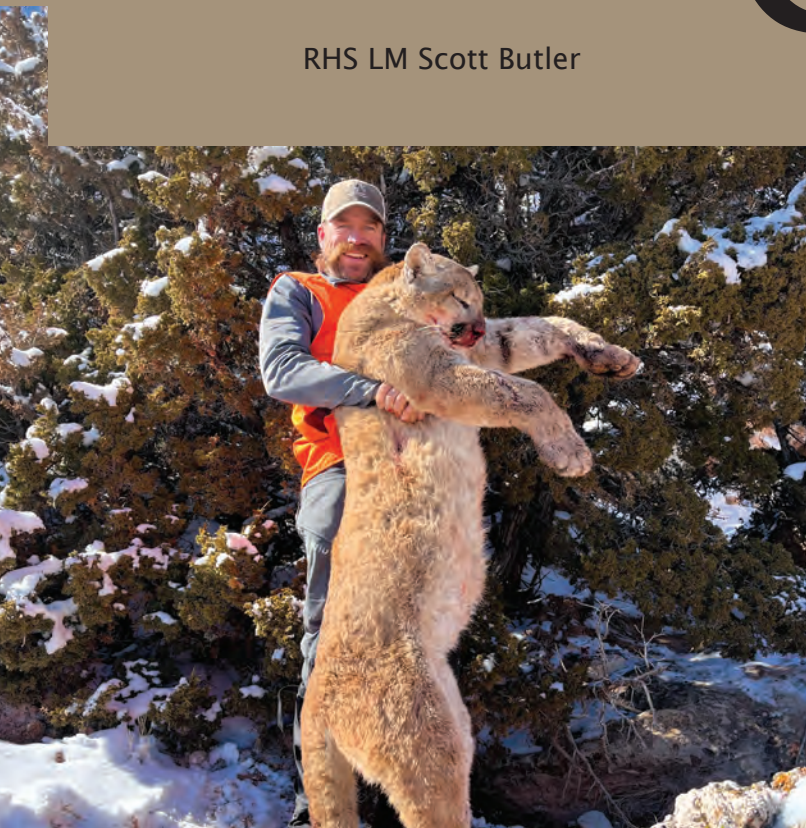
Ryan Foutz  
Colorado Elk

# Member's Gallery

RHS LM Bralli Clifford  
Romanian Mouflon

## BLAST FROM THE PAST

DO YOU KNOW THIS GUY? (Answer on Page 5)



RHS LM Scott Butler



RHS LM Rob Englot  
Alberta Pronghorn



# “A Ram on a Pedestal”

## My Sheep Hunt - An Experience of a Lifetime

By: Kim Lutz

The success of my sheep hunt was not measured by killing a ram, but in accepting and overcoming all the challenges a Wyoming sheep hunt presents. This once in a lifetime experience and challenge was a blessing. Taking it on to the fullest was my reward and my story. When I left for my sheep hunt, the only thing family, friends, and anyone else that knew I had drawn a coveted Wyoming bighorn sheep tag wanted or asked of me was to share photos of “my” harvested ram. That seemed the norm and became a subconscious pressure to present a picture of a dead sheep to show the “success” of my hunt. This was constantly lingering in my mind. Being a taxidermist, I have seen lots of beautiful sheep and was certainly excited about the possibility of doing taxidermy on “my” ram. Heck, I already had planned on doing a pedestal shoulder mount and knew right where he would be displayed in our home. I love the hunt and all that it means to hunt - to be intent on the moment of each step, the movement of my body as I watch the ground for tracks, droppings, disturbed brush or grass, and listen to everything around me. I listen for the

sounds of a twig breaking, rocks falling, and animals moving. I watch for shadows, change in wind directions, smells. I am experiencing the moment with all my senses. It is an amazing feeling trying to become one with nature. To truly be aware of your surroundings. There is nothing better than that for your soul! I waited almost 20 years to draw a tag, and not just any tag, but the formidable Area 9 tag, the most challenging, most difficult area for my once in a lifetime sheep hunt. I had decided to go with friend, guide, and outfitter - Dustin Stetter. He knows this area better than anyone - and he has great stock for the long trek into the heart of the area. This increased my chances of finding a ram. I was already in pretty good shape but wanted to be in really, really good shape to be able to climb any mountain as many times as needed and pack “my” ram off from wherever we ventured to find him on the mountain. I was dedicated to a healthy diet and cardio and strength workouts daily. I got myself in the best physical shape and condition in my adult life, at age 58. I would go out to the country and

