

The RAMPAGE



**Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation
Spring 2025**



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- Greg McHale
Greg McHale's Wild Yukon

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The **RAM**PAGE

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Magazine Editor - Kendra Young

Advertisement Information

For more information about including information or advertisements in the WY WSF RamPage, contact Kendra@wyomingwildsheep.org.

The RamPage is a biannual publication, with submission deadlines in February and September each year.

Mailing Information

Address Changes: Submit address changes to Info@wyomingwildsheep.org or (307) 213-0998.

Each membership address will receive one mailed copy of the RamPage. If you would like to receive more copies contact RamPage@wyomingwildsheep.org

Front Cover Photograph: Mark Gocke, Wyoming Game and Fish Department



Photo: Dan Quinn

2025-2026 CALENDAR

June 5-8, 2025
WSF Chapter & Affiliates
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

June 6 -7 2025
Annual Convention
Casper, Wyoming

June 19-20, 2025
Wyoming Big Horn Sheep Summit
Burgess Junction, Wyoming

December 5-6, 2025
Board/Membership Meeting
Saratoga, Wyoming

January 22-24, 2026
WSF Sheep Show
Reno, Nevada

2024-25 Governor's License Sales Totals

2025 Sale Location	2024 LICENSE SALES	2025 LICENSE SALES
WSF	\$195,000	\$215,000
Eastern	\$185,000	\$221,000
Midwest	\$185,000	
Iowa	\$185,000	
WY	\$190,000	
Total	\$940,000	\$436,000

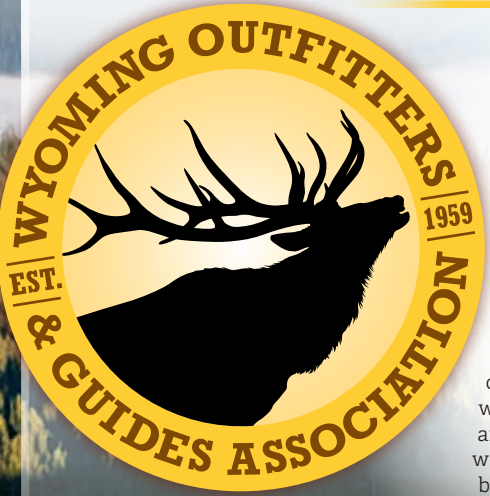
Wyoming WSF would like to thank and recognize Life Members who have signed up since the Fall 2024 RamPage was published. A complete listing of WY-WSF Life Members is available for viewing on the WY-WSF web page, under the "Life Members" tab. If you are interested in signing up, or upgrading to Life Member 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!

New Life Members

- | | |
|-----|-----------------|
| 724 | Mary Owens |
| 725 | Samuel Hays |
| 726 | Joseph Vallina |
| 727 | Jock Brodie |
| 728 | Jeffrey Frost |
| 729 | Daniel Smith |
| 730 | Julie O'Connell |
| 731 | David Clark |

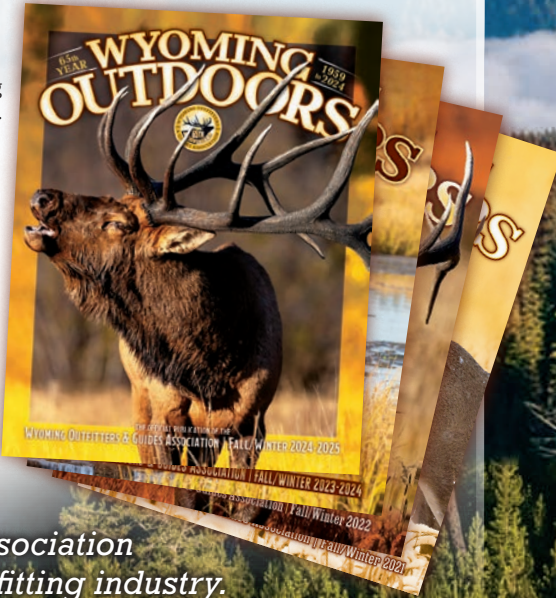
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Please Join Us:

WYOGA ANNUAL CONVENTION DATES IN CASPER, WY: April 3–5, 2025 • April 9–11, 2026

Built to Last: Expanding our Convention on a Legacy of Success

By Katie Cheesbrough, Executive Director

After celebrating our 40th Annual Convention in June 2024 with a record number of attendees, the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation is shaking up the event for 2025. As our organization grows in membership, fundraising, and impact, we have decided to host this year's convention in Casper to accommodate a larger crowd and a bigger vision. The central location will accommodate our members who live across the state while enabling us to grow the event into a bigger space with new opportunities.

By holding the 2025 Convention at the Ford Wyoming Center in Casper, we can open the event to a public sportsmen's exposition on Saturday, June 7th, from 10 am to 5 pm. This Expo will highlight local and regional outdoor companies, agencies, products, services, and educational opportunities. We hope hosting this public event will introduce more people to our organization and mission while celebrating Wyoming's incredible outdoor opportunities and way of life. This will also extend and expand our Youth Experience, which will continue to be hosted by our partners at the National Bighorn Sheep Center and Dr. Ryan Brock from the National Wild Sheep Foundation.

If you don't love change, other aspects of our convention will be familiar and as fun as ever! We will continue to have our Friday Night Rendezvous, the Life Member Breakfast, our membership meeting, and a spectacular Saturday Night Banquet where we can gather and raise funds for Wyoming's

bighorn sheep.

This event is essential to our mission of "putting and keeping wild sheep on the mountain" in Wyoming, as this is where we do the bulk of our fundraising. We pride ourselves on being an organization that puts your money to work in a transparent and impactful way. As we look forward to the future of our organization, it's always helpful to look back and see what we are building on.

Since we started tracking grant-in-aid (GIA) funds in 2005, the WY-WSF has granted over \$2 million to on-the-ground bighorn sheep projects. In 2024 alone, we approved over \$320,000 in GIA funds. As I reported in our last issue, the WY-WSF was one of the nonprofit organizations that made the most significant funding contributions to Wyoming Game and Fish Department habitat projects implemented in 2023, with \$118,505 from WY-WSF spent across the state.

Our esteemed Deputy Director,

Dean DiJenno, analyzed our performance as a nonprofit with our most current tax documents and found that we put 91% of the money we raise back on the ground through our GIA program. We also continue to grow in membership, outreach, partnerships, and as a trusted sporting nonprofit organization in the state. You all should be incredibly proud of the organization you have built and what we are collectively accomplishing here in Wyoming. Let's keep it going!

Please join us in Casper for the weekend of June 6-7, 2025, to gather with old friends, welcome new friends, swap stories, celebrate our hunting heritage, and continue the important work of raising money for bighorn sheep conservation in Wyoming!



Bralli Clifford. Ibex. Turkey.



Scott Butler



Justin Orr



Steve Cunic



Casuarina Sea Breeze Vacation. Tera Butler.



Chance Butler

President's Message

By: Zach McDermott

Since becoming President, it has been one of my personal missions on how we continue to develop and expand our financial footing. Our ultimate goal is to create fiscal viability for another 40 years and beyond. I like to think of it as WY-WSF will be sustainable for many generations to come.

About 3 years ago, I approached Mike Porter/ Ashton Thomas with the idea of establishing another investment fund to go along with the three we currently have: General, Life Member, and Conservation. We discussed creating some type of endowment or legacy type fund providing our members a donation conduit for endowed assets. Allowing them to contribute through a will or trust, retirement account and stock gifts, or even direct cash. We reviewed the model WSF created with their Legacy Fund. After several discussions with WSF and a few of their investment consultants, we developed a modified version more specific to WY-WSF and our membership.

In late Spring 2024, we finalized the Endowment Fund

Policy. As part of the Policy, a Board of Trustees (BOT) is to be appointed having fiduciary responsibility of overseeing the assets of the Endowment Fund. The BOT is to consist of two current Board members in an officer position and three members at large. After a lengthy research process, the BOT has been finalized. The members are Bralli Clifford and Zach McDermott from the Board and the members at large are Greg Clifford, Dean DiJenno, and Pete Burchfield.

The BOT has begun working on the Investment Policy Statement (IPS) in collaboration with

Ashton Thomas. We will be conducting our first meetings in March and April to finalize the IPS and at the June Meeting, we will unveil the official Fund Policy and IPS.

At the time of print, we are happy to announce we have received our first donations exclusively for the Endowment.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the Summer Expo and Banquet in Casper on June 6th and 7th, and will be available to answer any questions you may have regarding the Endowment Fund.



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The Sheep Hunt

By: Derrick Dietz



Growing up in southeastern Wyoming; outdoor activities including hunting, fishing, working, and playing had always been a part of life. Elk hunting was always a big deal and I got to participate from a very young age. Talks about hunting, seeing elk, bighorn sheep, and moose were always inspiring.

While in high school, I came to know I would need a good plan in order to afford a college education. Planning ahead, I joined the Wyoming National Guard, attending Army Basic Training between my junior and senior year with Advanced Individual Training following high school graduation. Attending weekend drills and summer training while enrolled in college, I was able to graduate and find a career in law enforcement.

Several years later, having left the military after completing the enlistment obligation, I decided to re-enlist and joined the US Army Reserve. I missed

the challenge and sense of accomplishment I had from past military experiences. This also seemed like a great way to bring in a little extra income for the family. After recommendations from the Company Commander and First-Sergeant, I applied and was selected for Direct Commissioning as an Officer.

After a lengthy illness, my father passed away in early 2005. He had not been well enough for several years to consider hunting bighorns and now we would not get the chance to have the bighorn sheep hunt we had talked about so often.

The first deployment to Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, came in 2005. I was notified I would be deploying just a few short months after my father had passed away. Several of the soldiers from our home Army Reserve unit were selected to be cross-trained and deployed with another Reserve Unit. Those soldiers and I would

spend the next fifteen months becoming like family. However dysfunctional it may be, still like family. I would spend a lot of time thinking of my own family at home, intertwined with memories of my own father and our time together. The most pleasant and comforting of those all, seeming to all involve hunting and fishing.

There were memorable times. Some even funny, as you think back. Hunkered down in a bunker as in-coming rounds exploded sporadically and everyone telling jokes! Other times, taking a little time to feel the calm and beauty of the night desert, just contemplating. I recall one night thinking about my favorite Bible verse; Joshua 1:9. A pendant of which is still attached to my dog tags.

Even though knowing that your own home relationships are suffering, you help other soldiers. If you want to feel better with yourself, go help someone else, right? Listening



to and supporting them as best you can because they miss home life terribly. However, trying to figure out just how to tactfully explain to a young male soldier how his fiancé, whom he hasn't seen in 8 months, could be 6 months pregnant... Oy.

Soon, we return home. Settling back into our lives. It's time to get back outdoors. Especially since returning meant being divorced soon after.

I came to the end of the law enforcement career. After twenty years, time to find something else to pay the bills. Then in 2009, shortly after assuming command of the local Army Reserve Unit, another call comes in. Guess who gets another fun filled 12 months of sun, sand, scorpions and camel spiders with a few rockets, mortars, and some small arms fire to keep things interesting.