find shooting scenarios to practice with my rifle doing lots of uphill shots and practice setting up a quick rest on my backpack in a prone position. All the while, picturing the situation in my mind, breathing, and taking a good shot. I did whatever I could think of to be prepared for what was to come. My husband, Daryl, and I planned on being in sheep camp on opening day, August 15th. Having him with me was an important part of the memories to be made. We planned on a 10-day hunt which would begin with a 20-mile horse/mule ride in. Words cannot even begin to describe the beauty we witnessed everywhere we looked. It was truly breathtaking. We had an amazing time experiencing the views from what felt like were on top of the world and being where relatively few others had ever been. The rugged terrain was challenging and gave us a humble feeling as we climbed where the sheep do. The beauty of the mountains came in many forms - the rocks, trees, sounds, glacier fed streams, high elevation lakes, scents, sunrises, and sunsets, and of course the feeling of solitude. But the Wrath of



Kim and Daryl Lutz

Mother Nature’s weather was a challenge in itself. Every day provided a stage for new adventure, lasting friendships were being formed along with memories that could not even be imagined unless you experienced them. I loved every minute of the hunt and never took a moment for granted. Every day I woke up with the hope of getting “my” ram. On this hunt, we climbed to over 12,000 feet - several times!!! At times it felt like we were looking down on Gannet Peak because we were so high. God’s glorious vistas were mesmerizing. After several days of glassing, I had a ram in my scope at 300 yards. My rifle rested on my pack, and it was a flat shot. The ram had no idea we were there. It was a perfect situation... almost. There was a younger ram at his six and when I took the safety off to shoot, he stepped right in front of my sight. I put the safety back on and at that moment they trotted off through the rocks and disappeared never to be

found again. Pure excitement and disappointment all in one, in a moment of time. That is a combination of emotions that you struggle with. Part of what hunting is all about. A sheep did not get harvested this first 10-day trip, but everything you can imagine about what a hunt should be was in my bag. Perfect! While descending the mountain the last time on the first hunt, I assumed this

was my last chance on the mountain. But I was asked back!! Tentative dates were in play and the anxiousness continued. The “idea” was to be back up mid-September. Not too long to wait, but long enough to have life throw in its own challenges.

While preparing for the second hunt, I was dealing with vertigo and knew that was a no go if I was to be up at 12,000 plus feet after a sheep. Two days prior to meeting at the trailhead I took a bad fall hitting my face into a rock pile. I broke several posterior sinus bones that severed an artery. I ended up in the hospital for almost a week to control severe nose bleeds and pain. After being bed ridden in the hospital and then a week of recovery, I wasn’t sure what was going to happen next. I had convinced myself there would be no way I could make it back up to sheep camp in this shape. When people hear that you have a coveted sheep tag, they are willing to help with anything to help in your success in getting a ram. There are too many friends, family, and doctors to say names and I don’t want to leave anyone out so I will put



Sheep. Photo: Kim Lutz



Panorama View. Photo: Kim Lutz



Dustin Stetter, Kim Lutz, Daryl Lutz

alert to the possibility of seeing a ram. I kept wondering if my body was ready to endure the exertion required for a sheep hunt. I would take it slow, and I just prayed that everything had healed as the doctors said it had. The last thing I wanted was to cause concern and have something happen to get life flighted off the mountain. Your mind thinks about lots of things on a 20 mile horse ride.....

The next day after arriving at base camp, Dustin and I headed up the mountain. I was a bit slower at first, catching my breath and checking my nose. It was all good. No worries, I was going sheep hunting!! We glassed from our usual spot and about 3 o'clock in the afternoon we spotted a beautiful mature ram sunning himself on a rock with his front leg outstretched looking over his realm without a care in the world. He was the one I wanted - "my" ram! We headed in his direction; the hunt was on. I can't even describe the excitement and emotions that I was feeling as we worked quickly and carefully to get within a favorable distance of the ram. We made it to a side hill

opposite the ram. He was walking along his side of the mountain on what appeared to be a very vertical steep rock cliff. They are truly amazing

animals. The sun was getting lower, and it hit his full curl horns and they glowed like they had their own beam of light. He turned his head slowly and the horns just glowed with light. This was the most beautiful thing I have ever witnessed. He was the largest ram I had ever seen. He was beyond anything I could have imagined. At the beginning of the season, I told Dustin I am not trophy hunting and would be very happy with any mature ram. So, to see this majestic beast was incredible. We kept inching our way to where we could set up for a shot, but he was still too far away, and we couldn't get in position for a clear shot - we weren't sure what to do. And then we could not believe what was happening...the ram started working his way in our direction and down the rocks. He was still too far and we couldn't get any closer without becoming exposed. The unimaginable happened, he continued to come down the mountain. He came within 350 yards. We were on a pretty steep side hill and had a hard time getting a good rest on my pack. But finally, I felt confident in taking a shot. He stood broadside and stopped, and I fired and missed - twice!! I was shaken up and couldn't believe I

missed. He presented himself to me again - I fired and again I missed. He had no idea what was going on. He never spooked, He just walked slowly away back up his mountain with not even a hair out of place. By now the sun was setting and he was way too far. He walked away like nothing had ever happened. He had no idea that on the opposite facing ridge someone was shaking up and frustrated and upset and just at a loss. How could I have missed after all that practice? But, there was a level of excitement, anticipation and reality that you cannot replicate when you are preparing. The moment I realized my hunt was over and my chance to harvest "my" ram, this most magnificent animal, had passed I was beside myself. Watching him walk away back up to his place in this world will forever be in my mind. Knowing "my" ram is on the mountain, or pedestal if you will, is actually one of the most peaceful things when I look back at my hunt. "My" ram lives on and is thriving. This realization didn't come to me until later as my emotions were all over the place. It was getting dark fast, the temperature was dropping,

and we still had to get down off the mountain. We gathered our gear and walked off the mountain in the dark and silence. There were so many things going through my mind. I had asked God for a good clean shot. Maybe he knew something we didn't? I asked myself this question as I tried to make some sense of what happened or did not happen. There was a snowstorm coming, so maybe if I had killed the ram, we would have put ourselves in danger the next day getting it out or maybe not even been able to get it out. We will never know, but things do happen for a reason, and I do trust my higher power. Still, all that rationale didn't help with the emotions and feelings that I let myself and others down - remember all those folks back home that wanted pictures of "my" ram. I was trying to wrap my head around what just happened and how I would deal with this final opportunity- this once in a lifetime chance to harvest a



Kim Glassing

are living in a pup tent trying to stay warm and get home with all your fingers and toes, you have lots of time to think. The more I thought about my experience the more I came to peace with the fact that the most magnificent, beautiful animal I had ever seen, living in the most incredible place on earth, let me enter his kingdom and share it with him and all its glory, and the ram, "my" ram, walked away to live another day on his mountain. I was blessed enough to witness it and the visions of him walking away unscathed brought peace to my soul. I was good with the fact that I didn't harvest a ram. But, I do have a collage of photos and memories that will be with me for the rest of my life. A picture of a dead ram does not show the life-long memories, the vistas you glass, ram(s) in the scope, the adventure, the challenges, the accomplishments, the exertion, the emotions, the tears and smiles, and the ever-lasting friendships and bonds that were formed. My hunt was very successful. One of the most exhilarating experiences was when Dustin got me in that moment that every sheep hunter dreams of - I had "my" ram in my scope! In the end, "my" ram still lives and remains on nature's pedestal - the mountain!

Wyoming bighorn sheep. It didn't happen right away, but when you are at sheep camp and a winter snowstorm blankets the ground with more than a couple feet of snow and you



Mountain Sun. Photo: Kim Lutz



Snow. Photo: Kim Lutz



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## *A Little Fun Goes a Long Way*



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# “The Elusive Ram of 2023”

By: Dale Baysinger

After 32 years of applying for a bighorn ram, it was finally my turn. I was having trouble with one of my ankles and had been in rehabilitation all summer trying to get in “sheep shape”, the term coined by my physical therapy crew. After several months of trying to get stronger for the wilderness trip, I had a follow-up with my doctor who gave me an injection to help relieve pain. While there, the doctor expressed great concern because I was having foot drops. I was referred to the back doctor and after the MRI, it was realized that I had major back problems. Nerves in my back were pinched off from collapsing vertebrae. This meant that no spinal fluid was getting to my lower back. Dr. Harris at Premier Bone and Joint stated that surgery was the only option if I wanted to avoid the rest of my life in a wheelchair and paralyzed from the waist

down. Thankfully, the Game and Fish approved a deferral for the following year after reviewing my diagnosis.