Part way through the deployment, something started to feel different. Physically something wasn't right. The Army doc didn't seem to know what

was going on and said I had a choice. Tough it out a few months until I was back Stateside at my next assignment or get a medical referral to Germany. Think I'll wait.

Once back Stateside and at the new assignment in Virginia, I was still having symptoms. Having trouble with balance, fatigue, unexplained pain, memory, weird vision issues, and walking just to identify a few. Physical challenges seemed to be coming on more strongly and quickly all the time. After some testing with the eye doctor, I was told I was being referred to a neurological specialist as it appeared I had Multiple Sclerosis (MS).



The volunteers at PHWFF were terrific folk! They would take the WTU soldiers out for fishing events and be there not just to teach fishing or fly tying, but were sometimes an ear when troubles needed to be talked out. Even just letting us have a bit of contemplative time while enjoying the outdoors. Something so simple can be so calming.

After returning home, I found myself pretty alone. My young, pre-teen, son Jacob, had chosen to live with me and my teen daughter, Danielle, was often around too. Still, issues with MS were presenting daily challenges. I always felt better when being outdoors and spending quiet time, sometimes in prayer, sometimes listening for a reply. What is my purpose now? I wasn't really stable enough to go fishing by myself due to the MS and there wasn't a PHWFF program nearby. Could I start a local PHWFF program?

It was during this time that I met Dan Currah, a co-founder



Neurology confirmed and diagnosed the MS. I was transferred to a Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) while the Army began the long medical review and out-processing. It was during this time I was introduced to a program called Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing (PHWFF). A program for injured active duty or disabled veterans to help with physical and emotional healing through fly fishing and related activities. I felt as though God had sent me a lifeline.



of the Wyoming-based Hunting with Heroes (HwH) program. HwH was also a veteran program whereby disabled veterans could be selected to receive hunting licenses for antelope, deer, elk, moose or even bighorn sheep that people had returned or donated back to the State for use by a disabled person or disabled veteran through a certified veteran hunting organization. We found that by helping each other, we could help our programs grow and reach more disabled veterans. I again had a feeling that I was helping myself by helping others find activities that gave them a sense of accomplishment and happiness.

I also re-connected with an old high school friend, Randy Svalina. Randy is the type of man most men wish they could be like. He has more heart than most could hope to have. A man I am proud to call a friend. He has faced some very serious health issues, so I knew he understood. He is also a man of strong faith and has even pastored a small church. We began planning our elk hunting trip and come fall, set up a perfect camp for a couple of "getting older and bit crippled up" guys. The Sunday

name was Tami and she was also a vet. We met again at a HwH event and then a fishing trip with PHWFF. Cut to the chase, a couple of years later we were married and the preacher officiating the ceremony was none other than my friend Randy. Blessed with a beautiful bride and the bonus of gaining another son, Wyatt.

One afternoon, I got a call from Dan Currah. "Hey buddy, have you ever been sheep hunting?" I told him I had not. "You want to go on a sheep hunt?" he asks. My reply was something not fit for print but included "Yes!"

As we spoke, I told Dan that although a bighorn sheep hunt had been a dream for as long as I could remember, I would probably never draw a tag. I also told him that with MS and the mobility issues, I would not be able to go "crawling around the rocks" on a mountain side in order to find a sheep. Dan told me that the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation (WY WSF) was co-sponsoring a bighorn sheep hunt with the assistance of Hunting with Heroes for a disabled veteran. He said that this hunt would not entail "crawling around the rocks" to find a sheep.

morning before opening day, Randy, Jacob, me, and a couple other fellas started elk camp with a bit of outdoor Bible time. Hot coffee, a small fire, and elk bugling not far off. Thank you, Lord! This trip helped me come to the realization that while I may not be able to get around as I once had, I could still participate within my limits and still enjoy.

A few years later while at a veteran picnic event, I met a lady I thought seemed quite nice. Her



I replied, "Well, I don't know what I've done to deserve being considered for such an honor, but this is a once in a lifetime opportunity and I'm all in!"

After some emails and a few phone calls I connected with Steve Austin from HwH and Dean Dijenno, Deputy Director for WY WSF. We spoke a lot over the next few weeks and a scouting trip was planned for mid-August. I came to learn that Steve had also been the recipient of a Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation sponsored hunt and now he was using this opportunity to represent Hunting with Heroes as a liaison to WY WSF to help pay it forward.

Scouting time came. Steve took me to meet Dave Mason, one of our hosts for the trip. We also met with Colten Galambas, the local Game Warden from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The four of us spent the day scouting the hunting area. The tag being issued was for a three-quarter curl, un-broomed ram. As luck would have it, we happened to find three magnificent rams that were perfect for my education about the differences in the rams. One was a regal looking full curl; the second a three-quarter curl

Spending some pre-hunt range time led to discovering some rifle issues. A call to Best of the West, led to a quick trip to Cody. The folks at Best of the West were some of the best people a guy could hope to meet. They put that rifle first in line and did some quick work to it. Had that rifle shooting right again in no time. Their customer service was no less than amazing!

Time to go hunting! Kurt Eisenach, a member of WY WSF, and Jason House, a HwH volunteer, met with Dave Mason and me. We used 4-wheelers and a side-by-side to get ourselves and gear up to an old cabin the property owners were allowing us to use during the hunt. We went out for the afternoon to look around a bit. Right off the bat, we see two nice rams! Regal looking creatures they were. Watching us watching them, they seemed unconcerned with our presence. Jason, Kurt, and I began talking more about the specifics of this hunt and the license requirements. The requirements included that the ram had to be less than $\frac{3}{4}$ curl. No brooming but a broken horn tip, if not broomed, would be acceptable. The purpose of this particular Type 2 license was to help with

that was broomed and the third was the three-quarter curl un-broomed ram. The type that this tag required. I got to spend the next 25 minutes looking at the rams as Warden Galambas explained how to measure and what to look for. The trio stayed as long as we wanted! They would mill about a bit giving us more opportunity to study them and the differences in them. What an awesome experience!

What trip would be complete without some firearm issues?



the conservation and health of the sheep herds in the area. The biologist had determined that these young rams would be more likely to leave the area looking for breeding opportunities since there were already a large number of mature rams in the population. When the younger rams leave, the likelihood of them contracting diseases and spreading that to the other herds increases. By hunting these specific rams, we were helping preserve those herds.

The next day we started early and began seeing rams right away. We started to realize why this hunt was going to be difficult. The rams we saw were all well over ¾ curl. As handsome as they looked, and would be a fine trophy for any hunter, they were too big! We needed to find smaller rams. Who would have thought that would become an issue?

While heading to look at another, Kurt received a message that if we are able to fill this tag, Swann Studios Taxidermy has confirmed that they would donate a mount of the sheep for this hunt! Amazing news! Now, can we find the bighorn we need?

As the day progressed, we found ourselves using the spotting scope and photo adapter to take pictures of the sheep to be able to draw the line from the front horn base past the back corner of the eye to the horn. If the horn crossed the line, he would be too big. We found one that looked like he might be the right size, but questioned one side as to if it would be broomed. Why not ask the Game Warden? We went to the spot that had a little cell service and sent a photo asking “if this ram would meet the requirements?” A call to another resource got us the “non-specific” answer of, “That possibly could be considered broomed.” Aargh! More scouting led us to find

a couple of herds of ewes and lambs and even more full-grown rams. Then a group of five rams a long way off. This group had what seemed to be at least three rams that would be legal for us. The sun hung low, so we would have to check on them tomorrow. On the trip back to the cabin, we got the text message answer from the warden, “Not that one.”

The next morning, we had our plan! We left to go find “The Five”. On top of the plateau, we set out on foot. Working our way around the ridge line, we found our lookout spot. The rams were there! They were resting under a small cliff face. Close to them were another group of 23 ewes and lambs. Since they were about 650 yards, we needed to be closer to be able to identify our legal ram.

Withdrawing from our concealed position, we began the long walk back and around the head of the draw. The wind in our favor, we headed toward the top cliff face. Our approach, quiet and stealthy, we worked into position. Peeking over the edge; slowly, quietly... Where did they go?! Looking up and down the draw, no rams. Oh look! Across the draw, all five of them, 150 yards from the first lookout spot! Had we waited, they would have come to us! Guess we’re walking all that way back.

Jason and Kurt led me back toward our original spot. By now I’m feeling pretty fatigued. Walking is less stable, but I’m still going. Jason signals us to get lower. We slowly work our way to him as he checks out the rams.

Two of the five are full-curl. Amazing to watch, but too big. Of the remaining three rams, two are close and one is easily legal. Jason sets up a shooting position for me to get into. For the next hour, we watch, judge, photograph, measure, and contemplate. We finally decide

that in order to be fully legal, and meet the intent of the license, we will target the smaller ram.

The first shot finds its mark. The ram takes a couple steps and stops. The other four slowly move off just a few yards away. As our ram starts to move, a second shot. The ram staggers as he starts over the rise. Just as the third shot is taken, the ram drops!

We gather our gear and work our way down to the ram. I can’t believe I have just fulfilled this lifelong dream! This is SO awesome! After a few photos, we prepare the carcass for the long pack out back to the ATV. As we load up, I’m feeling a bit overwhelmed. Memories of hunting with my own father, hunting with one of my sons, and hunting with friends. Standing together, Jason, Kurt and I take a moment to give thanks for this awesome moment and trip.

For the rest, I am grateful to Hunting with Heroes, the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, and the large number of people who volunteered their time, resources, energy, and efforts just to make this bighorn sheep hunt possible for me. Thank you all.



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The Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation received the Outstanding Achievement Award during Conservation Night at the 2025 Sheep Show in Reno, Nevada. The award “recognizes and salutes the efforts and leadership” of the Foundation to “ensure that Wyoming continues to have healthy herds of bighorn sheep,” and highlighted the ongoing efforts with the Sweetwater Rocks Initiative. Present to receive the award on behalf of the Foundation were President Zach McDermott, Executive Director Katie Cheesbrough, and Board Member Matt Hoobler. The award was presented by Cory Mason, Wild Sheep Foundation Executive Vice President, and Kevin Hurley, Wild Sheep Foundation Vice President of Conservation.



Life Member Marjorie Pope won a Balkan Chamois Hunt during the Less Than One Club Party.



CHAPTER EVENTS

Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation personnel at the Camo at the Capitol Legislature Meeting in early 2025. Participants included Bralli Clifford, Katie Cheesbrough, Mary Harris, and John Harris.



Bralli Clifford and Tera Butler at the Camo at the Capitol event.

WY WSF Booth at the Reno Sheep Show 2025.

Former Game and Fish Director Nominated to Lead U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wyoming Game and Fish Department

CHEYENNE — Former Wyoming Game and Fish Department Director Brian Nesvik was nominated by the Trump administration to be the next U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director. The nomination was announced Feb. 12.