After months of recovering from back surgery, my back was ready for the hunt. However, my ankle was still a problem. I had little control of it. My ankle kept rolling and it was unstable. I needed an ankle fusion, but was waiting to do that until after the hunt. With the wilderness and wild terrain needed to get to the rams, Dr. Gueramy at Premier Bone and Joint fitted my ankles for braces.

Excited and as ready as I could be, I loaded up to go on the hunt of a lifetime. I met with my guides, Lost Creek Outfitters, at the trail head. The amazing staff packed the mules for our 7-10-mile ride to camp. After riding through the most amazing wilderness I had ever seen, we arrived at camp. At camp, we had a wonderful meal together and retreated to get a good night’s sleep. The next morning at sunrise, I was awakened by the smell of pine trees and bacon. I was a little sore from the ride in, but was too excited to care! My guides suggested I stay in camp and rest up while they went out to scout for a ram.



Dale and BJoe with Dale's Ram



The Perfect Shot

After listening to the rushing river and enjoying the views in camp all day, I was excited for Doc and BJoe to get back to camp and let me know what they found. They rode in at sunset with great news and big smiles. They located a small herd of rams that they knew we could get close to. After dinner and a plan for the next day, I slept very little because of the excitement. I checked my gear many times and lay in my tent until the sun came up. After breakfast, we were on our way to see the rams. It was another 3-hour ride into even more breathtaking country. BJoe told me to follow him into some extreme terrain. I asked where the trail was-

*And he smiled and stated to “lay over the saddle horn and hold on.”*

After we broke out of the timberline, the canyon leveled

out. We continued for another hour around the bottom of the peaks. There was no cover and loose rocky slopes. At this point, we are 1000 yards from the herd. BJoe and Doc walked bent over to stay below the skyline and not be spotted by the rams. I didn’t have that option because of my back and ankle, so I army crawled to the rocky ridge.

The bighorn sheep were bedded down in a rock pile 500 yards away. I set up, waiting for the rams to stand and graze for a better shot. When they started grazing, the wind had picked up, clouds moved in, and the temperature dropped. BJoe and Doc were telling me the yardage. I dialed in my scope for the yardage and crosswind. I couldn’t get steady because I was chilled from the drop in the temperature. I squeezed off my first shot and it was too high. The rams stood still, confused by where the shot came from. I adjusted my scope and squeezed off a second shot. I missed him by inches. At this point the rams started moving up the cliffs towards the top. BJoe and Doc were reading the yardage and



Dale Crawling Over Rocks

the rams had moved out to 700 yards. I decided to move my rifle to a different location and shoot off a backpack, using it as a sandbag. This was my last chance before the rams were over the top of the peaks. Within seconds, the wind quit blowing and it turned sunny. I could hear BJoe’s voice in the background telling me to shoot. In that moment, I knew I had to take the shot. I readjusted my scope and made the shot of a lifetime. The ram fell 30

feet and stopped on a small shelf. We were all jumping up and down and high fiving. BJoe looked at the ram again and expressed concern on where the ram landed and the reality of how we were supposed to get to him. Suddenly, we heard a crack that sounded like lightning. The crack was actually the sound of a rockslide caused by all the other rams going over the top. The ram fell off the ledge and slid on top of the rock pile like a conveyor belt to the bottom. We couldn’t believe what we saw. We were able to ride the mules up to the ram. After returning to camp, we were caping the 160-class ram for a shoulder mount when we realized the shot was a perfect shot, right between the eyes. A perfect end to a perfect once in a lifetime experience.

*A special thanks to my wife, Dr. Gueramy, Dr. Harris, Teagan, Jacob, Jordan, Jill and all the staff at Premier Bone and Joint, and congratulations to BJoe for his 200th successful guided ram hunt.*



Doc, Dale, and BJoe

# “It’s More Than Just Chapped Lips”

By: Peach Van Wick, Assistant State Wildlife Veterinarian

With Support From The Wyoming Game & Fish Department Veterinary Services Unit

You’re probably aware of several diseases that can affect Wyoming’s bighorn sheep herds, but there is one disease that may catch your eye when you’re hunting or viewing wild sheep: ORF. ORF (also known as “sore mouth” or “contagious ecthyma”) is a viral disease of sheep and goats caused by a poxvirus. This disease is the most common skin disease impacting domestic sheep and goats worldwide and has been documented in several wild species (e.g. bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and muskox). It causes crusty sores on the nose and mouth (primarily), teats, genitals, and above the hooves. In domestic animals, these sores usually resolve on their own within 6 weeks but can cause more serious issues based on the overall health of the animal, and result in secondary bacterial infections, etc. While present, sores on the mouth and nose may be very painful to the animal, which can result in decreased feeding, and sores near the hooves could lead to lameness. In affected lambs, nursing from their mothers may become challenging and lead to poor body condition.