“Brian is an outstanding leader, and if he is appointed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be in good hands,” current Wyoming Game and Fish Director Angi Bruce said. “He has a proven track record of working to develop science-based policies and programs for wildlife management, and his expertise would greatly benefit the federal and state wildlife management agencies. I have no doubt that, if appointed, Brian will work collaboratively with all agencies and organizations throughout the country for the benefit of wildlife. He is the right person at the right time.”

Nesvik retired from Game and Fish in 2024 after more than 29 years with the agency. He worked his way up the ranks, from a game warden in the Laramie and Pinedale areas, the title of Cody Regional Wildlife Supervisor in 2010, and Chief Game Warden and Wildlife Division Chief in 2011. Nesvik was appointed as Game and Fish Director by Gov. Mark Gordon in 2019. During his tenure as director, Nesvik tackled issues such as grizzly management and aquatic invasive species, as well as the ongoing challenges in managing healthy mule deer populations.

Nesvik served in the Wyoming Army National Guard for 35 years, and retired as a brigadier general in 2021.

Current Chief Game Warden and Wildlife Division Chief Dan Smith said Nesvik’s hands-on experience with Game and Fish will give him a realistic perspective as he works on national-level wildlife issues in Washington, D.C.

“Brian’s real-world experience with the challenges we face in wildlife conservation will be a tremendous benefit as we work with our federal counterparts,” Smith said. “I am optimistic that with his leadership, state agencies will be able to further strengthen their partnerships and common objectives in conservation efforts.”

Nesvik will undergo a Senate hearing in the coming months in order to receive official confirmation.

-WGFD-



Photo Credit: WY Game and Fish Dept.



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Education

By: Brady Samuelson



and velveted high-country elk; I had the chance to sit down and eat some lunch while glassing. It was the start of my education on what was only the beginning of a DIY sheep hunt.

As I was laughing at the

an excellent job of explaining all of the tests being conducted and the biological sampling procedures to my small group of students. They were participating in real science, getting their hands on wild sheep, and compiling memories that would last a lifetime. I, myself, felt privileged enough to be spending the day "working" in Torrey Valley

After climbing a ridge, carpeted with wildflowers and snow drifts left over from harsher times, the four horses in our eager scouting party crested the ridge. The anticipation of cresting the top didn't disappoint, revealing miles of deep valleys and endless alpine scenery. Being atop a horse in sheep country is almost all I could think about since I drew an Area 5 sheep license and I was finally there. After packing up camp the day before and seeing multiple rams, a handful of grizzlies,

image of a comically knobby-looking ewe climbing up a crevice, it made me think back to the times I took a group of excited middle school students to participate in the lamb mortality study being conducted on the Whiskey Mountain herd. Getting students involved in management efforts was always a passion of mine and nothing compared to watching students

receive wild bighorn sheep from the helicopter that just captured them with net guns. The Wyoming Game and Fish, University of Wyoming grad students, and the Federal Fish and Wildlife biologists did



along with professionals in the wildlife field, but I know the impact was even greater on the students who attended the trip.

I have been taking students to the National Bighorn Sheep Center in Dubois, Wyoming for the past seven years. It's a trip that requires 6th-grade ecology students to submit an application and complete a project on the



management into all facets of my curriculum is important for me and the future of our wildlands. Amy Anderson, a terrestrial habitat biologist

I'm a firm believer that the most important way to keep our outdoor lifestyle alive against pushback from non-hunting communities is to educate the populace about the benefits of conservation versus preservation. Harvesting a bighorn sheep is arguably the pinnacle of big game hunting, and I was so grateful to actively participate in a variety of conservation efforts.

alpine ecosystem. Of these applicants, 12 students get to leave the traditional classroom in Riverton behind and enjoy the day getting a guided tour of the Center, lunch in Dubois, and a drive to view bighorn sheep in their winter range. The trip is often the highlight of their school year and parents are always appreciative of the efforts put in place to give these students this experience.

At the beginning of September, it was my turn to be educated. The unforgiving lands and wise bighorn rams are excellent teachers and do a great job of humbling any hunter. It's easy to understand the addictive nature and allure of a sheep hunt after being swallowed up by some of the most pristine and untouched country in the Lower 48. After doing my homework, scouting 10 days on the back of a horse, and being unsuccessful on the opening weekend of the season, I was appreciative to be looking at 14 rams bedded on the side of an alpine slope and planning the final stalk. Incorporating wildlife



Educating young people about the importance of science-backed conservation methods of hunting will continue to be a passion of mine. I eagerly look forward to exposing students to the wonders of our wild sheep and fondly look back on the education I received on those iconic alpine slopes last fall.

Note: Brady Samuelson was the recipient of the Wyoming Wild Sheep Educator of the Year Award in 2019 and received a scrimshaw folding knife (center image). He carried this knife on his recent bighorn sheep hunt. Brady currently teaches in Riverton, Wyoming.



with the Game and Fish teaches a forage clipping lab for students each year and I teach two hunter education courses to our middle school students.



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Teton Range Bighorn Sheep Update:

Conservation investments continue to yield

new information for wildlife managers

By Carson Butler and Sarah Dewey, Grand Teton National Park

New Research Project

Grand Teton National Park and the University of Idaho initiated new research in 2023 to determine how many bighorn sheep the forage resources in the Teton Range can sustain. Upon completion (anticipated 2027), this project will benefit managers of Teton Range bighorn sheep by providing a foundation for science-based conservation strategies aimed at long-term sustainability of this small, native bighorn sheep population. Simply put, the project will combine field-collected vegetation

data and satellite imagery to dynamically predict and map forage production (caloric energy) across bighorn sheep habitat in the Teton Range. This will be combined with diet information obtained from hundreds of scat samples and body fat measurements of captured animals paired with movement data from GPS radio-collars to translate total forage production into forage available to and used by bighorn sheep. This prediction will then be combined with published energy budgets of bighorn sheep (how many calories

they burn on a daily, seasonal, or annual basis) to estimate how many bighorn sheep the food in the Teton Range could support. To date, we have captured 27 bighorn ewes (14 in November 2023 and 13 in November 2024) and completed two of three field-seasons of vegetation and scat collection. While we await the conclusions of the study, other findings from the research are already providing useful insights.

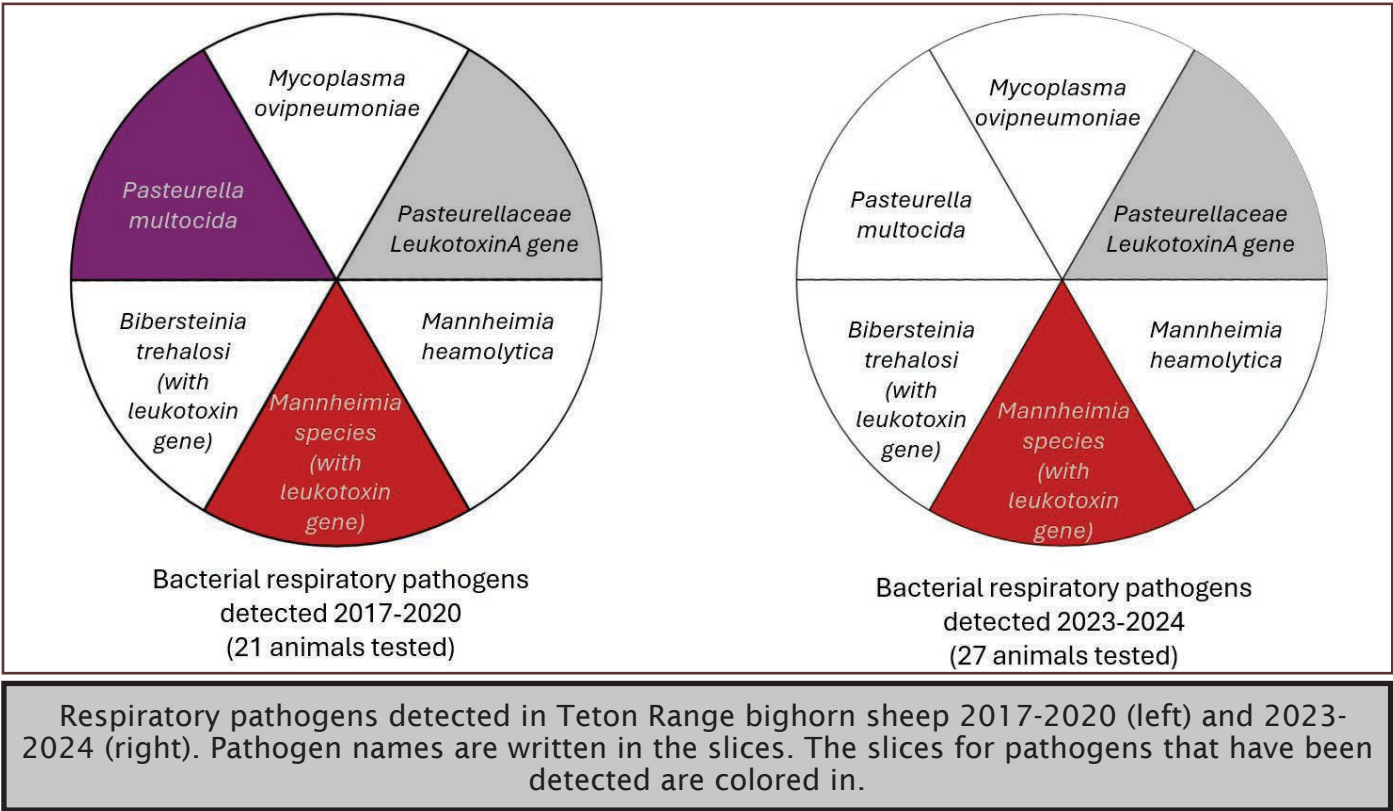
No New Respiratory Pathogens Detected

Respiratory pathogen sampling



Biologists swab tonsils of a bighorn ewe to test for bacterial respiratory pathogens in November 2024.

*Note – following the COVID19 pandemic many bighorn sheep handling protocols have been updated for handlers to wear N95 masks to minimize the chance of humans transmitting COVID19 to bighorn sheep. Given the sensitivity of bighorn sheep to respiratory disease and the documented spread of COVID19 to other mammal species, many veterinarians and biologists have deemed this a prudent measure to protect bighorns in their care.