Transmission usually occurs when an uninfected sheep comes in contact with an infected

sheep (they need direct animal contact); however, infectious material from scabs can contaminate the environment and surfaces (think feed troughs and mineral licks!) and result in disease spread. In domestic animals, nearly all animals in the herd or flock will develop the disease if they have never had ORF in their past. It’s very difficult to eliminate ORF from a group of animals once it is present, especially since the virus can live in the environment (in a scab that has fallen off an infected sheep/goat) for months in the right conditions. In domestic animals, if they previously recovered from ORF, they appear to be resistant to future similar infections; however, introduction to new strain types or succumbing to an inactive infection (particularly if they’re struggling from inadequate nutrition or other diseases) can lead to a clinically sick animal.



Diagnosis of ORF requires a sample of the affected skin (i.e., crusts from the sore) from the animal. Blood work can be done but only tells us if an animal was exposed to the virus and doesn’t indicate an active infection.

Can ORF be treated? In domestic animals, treatment is not very rewarding since ORF is a virus and doesn’t respond to antibiotics. They can receive supportive care (i.e., fluids, nutritional supplementation) – like what you’d get if you were home with the flu! In wildlife, it is not feasible to treat ORF in a supportive way (try telling a ram to drink plenty of water and to catch a few extra Zzz’s).

Can you or your pets get ORF? Yes! Orf is contagious to humans and can cause sores. This primarily occurs in people who work with domestic



sheep and goats; however, it could easily be spread from an infected bighorn sheep to a hunter when field-dressing a diseased carcass – a good reminder to wear gloves any time you’re dealing with wild animals! It’s also important to keep in mind that even though it’s rare, other animals – including cats and dogs – can get infected with ORF.

History of ORF in WY: ORF was first recognized in bighorn sheep in 1953 (Alberta, Canada). In Wyoming, ORF has been confirmed in the Absaroka (2014) and Whiskey Mountain (1986) bighorn sheep herds and has been suspected in several other herds across the state (Whiskey Mountain – 2010’s; Ferris-Seminole – late 1980’s/early 1990’s; Jackson – 2016). These outbreaks seem to be sporadic and resolved on their own.

Recent Suspect Cases: In Winter 2024, Wyoming Game and Fish Department’s Veterinary Services Unit started receiving calls and pictures from a couple of field biologists across the state, expressing concern of mouth sores observed on bighorn sheep. Several sheep on the National

ORF; however, paired with historical knowledge, the signs observed by biologists do suggest that ORF is a high possibility in these bighorn sheep. Other possible causes of mouth sores/lesions include bacterial or parasite infections, other viral infections (e.g. bluetongue), chemical or thermal burns, and trauma.

What you can do: Like with many diseases, preventing co-mingling of wild sheep with domestic sheep and goats is the most important goal in keeping bighorn sheep healthy! If you are recreating in bighorn sheep habitat, avoid taking boots and other gear that you’ve worn around domestic animals. If you see a bighorn sheep exhibiting signs of illness (e.g., mouth sores or other illnesses such as respiratory disease), make note of the location and contact your regional Wyoming Game and Fish Department office, biologist, or warden.

As always, we thank you for caring about the health of bighorn sheep!

Elk Refuge were exhibiting clinical signs consistent with ORF, but none were sampled for laboratory confirmation (photos courtesy of Zachary Hunter, USFWS). As of the time of this writing, the clinical signs appear to be resolving.

Additionally, since the beginning of the year one sheep from the Ferris-Seminole herd and two sheep from the Laramie Peak herd were noted by biologists to have suspicious mouth sores. One sample from a ram in the Laramie Peak herd was confirmed to be ORF by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department’s Wildlife Health Laboratory, but the others remain observational only and therefore, ORF was not diagnosed. No other suspects have been noted to date.