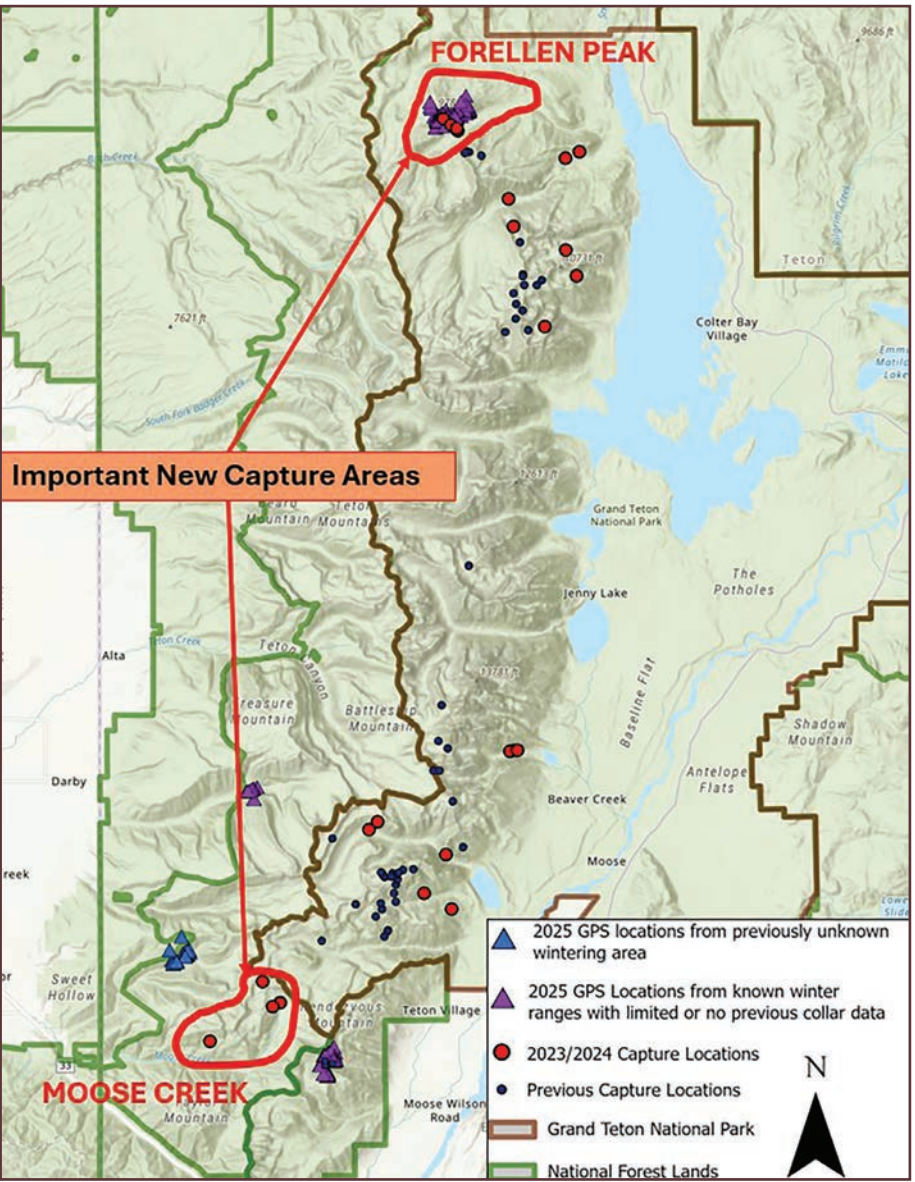
continues to suggest Teton Range bighorn sheep do not carry the full complement of respiratory pathogens responsible for epizootic pneumonia. Previous pathogen sampling conducted 2017-2020 failed to detect *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* in 21 individuals and *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* was not detected in any of the 27 individuals sampled since 2023. Collectively this testing provides compelling evidence this population is not affected by *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. Previous testing detected two potentially problematic bacterial pathogens in the *Pasteurellaceae* family, but did not detect two *Pasteurellaceae* strains that have been more strongly associated with respiratory disease, leukotoxin-producing *Bibersteinia trehalosi* and *Mannheimia haemolytica*. Testing since 2023 has also failed to detect these more concerning *Pasteurellaceae* strains. Collectively, the test results along with no observations of pneumonia in this population suggest the existing respiratory pathogen community does not

pose a strong threat to the health of Teton Range bighorn sheep.

Animals Captured in New Areas are Improving our Understanding of Seasonal Ranges

Teton Range bighorn sheep are present in Grand Teton National Park, the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, and the Bridger-Teton National Forest throughout the year, including during winter. Prior to 2023, 95% of the bighorn sheep ever captured in the Teton Range were captured inside Grand Teton National Park. As a result, biologists and managers do not have the same level of understanding of how bighorn sheep use winter habitat outside of the National Park compared to inside the park where dozens of radio-collared animals have provided a detailed understanding. For the first time ever, we obtained authorization to capture bighorn sheep in the Caribou-Targhee National Forest on the west slope of the Teton Range in 2024. As a result, we captured four bighorn ewes in Moose Creek at the southern end of the Teton Range. Two

of these animals have moved onto a known, but less-well understood, winter range on the Bridger-Teton National Forest and two of these animals have moved to a previously unknown wintering area on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Additionally, we captured a total of five bighorn ewes on Forellen Peak, which is an important winter range inside Grand Teton National Park that animals had not yet been captured from. In addition to obtaining better information about how bighorns use this known winter range, we are eager to learn more about other seasonal ranges used by this segment of the population. Capturing and radio-collaring bighorns in new areas within and outside Grand Teton National Park has already provided local biologists and managers a more complete picture of the seasonal ranges used by Teton Range bighorn sheep with additional insights certainly to come.



Locations of bighorn sheep captured prior to 2023 and since 2023 with important new areas sheep were captured in circled in red.

Teton Sheep Enter Winter with Lots of Body Fat (Some Years)

Prior to 2023, body fat of Teton Range bighorn sheep had only been rigorously measured in a single animal. We used an ultrasound to estimate percent body fat of 14 bighorn ewes in November 2023 and 13 in November 2024. This provides a direct measure of nutritional reserves and overall health whose influence on individual survival and reproduction is well understood. The average

percent body fat measured in 2023 was an astounding 21%, with individual measurements ranging from just 2% up to 32%. This amount of body fat is much greater than what has been reported for most other bighorn sheep populations and was incredible to observe. The average body fat for ewes captured in 2024 was lower than observed in 2023, at 15.24% (range: 10.4% - 23.7%). However, the lower average body condition measured in 2024 was comparable to what has been reported in neighboring bighorn

sheep populations in the Gros Ventre and Wind River Range. The difference in body fat between years could indicate the body fat that Teton Range bighorn sheep can accrue is sensitive to influences of weather conditions on forage production. The implications of the fall fat levels we observed are not immediately clear as higher fat levels might be needed for Teton Range bighorn sheep to get through the long and severe winters. As is often the case, more information leads to more questions.

Conclusions and Looking Ahead

We plan to further leverage information we’re gathering from our new nutritional study to gain deeper insights into Teton Range bighorn sheep. The radio-collared animals, distributed across the Tetons, will be used to estimate population-size using trail cameras placed at mineral licks. By knowing how many collared animals are alive and the ratio of collared animals to uncollared animals observed on our trail camera photos, we can estimate the total number of bighorn sheep. We suspect the population declined following the severe winter of 2022/2023 and this information will help us confirm or deny that suspicion. Additionally, the radio-collars are programmed to collect GPS locations more frequently during the lambing season. We plan to use this frequent location data, along with observations of lambs with collared ewes, to determine if, when, and where radio-collared animals give birth. If successful, this will provide us a measure of the proportion of ewes with lambs and help identify key lambing locations and time periods in the Teton Range. This information could be valuable for managing lambing habitats. Research grants are often provided for narrowly defined research questions, such as how many animals a landscape

can support. However, the data collected is frequently applied in many other ways. While we’re excited to report these additional findings in the interim, we will be even more excited to share the final results of the new nutrition study.

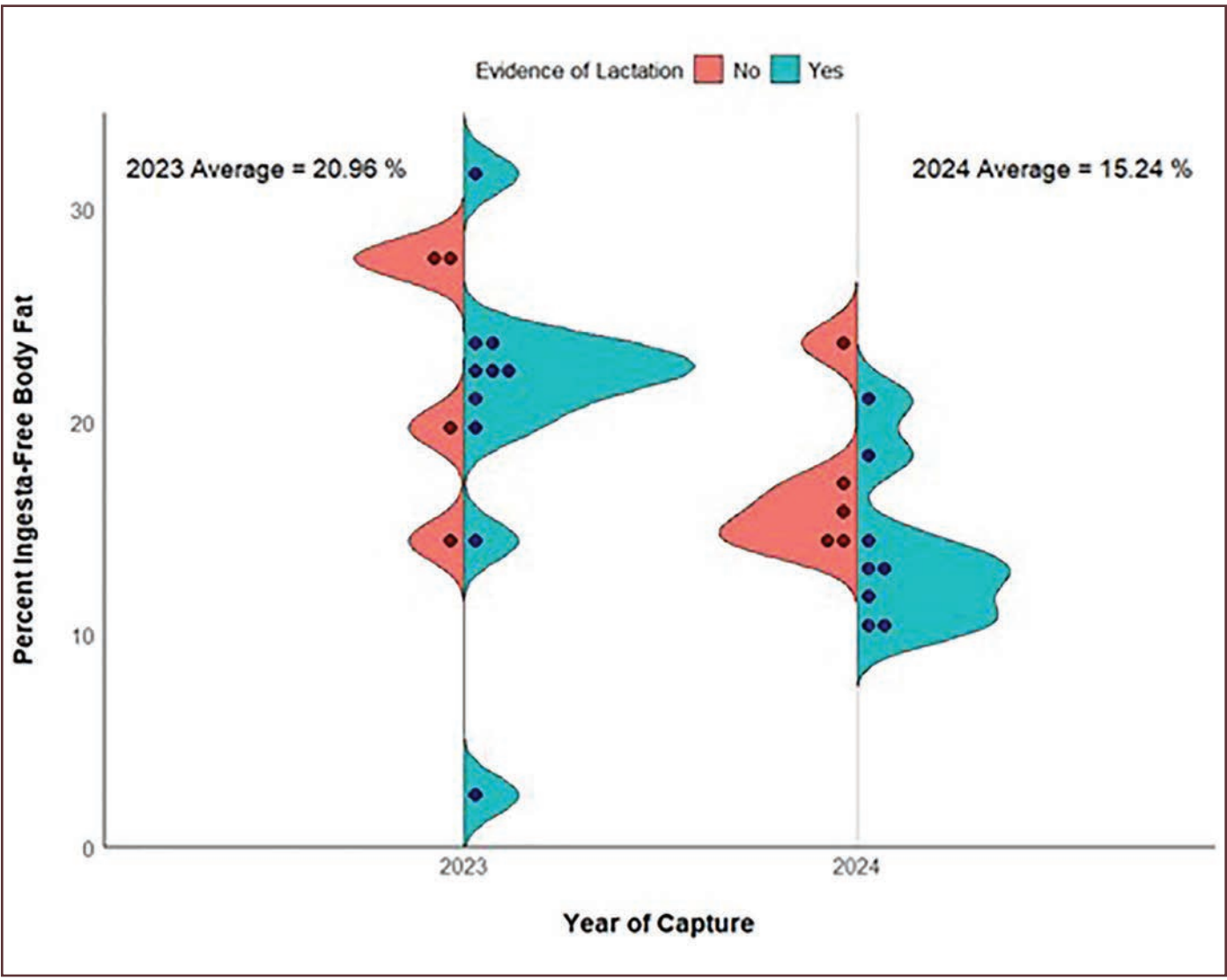
Acknowledgments

Funding for this project was provided by the Cross Charitable Foundation, Grand Teton National Park Foundation, Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund, National Park Service, Wyoming Governors

Big Game License Coalition, and Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation.

Baker Aircraft, Inc. conducted captures. Ryan Long and Ryan Martin, University of Idaho; J. Arnal, A. Egan, and M. Smith, Bridger-Teton National Forest; T. Brasington and J. Schwabedissen, Grand Teton National Park; Drs. M. Verant and L. Baeten, National Park Service, Biological Resources Division; A. Courtemanch, R. (Ross) Akhtar, and B. Agenbroad, WGF assisted with processing sheep during captures. For

help with permitting, we thank J. Pence, N. Yorgason, and J. Kunzman from the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and A. Egan and A. Milo from the Bridger-Teton National Forest. The Wyoming Wildlife Health Lab staff provided diagnostic and lab-based support.



The distribution of observed body fat percentage between lactating and non-lactating bighorn sheep in November 2023 and 2024. The shaded areas show the relative density of observations at the corresponding fat level and colored circles represent individual observations. Figure credit: Ryan Martin, PhD Student University of Idaho.



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Friday Night Rendezvous

Friday, June 6 beginning at 5 PM in the Grand Ballroom at the Best Western Downtown Hotel in Casper, WY

Guest Speaker!



David Willms is Associate Vice President, Public Lands for the National Wildlife Federation and an adjunct professor at the University of Wyoming where he teaches classes in Wildlife Law and the Endangered Species Act. He is host of Your Mountain podcast and a frequent contributor to MeatEater and Hunt Talk Radio. David is an avid hunter, angler, backpacker, peak-bagger and supporter of public lands. He lives in southeast Wyoming with his wife and three children.

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Wyoming G&F Dept



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2024 Project Update Report - E.D. Katie Cheesbrough
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Snowy Mountain Rifle - Shooting school attendance for 1 participant.
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Elena Johnson - Performance art piece featuring Wild Sheep composed during the banquet.
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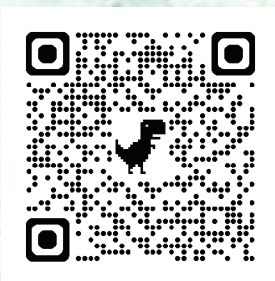
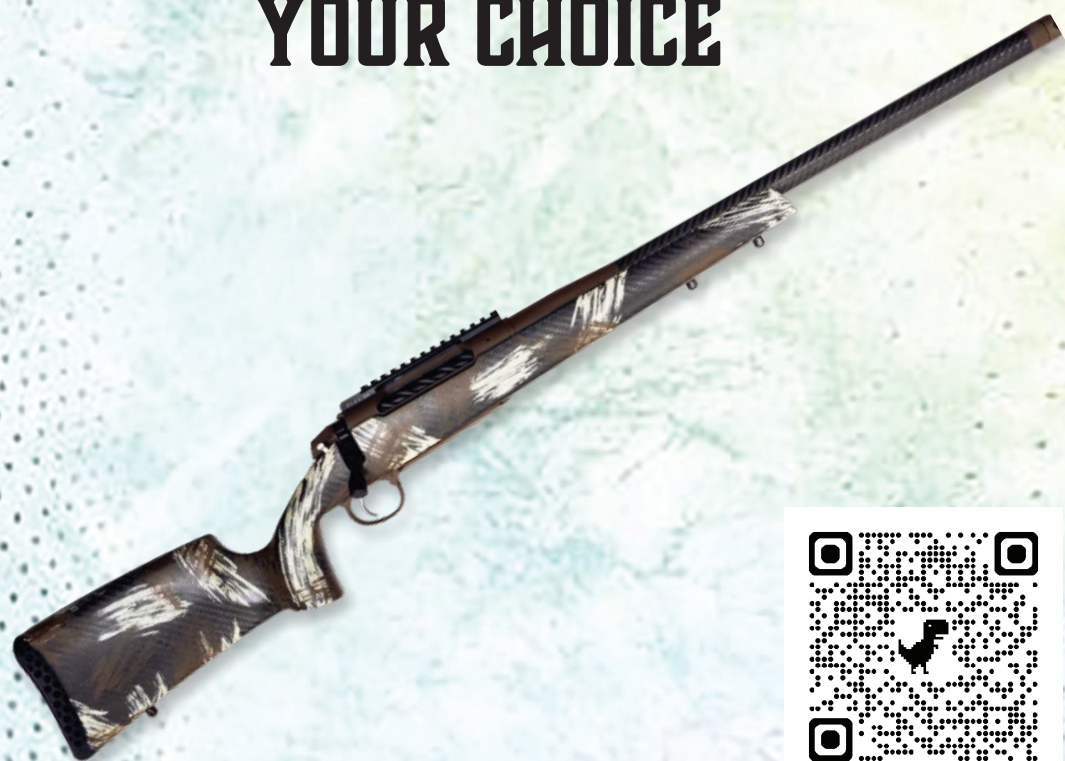
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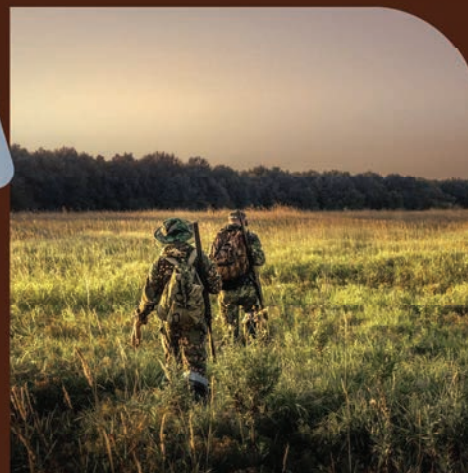


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Darryn Epp Photography

Sheep Hunting at Sixty-Eight

By: Jeff Frost

The ram immediately collapsed from the impact of the bullet. He initially lay still before a final kick pushed him off the ledge and he tumbled out of sight. It was the third day of my Area 4 sheep hunt with Cody Brown of Wind River Backcountry Outfitters of Dubois. Along on the hunt were 3 of his guides and my friend and Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation Board Member, Matt Hoobler. We had ridden into our base camp by horseback several days earlier on a pack train of 15 horses and mules.

The day prior, several of the guides had spotted a band of rams including one “decent” older ram nestled high in the cliffs of a canyon. As we rode the following morning toward the sheep, random questions ran through my mind. Would this be the ram that I wanted? When the moment of opportunity arrives, will I be able to deliver any long-

distance shot required? Am I in “sheep shape” and ready to tackle the heart pounding and lung busting altitude and steep terrain that sheep call home? And ultimately, at age 68, do I have what it takes to successfully hunt the king of the mountain, a Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep?

I knew what I was getting into in that I had sheep hunted years ago with a bighorn sheep permit in Wyoming Area 4 at age 40, thinking at that time that it was my “Once in a Lifetime” opportunity. Memories of that hunt north of Dubois and southeast of Yellowstone were seared into my brain with the beauty of the backcountry, the magnificent grandeur of the mountain vistas, the daily sightings of the wildlife that roam such territory, and the 10 days on horseback. This was why I was enduring the most physically challenging effort thus far in my lifetime in climbing up and down

foreboding peaks, canyons, and cliffs until I finally secured a fine ram late in that hunt. And because of that successful hunt, I found sheep meat to be exceedingly tender and delicious, and I further dreamed of enjoying it again someday.

This past May, I received notice that I had drawn my second “Once in a Lifetime” sheep tag again in Area 4. What a dream come true! I must confess that I read and reread the Game and Fish notification a number of times to make sure I was reading it correctly as “Successful”. The realization that many aspiring sheep hunters continue to apply for their first permit, and that I got to pursue a Wyoming ram for the second time, was humbling to say the least. And while I try to keep myself in good shape, I knew that sheep hunting demands that you be not just in good shape, but in top physical condition. Therefore, upon receiving this notice from the Wyoming Game and Fish, I dedicated myself to a rigorous workout routine. For the next 3 months, I walked, ran, and tread-milled a total distance of 750 miles along with countless trips to the gym for further upper and lower body training in preparation for the hunt. I didn’t want my not being in the proper shape to be the reason for not getting a sheep. I also made multiple trips to our local gun range with a friend to sharpen my rifle skills.

Back to the story! With the canyon in sight, we dismounted from the horses and secured them in a grove of trees out of sight. Reading the wind, we then approached the canyon

from the north and scanned the vast expanse in front of us, yet could not locate the herd as they were hidden from our view. We climbed up and down in elevation to allow for other vantage points to glass from, but to no avail. With that, Cody concluded that we needed to descend in elevation and then travel through the bottom of the canyon along a horse trail to potentially see the herd from below. We crept along occasionally scanning the cliffs above for the herd. Finally, the sheep were spotted. Cody selected the best location to shoot from unobstructed and motioned for me to come slowly to that spot. We took a few moments to build a platform of our backpacks as a secure rest for the rifle and I assumed a prone shooting position.

I am known by my friends as being the first to spot game where they then exclaim, “How did you see that?!” Yet as I searched with my naked eye and then with my binoculars

at the cliffs above, I could not locate the sheep. Cody then said, “See the dead log by the large boulder? They are directly above that.” Immediately they came into focus. The herd of five rams were all bedded within a short distance of each other. The largest ram lay facing away with a smaller ram in front of him. Clearly no shot was going to occur in this position. I studied the sheep and the cliffs, and I concluded that once they rose from their beds, I would need to deliver the shot soon thereafter before they disappeared. The challenge was that once I lifted my eye from the scope, it would take me some time to find the ram again in the field of view. I therefore concluded that I would need to keep my eye on the ram through the scope to be ready when the moment came to deliver the shot. For the longest time, the largest ram lay behind the younger one with the other rams spread around the vicinity. Occasionally, a ram would rise only to swap ends,



paw the rocky ground, and lay back down. I was positioned prone on the mountainside with the ram in sight high on the cliffs with the rifle scope on higher power due to the pending 430-yard uphill shot. I held this position for 2 hours and 40 minutes that crept by painstakingly slow. I found myself having to deal with my neck stiffening, and my right leg and my left arm going to sleep. But I had to remain focused and ready to deliver the shot. Finally, the big ram arose and started to move, first to the right and then uphill to the left as he separated from the other sheep. Finally, I heard the words, “Safety Off”, whereupon I repeated the same. As the ram climbed upward from the others and presented a clear shot, he stopped. I heard the words “Fire when you’re ready”. I responded with “Here goes”. Along with my solid rest on the backpacks, and with the crosshairs on the ram’s shoulder, I squeezed the hair trigger at the target. The shot was answered by the phrase “Ram Down!”

With the sheep down, Cody informed me that he and the guides would retrieve my ram due to the challenging and dangerous cliffs where the sheep had fallen. Matt and I sat and re-lived the hunt while waiting for the guides to





return with the cape, horns, deboned meat, heart, liver, and “tenders”. Matt asked me if I heard him say that an animal was coming our way while I lay prone preparing for the shot. I responded that I was concentrating on the ram, but I thought I heard someone say something about a deer. Matt replied that it wasn’t a deer, to which I asked, “Well what was it?” Matt said, “Let’s just say that we had our bear spray on the ready as it approached before it disappeared in the thick understory.” After some discussion, it was concluded that the color matched a grizzly bear that was often seen in the area. He was approaching from my left and was about 20 yards away from me when this played out. Thankfully, it wasn’t an attack or even a charge, rather it was just an encounter that I never knew had occurred. Sometimes it’s better what you don’t know!