It’s important to keep in mind that sighting of mouth sores in wildlife is not enough evidence to definitively diagnose



# “The Affliction”

By: Adam Millburn

*Jack O'Connor once wrote, “There is no halfway, after his first exposure, a man is either a sheep hunter or he isn't. He either falls under the spell of sheep hunting and sheep country or he won't be caught dead on another sheep mountain”.*

What Mr. O'Connor didn't go on to say was how long after the first exposure one's symptoms become apparent.

My first contact with the disease was in the Northwest Territories, and although the hunt ended with a ram, it was also littered with blisters, bears, bugs, and beauty. It was the beauty of the overall experience that slowly allowed the sheep affliction to overtake me. At first, I thought I was immune, but in the end, I too became consumed by sheep fever.



Photo Credit: Adam Millburn

Since that first hunt, I have been fortunate to hunt sheep many more times with each experience vastly different than the rest. Sheep and the hope of possibly hunting them again has improved my health and probably extended my life. Knowing I may once again have the opportunity

to traverse their haunts is humbling and forces me to never totally let my guard down.

This past January, I had the amazing privilege to hunt desert sheep with Emilio Espino at the legendary La Palmosa Ranch in Coahuila, Mexico. Through their tireless effort, Emilio and his family have brought desert sheep back to a part of Mexico they hadn't been present in since about 1970. The Espino's didn't just bring a few sheep back either, as the mountains at La Palmosa presently harbor a bustling herd of nearly 700.

On this particular hunt my daughter, Savannah, and son, Blaine would be joining me. Blaine had already been diagnosed with the fever and I am confident that Savannah was also infected, with this being her inaugural march into sheep country.

The first day of the hunt, we took a detour to allow Savannah



Photo Credit: Adam Millburn

to search for her first mule deer, which ended up being a great decision. Savannah was able to get within 200 yards of a beautiful buck and make a perfect shot with her brother watching over her shoulder. Emilio and I looked on with great excitement as the stalk and shot were executed to perfection. The smile on her face exemplified how she felt about the entire experience.

Day two dawned cool and still,

with a plan to glass an area known as “La Cola de Lagarto” (The Lizard's Tail). The Tail was known to hold sheep and our task was to find one of the old warriors La Palmosa is so well known for. Some ten-day sheep hunts can evaporate without the sighting of a legal ram. However, on this morning, my guide Juan, with the eyes of an eagle, spotted a beautiful ram feeding in a difficult spot to approach. Options were discussed and

a plan to climb and close the distance was developed.

With a favorable wind beginning to build, the decision was made to get to the ridge above the ram and begin the long stalk. Several hours later would find us closing in only to discover the ram had detected something out of the ordinary going on. With his eyes burning through every bush we hid behind; it was becoming clear that the time to act was now. Juan quickly helped me set up for a shot at the ram that was certainly moments away from heading off to parts unknown.

Reflecting on my past experience of harried misses and other miscellaneous blunders, I quickly set up for the shot, but made sure to not rush any part of the process at the expense of quality. Once I settled the crosshairs on the ram and knew I could harvest him, I took a brief moment to mentally acknowledge all that was done by so many people to make this moment possible.

After the trigger broke over and the report of the rifle slowly faded, we were all silent, reflecting on different emotions caused by our myriad of lifetime experiences. In the wake of the shot lay a beautiful old ram who spent his ten years in a setting made habitable for sheep by a family who went above and beyond with the goal of leaving the world a better place than how they found it.

*Author:  
Adam Millburn  
February 1, 2024  
Desert Ram 179" & 41"  
Left Horn Length  
Coahuila, Mexico*



Photo Credit: Adam Millburn

Photo Credit: Adam Millburn

**BIG HORN HUNTING IS OUR PASSION**



At Lost Creek Outfitters we offer guided hunts for rocky mountain big horn sheep, mountain goat, elk, mule deer, and antelope. We offer hunts in two locations, in Cody on the Shoshone Forest and on private land near Casper. Our mission is to maintain our commitment of being a small high quality, hunting and pack-trip, operation. We strive to be the best outfitters in the business, not 'just one of the good ones.' We truly value and cherish our clients and the great friends they become. We want their experience with us to be prized for a life time.

We are strictly a fair chase, legal operation who loves the wildlife and the opportunities we have to pursue them. We study and live with the game, we hunt and love sharing our experiences and knowledge with others.



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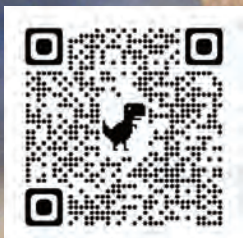
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