Upon their return with my bighorn, I studied him closely and was awestruck with how magnificent he was. And while he was not broomed, he was very symmetrical with 15-inch bases and 32 inches around the horn. One can just imagine how many times he had banged heads with other bighorns to establish dominance.



As we rode out of the back country toward the trailhead for the return trip to Dubois, I recalled the many wildlife encounters, including two big black wolves that were running toward our camp before disappearing into the timber, a bugling 7-point bull elk and his harem, mule deer, and many bighorn rams, ewes, and lambs. And suddenly it dawned on me that all my earlier questions had been answered. I did handle the altitude and life on edge in our Wyoming high country. I delivered the long distance shot with accuracy. And I did have what it takes to hunt sheep at age 68.

Many thanks to Cody Brown and WRBO and his able crew. Also, many thanks to my hunting partner Matt, for his dedicated support, his great camera work, and his insight into all things outdoors, and especially bighorn sheep. And certainly, a heartfelt thanks to my bride of 48 years who understands my passion for the high country and outdoor adventure. I will always be grateful for the incredible opportunity to have pursued bighorn sheep twice here in Wyoming, once at age 40 and later at age 68, returning home from these hunts with two beautiful rams!

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National Bighorn Sheep Center

By: Amanda Verheul
Executive Director

Your wild sheep education experts at the National Bighorn Sheep Center continue to stay busy. Most recently, we celebrated our 31st Bighorn Bash with a smashing success. It was incredible to see such a variety of sheep supporters and lovers at the event. Everyone enjoyed returning to the Headwaters location, where the Bash was held for the first 29 years. For the upcoming year, our calendar is filling up with school visits to the Center, youth expos and events, museum improvements, and a new film!

We are increasing our outreach efforts this year by attending more expos and educational events than ever before. We will be at several chapter's and affiliate banquets, and youth and conservation expos in Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho. We always seek more outreach opportunities in classrooms, at expos, or fairs. If there is an event that would be a good fit for us to share our mission and conservation efforts, let us know.

This year marks our sixth year of Camp Bighorn. Registration is open by visiting our website or scanning the QR code. We are excited to bring our future conservationists another excellent camp experience. This camp excels with content field experts facilitating the classes. There is always something new and exciting around the corner for our campers. We partner with biologists, ecologists, ethnobotanists, nature journalists, taxidermists, artists, tribal elders, hunters, and outdoorsmen from national, state, and local organizations. We are grateful for their knowledge and participation.

Located at the Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp just outside of Dubois, Wyoming, Camp Bighorn provides campers, particularly 9-12-year-olds, with an incredible opportunity to immerse themselves in the natural world. What makes this camp truly remarkable is its unwavering focus on wildlife conservation, especially the preservation of bighorn sheep, a species native to the region. It's rare to find a summer camp that blends outdoor recreation with hands-on conservation efforts quite like Camp Bighorn does, making it an exceptional choice for families who want their children to experience the beauty of the outdoors, while also learning how to protect it.

Our outreach and distance learning program is also changing. We are finding more interest in our sheep trunks. Our education manager, Beth, is working to make these trunks easier for teachers and educators. Please sign up to get a trunk in your classroom, or education group today.

The museum exhibits at the Center are getting a much-needed update. They have been relatively stagnant since we opened in 1993. We hired professional firms to look at our space and share creative ideas to update the Museum. We began a mural project on the north wall of the Museum on February 18, 2025. This mural will help break up the white walls and give our guests a wonderful experience. We are looking forward to sharing these updates with our members and guests.

Another exciting thing on the horizon is our partnership with Colin at Big Sky Films. We are producing a high-quality educational sheep film that will feature and focus on bighorn sheep and the overarching problems that biologists face when trying to 'get more sheep on the mountain.' This film will greatly emphasize the Montana sheep herds while also discussing the Wyoming herd populations, genetics, and other aspects of our local herds.

Since our last update, we visited 3-Spear Ranch and tested their domestic sheep and goats for *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. They all tested negative, which



is a relief for us bighorn sheep enthusiasts. Creed and Sasha Garnik, the ranch owners, are very supportive of the project and advocate for increasing the number of bighorn sheep on the mountain. The 3-Spear Ranch is located just below the iconic 'Sheep Ridge' above Dubois, Wyoming. In the late 1980s, hundreds of sheep were grazing together on this ridge. As we know, *M. ovi* has played a large part in the declining Whiskey Mountain sheep population, which is not looking good for the future.

My predecessor, Sara Domek, arranged a series of meetings and discussions with the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation

and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to develop solutions to the problem. I remember attending these meetings and how collaborative the breakout sessions were. The Wild Sheep Initiative and the Test and Remove Program were implemented as the best possible solution to the decline, and we have seen some successes. It takes removing the sick to save the rest. It is crucial to develop partnerships and plans to ensure our herd is not reinfected. We must be aware that when our numbers increase, our carrying capacity on the land will not be what it once was. Why is that? Will test and remove be the solution?

One thing we can do to help is to talk to our locals who have domestic sheep and develop solutions that work for everyone. How can we unite ranchers and wild sheep enthusiasts to work towards a common goal? On April 10th, 2025, we will have an educational booth (representing the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation and the National Bighorn Sheep Center) at the FFA State Convention in Cheyenne, Wyoming. This will be an opportunity for us to share conservation topics and help students get involved in wildlife conservation to work together for wildlife.



Wild Sheep Webinar Presents:
Wild Sheep Initiative, Test and Remove Program



Wednesday
March 5th, 2025
at 5PM - VIA ZOOM

"We are committed to the
restoration and conservation of
bighorn and thimhorn sheep for
the benefit of future generations"
- Wild Sheep Initiative



FEATURING:

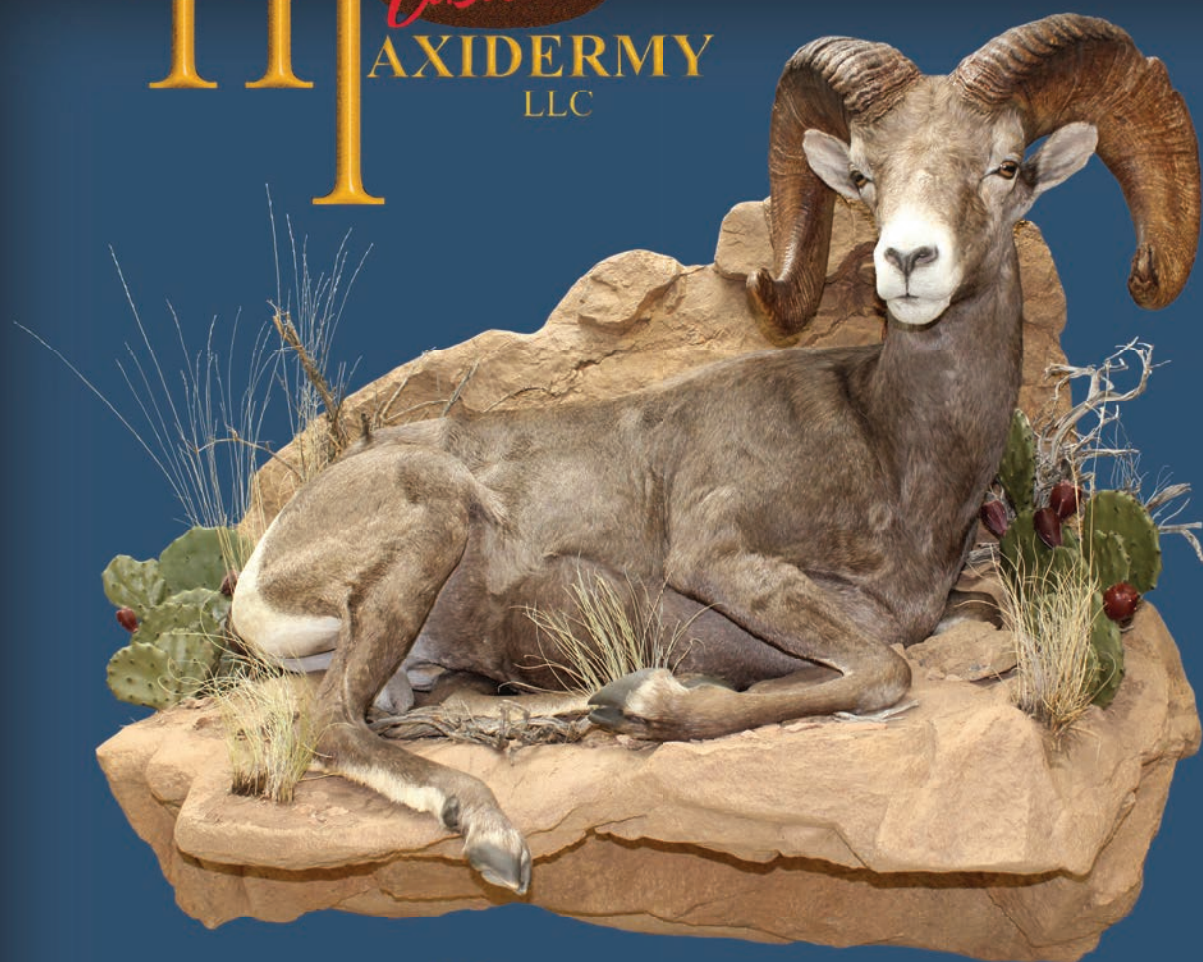
Daryl Lutz - WY Game & Fish Regional Wildlife
Management Coordinator and
Chair of WAFWA's Wild Sheep Initiative
Frances Cassirer - Senior Wildlife Research
Biologist at Idaho Fish and Game



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Check out our YouTube
Channel for all our Wild Sheep
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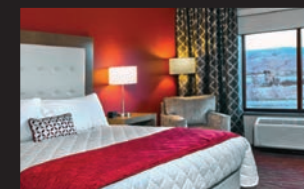
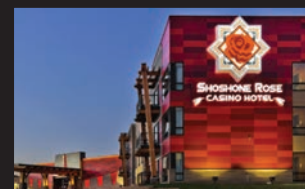
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A Successful Sheep Hunt

By: Ben Titus

With one measly preference point to my name, I certainly wasn't expecting to see "Successful" next to my Wyoming bighorn sheep application! After several logins to confirm I wasn't hallucinating, the phone calls began.

The buzz of excitement from drawing a coveted tag is almost intoxicating. The offers to help from everyone poured in and it was invaluable to have so many people offer their hard-earned knowledge, I can't thank everyone enough for their help! Luckily, I work at Gunwerks and my supervisors were extremely supportive when I told them they likely wouldn't see me again until I filled my tag. I fight wildland fire in the summer and knew I wouldn't have a chance to scout, so the research began. The unit seemed to be declining and as I gathered information from people, my goals evolved to focus on the experience and just try to find the best ram we could - whatever that might be.



Ultimately, I felt like with the right crew we could access sheep country and dig up a ram on our own without having to hire an outfitter. Tagging along on the hunt were my good friends Jake and Landon, John and his dad, John, and my own dad. The Johns had good stock and decades of packing experience, Jake and Landon are hardcore hunters that I knew would push me, and my dad's been dreaming of another wilderness packing trip for years.

On October 3rd, we picked a spot on the map, loaded

up the packstring, and began the 15+ mile ride into base camp. The plan was for Jake, Landon, and I to get dropped off and spend several days backpacking a large loop looking for sheep in the high basins. None of us had seen the area beforehand, so most of this plan was built on a hope and a prayer.

Dropped at the pass, we started hiking. Within 200 yards, I spotted 18 ewes just 600 yards away — a promising start. Further up the ridge, we stopped again. Soon, about 2 miles away, I spotted the first band of rams bedded down. Prepared to not see any sheep for days, the pressure of the hunt started to lift. It was incredible to be in sheep country.

Two of the rams looked to be solid and mature, but the 40 mph winds made it hard to know for sure. Pursuing them would divert us away from the country I wanted to explore. We deliberated for some time,



Trying to find rams.

but to Jake and Landon's disbelief, I opted to pass. All my research convinced me that I needed to see more animals to learn what a really mature ram was and I didn't want to commit so soon.

We continued up the mountain, only to be cliffed out on what looked like an easy route. By dark, we'd covered less than a mile. Overnight, 60 mph gusts buffeted the tent, ripping the windward side off the ground around midnight.. No one got any sleep. The following morning, Landon's rock climbing skills guided us through nasty hard pack, kitty litter crags I wouldn't have even attempted without him. This was sheep hunting alright.

Crossing the next basin, we came upon remains of a 6 year old ram that washed down from the cliffs above! The discovery renewed our energy and reminded us how tough these animals have to be to live at 11,000 feet. We set up another camp, and

spent the evening glassing. A few sheep were spotted, including a couple rams that reminded us of the band I had passed on. I felt good about my decision to keep searching for that next age-class.

At last light, we took one more look down the valley. "I got sheep!" Jake and I said in unison. Too dark to see them clearly, we would look again in the morning. They hadn't moved much over night and of the three sheep, one ram had a noticeably bigger body and a unique, deep chocolate color. He kicked the ram we nicknamed



Packing in along the trail.

Scar out of his bed and the other came down the hill to knock horns. As we watched these rams and enjoyed the show, it settled in that the chocolate ram was the one.

By the time we broke camp and got to another vantage point the rams had disappeared. The rest of the day was spent slowly moving in and picking apart the mountain. The hours ticked by and doubt crept in as we waited. We were

still scouring the mountain after sunset when Landon scream-whispered "I've got sheep! *It's them!*".

It was a yard sale of gear from the day of waiting and the rams noticed us scrambling to set up. They had appeared much lower than expected in the timber and started to work their way through the trees away from us. I settled the Gunwerks 6.5 PRC on the tripod and tried to keep tabs on the big ram. As they came into an opening, he gave me a broadside shot and I pressed the trigger - only to miss a big game animal for the first time in my life. "This can't be happening" I thought to myself and tried to keep it together. I squandered one more shot into the dirt and my heart broke.

I didn't know why I'd missed, but I knew I couldn't keep shooting and risk wounding the animal. We watched the band of rams rejoin and settle into the cliffs for the night. Finding the flattest spot we could (which was not flat at all), we used our trekking poles to carve away at the

Jake Robl with the found dead head.



mountain until the three of us could stay put in our bags. We'd see if the rams were still there in the morning.

Daylight took an eternity to arrive. We sorted through different groups of ewes before someone picked up a few new sheep at the top of the opposing ridge. It was them - I couldn't believe it! Frantically, we threw our gear into our packs and crossed the drainage to close the distance - I was determined to have a chip shot this time. We occasionally saw the rams above us, but due to the slope and timber we kept moving in. Eventually, we lost sight of the rams and the hours ticked by while we waited them out. We had only filled up with water once in the last 4 days and food was also running low. We needed to make a move.

It was risky to move, but we knew that they were either holed up in a group of trees or had crossed over the ridge into even thicker timber. As we worked the backside of the ridge, I cut a fresh track. I stepped out from a group of trees and spotted a ram bedded below as he whipped his head around and pegged me up above them. Several statuesque minutes passed by before he relaxed. I could see three sheep bedded close below me, but were they our rams? We quietly got our gear ready and I began to inch out. I recognized "Scar", but I had to identify the big, chocolate ram as two of them were bedded behind a tree. He finally turned his head and at this distance I knew my hunt was about to be over. The Gunwerks rifle broke the silence.

It was surreal to see such an amazing ram laying under the gaze of such incredible mountains. We had found a ram that blew all of our expectations out of the water and the bitterness of my miss made the success even sweeter. A few inreach messages were sent and we began to break the 9 ½ year old ram down. The Johns and my dad met us with the mules on the trail late that night and the story was told over a bottle of whiskey.

If there was any advice I could give someone who holds a once-in-a-lifetime tag it is to share the opportunity with good people and to soak up every minute of planning and preparation. It's all over too soon.



Ben and Landon Michaels doctoring their feet after a long day of hiking.



Night before the pack out.

Bighorn Sheep 2024 Harvest Report

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center

TABLE I
BIGHORN SHEEP
HARVEST SUMMARY
STATEWIDE
2024

	VALID LICENSES	ACTIVE HUNTERS	HARVEST				RECREATION DAYS	DAYS/ HARVEST	HUNTER SUCCESS
			RAM	EWES	LAMB	TOTAL			
RESIDENT	194	194	126	34	0	160	1,727	10.8	82.5%
NONRESIDENT	30	30	22	3	0	25	209	8.4	83.3%
STATE TOTAL	224	224	148	37	0	185	1,936	10.5	82.6%

*License holders who did not respond to the survey are assumed to have hunted, but not harvested

TABLE I-HU
BIGHORN SHEEP
HARVEST, HUNTING PRESSURE, HUNTER SUCCESS
BY HERD UNIT
2024

HUNT AREA	RESIDENCY	VALID LICENSES	ACTIVE HUNTERS	HARVEST				RECREATION DAYS	DAYS / HARVEST	HUNTER SUCCESS
				RAM	EWES	LAMB	TOTAL			
106 TARGHEE	RESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	61	30.5	100.0%
	TOTAL	2	2	2	0	0	2	61	30.5	100.0%
107 JACKSON	RESIDENT	19	19	6	6	0	12	193	16.1	63.2%
	NONRESIDENT	3	3	2	0	0	2	21	10.5	66.7%
	TOTAL	22	22	8	6	0	14	214	15.3	63.6%
121 DARBY MOUNTAIN	RESIDENT	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	NA	0.0%
	TOTAL	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	NA	0.0%
200 ABSAROKA	RESIDENT	104	104	82	0	0	82	874	10.7	78.8%
	NONRESIDENT	20	20	16	0	0	16	145	9.1	80.0%
	TOTAL	124	124	98	0	0	98	1019	10.4	79.0%
212 DEVIL'S CANYON	RESIDENT	8	8	8	1	0	9	26	2.9	112.5%
	TOTAL	8	8	8	1	0	9	26	2.9	112.5%
516 DOUGLAS CREEK	RESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	47	23.5	100.0%
	NONRESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	9	9.0	100.0%
	TOTAL	3	3	3	0	0	3	56	18.7	100.0%
517 LARAMIE PEAK	RESIDENT	8	8	7	0	0	7	143	20.4	87.5%
	NONRESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	10	10.0	100.0%
	TOTAL	9	9	8	0	0	8	153	19.1	88.9%
519 ENCAMPMENT	RESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	66	33.0	100.0%
	TOTAL	2	2	2	0	0	2	66	33.0	100.0%
609 WHISKEY MOUNTAIN	RESIDENT	11	11	7	0	0	7	103	14.7	63.6%
	NONRESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1.0	100.0%
	TOTAL	12	12	8	0	0	8	104	13.0	66.7%
615 FERRIS-SEMINOE	RESIDENT	36	36	9	27	0	36	187	5.2	100.0%
	NONRESIDENT	4	4	1	3	0	4	23	5.8	100.0%
	TOTAL	40	40	10	30	0	40	210	5.2	100.0%
720 KOUBA CANYON	RESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	18	18.0	100.0%
	TOTAL	1	1	1	0	0	1	18	18.0	100.0%

*License holders who did not respond to the survey are assumed to have hunted, but not harvested

Citation:
Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center. 2025. Bighorn sheep 2024 harvest report. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne, WY. Available online: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/hunting-trapping/harvest-reports-surveys>.

TABLE I-A
BIGHORN SHEEP
HARVEST, HUNTING PRESSURE, HUNTER SUCCESS
BY HUNT AREA
2024

HUNT AREA	TYPE	RESIDENCY	VALID LICENSES	ACTIVE HUNTERS	HARVEST				RECREATION DAYS	DAYS / HARVEST	HUNTER SUCCESS	NOTES
					RAM	EWE	LAMB	TOTAL				
1 CLARK'S FORK	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	14	14	12	0	0	12	121	10.1	85.7%	INCLDS. 1 CARRY-IN
		NONRESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	10	5.0	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	16	16	14	0	0	14	131	9.4	87.5%	
2 TROUT PEAK	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	23	23	18	0	0	18	260	14.4	78.3%	INCLDS. 1 CARRY-IN & EXCLDS. 1 DONOR INCLDS. 1 DONEE, 1 TRIFECTA
		NONRESIDENT	4	4	2	0	0	2	31	15.5	50.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	27	27	20	0	0	20	291	14.6	74.1%	
3 WAPITI RIDGE	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	18	18	12	0	0	12	102	8.5	66.7%	INCLDS. 1 CARRY-IN & EXCLDS. 1 CARRY-OUT
		NONRESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	14	7.0	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	20	20	14	0	0	14	116	8.3	70.0%	
4 YOUNT'S PEAK	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	14	14	13	0	0	13	76	5.8	92.9%	EXCLDS. 1 DONOR, 3 CARRY-OUT INCLDS. 1 DONEE, 1 GOV
		NONRESIDENT	4	4	4	0	0	4	24	6.0	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	18	18	17	0	0	17	100	5.9	94.4%	
5 FRANC'S PEAK	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	31	31	27	0	0	27	246	9.1	87.1%	INCLDS. 1 GOV & EXCLDS. 1 DONOR, 2 CARRY-OUT INCLDS. 1 DONEE, 1 CARRY-IN, 2 GOV, 1 SUPERTAG
		NONRESIDENT	8	8	6	0	0	6	66	11.0	75.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	39	39	33	0	0	33	312	9.5	84.6%	
6 TARGHEE	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	61	30.5	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	2	2	2	0	0	2	61	30.5	100.0%	
7 JACKSON	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	10	10	6	0	0	6	131	21.8	60.0%	EXCLDS. 1 DONOR INCLDS. 1 DONEE
		NONRESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	12	6.0	100.0%	
	TYPE 6	RESIDENT	9	9	0	6	0	6	62	10.3	66.7%	
		NONRESIDENT	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	NA	0.0%	
		TOTAL	22	22	8	6	0	14	214	15.3	63.6%	
8 SHEEP MOUNTAIN	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	2	2	1	0	0	1	6	6.0	50.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	2	2	1	0	0	1	6	6.0	50.0%	
9 DINWOODY	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	5	5	2	0	0	2	59	29.5	40.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	5	5	2	0	0	2	59	29.5	40.0%	
10 JAKEY'S FORK	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	4	4	4	0	0	4	38	9.5	100.0%	
		NONRESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1.0	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	5	5	5	0	0	5	39	7.8	100.0%	
12 PORCUPINE ^a	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	3	3	3	0	0	3	8	2.7	100.0%	
	TYPE 2	RESIDENT	5	5	5	1	0	6	18	3.0	120.0%	INCLDS. 1 DONEE & EXCLDS. 1 DONOR
	ALL	TOTAL	8	8	8	1	0	9	26	2.9	112.5%	
17 FERRIS-SEMINOE	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	4	4	4	0	0	4	16	4.0	100.0%	EXCLDS. 1 CARRY-OUT
		NONRESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	19	19.0	100.0%	
	TYPE 2	RESIDENT	4	4	4	0	0	4	55	13.8	100.0%	
		RESIDENT	18	18	0	18	0	18	42	2.3	100.0%	
	TYPE 6	NONRESIDENT	2	2	0	2	0	2	2	1.0	100.0%	
		RESIDENT	6	6	0	6	0	6	31	5.2	100.0%	
	TYPE 7	NONRESIDENT	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	2.0	100.0%	
		TOTAL	36	36	9	27	0	36	167	4.6	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	36	36	9	27	0	36	167	4.6	100.0%	
18 DOUGLAS CREEK	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	47	23.5	100.0%	
		NONRESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	9	9.0	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	3	3	3	0	0	3	56	18.7	100.0%	
19 LARAMIE PEAK	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	8	8	7	0	0	7	143	20.4	87.5%	EXCLDS. 1 CARRY-OUT
		NONRESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	10	10.0	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	9	9	8	0	0	8	153	19.1	88.9%	
20 KOUBA CANYON	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	18	18.0	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	1	1	1	0	0	1	18	18.0	100.0%	
21 ENCAMPMENT RIVER	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	2	2	2	0	0	2	66	33.0	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	2	2	2	0	0	2	66	33.0	100.0%	
22 DUBOIS BADLANDS	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	4	4	0	0	0	0	69	NA	0.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	4	4	0	0	0	0	69	NA	0.0%	
24 BIG PINEY	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	NA	0.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	NA	0.0%	
26 BENNETT MOUNTAIN	TYPE 1	RESIDENT	1	1	1	0	0	1	36	36.0	100.0%	EXCLDS. 1 CARRY-OUT
	TYPE 6	RESIDENT	3	3	0	3	0	3	7	2.3	100.0%	
	ALL	TOTAL	4	4	1	3	0	4	43	10.8	100.0%	

^aAn additional ewe was illegally taken in Hunt Area 12 with a Type 2 license; the associated license, harvest and recreation days are counted as Type 2 here.

[†]One Nonresident Governor's license that was excluded due to carry-out is not shown

[‡]License holders who did not respond to the survey are assumed to have hunted, but not harvested

Acknowledgments:

This report was completed through a partnership with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center at the University of Wyoming. We thank Wyoming Game and Fish Department personnel for collecting harvest information at hunter check stations. As always, we are indebted to the many sportspersons who completed a survey questionnaire and shared valuable information about their hunting experience.

TABLE II
BIGHORN SHEEP
TEN-YEAR COMPARISON OF STATEWIDE HARVEST
2015–2024

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
VALID LICENSES										
RESIDENT	143	149	158	147	134	137	129	151	206	194
NONRESIDENT	54	61	56	59	48	47	57	56	35	30
TOTAL	197	210	214	206	182	184	186	207	241	224
ACTIVE HUNTERS										
RESIDENT	140	147	157	146	134	133	128	148	197	194
NONRESIDENT	53	61	55	59	48	44	56	54	35	30
TOTAL	193	208	212	205	182	177	184	202	232	224
TOTAL HARVEST										
RESIDENT	106	111	125	103	105	93	99	118	153	160
NONRESIDENT	48	56	50	51	39	39	49	44	29	25
TOTAL	154	167	175	154	144	132	148	162	182	185
RAM HARVEST										
RESIDENT	106	111	125	103	104	92	99	110	128	126
NONRESIDENT	48	56	50	51	39	39	49	41	26	22
TOTAL	154	167	175	154	143	131	148	151	154	148
EWE HARVEST										
RESIDENT	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	8	25	34
NONRESIDENT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	11	28	37
LAMB HARVEST										
RESIDENT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NONRESIDENT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RECREATION DAYS										
RESIDENT	1553	1537	1497	1349	1328	1257	1428	1325	1841	1727
NONRESIDENT	278	384	336	410	246	232	292	320	177	209
TOTAL	1831	1921	1833	1752	1574	1489	1720	1645	2018	1936
DAYS/HARVEST										
RESIDENT	14.7	13.8	12	13.1	12.6	13.5	14.4	11.2	12	10.8
NONRESIDENT	5.8	7.1	6.7	8	6.3	5.9	6	7.3	6.1	8.4
TOTAL	11.9	11.6	10.5	11.4	10.9	11.3	11.6	10.2	11.1	10.5
HUNTER SUCCESS										
RESIDENT	-	-	-	71%	78.4%	69.9%	77.3%	79.7%	77.7%	82.5%
NONRESIDENT	-	-	-	86%	81.2%	88.6%	87.5%	81.5%	82.9%	83.3%
TOTAL	79.8%	82.2%	82.5%	75.1%	79.1%	74.6%	80.4%	80.2%	78.4%	82.6%
FIREARM HARVEST										
RESIDENT	-	-	-	100.0%	98.1%	95.7%	100.0%	96.6%	94.1%	96.9%
NONRESIDENT	-	-	-	98.0%	97.4%	100.0%	93.8%	97.7%	86.2%	96.0%
TOTAL	98.7%	99.4%	96.0%	99.3%	97.9%	97.0%	98.0%	96.9%	92.9%	96.8%
ARCHERY HARVEST										
RESIDENT	-	-	-	0.0%	1.9%	4.3%	0.0%	3.4%	5.9%	3.1%
NONRESIDENT	-	-	-	2.0%	2.6%	0.0%	6.2%	2.3%	13.8%	4.0%
TOTAL	1.3%	1.2%	4.0%	0.7%	2.1%	3.0%	2.0%	3.1%	7.1%	3.2%

Correspondence:

For questions about hunting in Wyoming, call one of Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Regional Offices (contact info available online at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/regional-information>), or contact our statewide Customer Service staff at wgf-contact@wyo.gov or (307) 777-4600.

TABLE III
BIGHORN SHEEP
LICENSE DATA SUMMARY
STATEWIDE
2024

	VALID LICENSES	NUMBER SURVEYED	RESPONSES	RESPONSE RATE
RESIDENT	194	194	183	94.3%
NONRESIDENT	30	30	28	93.3%
STATE TOTAL	224	224	211	94.2%

* Responses include hunters who registered a harvested bighorn sheep or responded to a harvest survey



Arrow Murphy hunted several weekends in the Gros Ventre, putting in many miles. He is 12 years old, and this was his first hunting season for big game. Drawing this tag was very exciting! After some long hikes and close encounters, he was finally successful on the morning of November 2, with a perfect shot at 200 yards. He shot his sheep with a Ruger American in 7mm-08 and a 139-gr Hornady Interlock. In the months preceding, he spent many hours at the range practicing. This hunt was special as Arrow was accompanied by his grandfather, John Murphy, who has been hunting the Gros Ventre for over 50 years. The local game warden, Jon Stephens, checked Arrow's sheep and provided some excellent instruction to the youngster on collecting measurements and teeth. Jon is an outstanding ambassador for the Wyoming Game and Fish through his interest in youth and their hunting experiences. Arrow attends school in Ten Sleep and is an avid fisherman with extra interest in walleye.



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It's Not About The Sheep

By: Jordan Seitz

Encampment K12 Teacher

SHEEP UPDATE 15

This fall my new principal, Jake Johnston (Mr. J), asked our staff why we are here [at school]. Some deep thinking led me down a rabbit trail reflecting on why I take students on outdoor adventures. As a public school teacher, I certainly value academics. Regarding the sheep, they are the catalyst for many of our opportunities. In short order, I concluded it's not about the academics or the sheep; it's about the kids. As an outdoorsman and adventurer, I believe it is important for youth to experience the outdoors. I take students on adventurous trips to build relationships, experience the wild, and overcome challenges.

Relationships: Many awesome people have become friends and mentors, enriching our experiences and exposing the students to different careers and perspectives on life. Adventures inherently bring us together and provide moments to trust each other.

The Wild: Over the years we've seen all kinds of wildlife and beautiful landscapes by hiking, snowshoeing, and skiing.



Despite our rural location, many incoming students have never seen a bighorn sheep or been



"off-trail." Crossing backcountry creeks barefoot...who does that?

Challenges: Adventurer Jim Shockey says most people avoid

discomfort these days and associate being uncomfortable with near-death experiences. He says we need to experience and embrace discomfort to know and appreciate comfort. Whether it is distance, steepness, ruggedness, wind, moisture, temperature, or forgetting food and water, my students definitely experience discomfort. I try to instill pride in overcoming these hard things, emphasizing how they give us a chance for personal growth that can only be derived from rough country. As an aside, the vehicles and school building sure look good when we return!

In September, the perfect weather was offset by stream crossings and many steep miles. Our trail cameras caught some great activity, including lambs nursing, a mule deer buck breaking and losing part of a velvet antler, a pack of coyotes, grouse, a new uni-horn ewe, sheep passing through a thick stand of aspen, and Ol' Chubs the marmot still hopping across his rocks. Three of our four cameras were relocated to focus on stream crossings... two of which will probably be surrounded by overflow water in the spring...oops!



Our science teacher Daniel Greenwood drew a coveted ram tag for the canyon and shot a brute. He brought the head to his classroom for a day and we roughly scored it with Mr. J at an unbelievable 185 inches! Almost everyone in the school got a chance to see, touch, or hold the head of this remarkable sheep. God bless rural Wyoming!

To get more kids outside, our new 5th grade teacher Bailey Miller brought her class along on several adventures, including one where

compared to the staggering 450,000 locations collected from 20 sheep! We want to schedule classroom sessions where students study the data looking for "barriers to movement" or "holes in the data." This is one more step towards supporting our sheep herd.

This fall, several students saw sheep for the first time and Sarah refused to stop looking until she figured out how to find them in the distance using binos. Mesa said, "You know how many background photos on my phone have come from your trips?" Bergen showed up with a notebook page full of sheep facts and boxes to fill in with observations and data. Hunter said he didn't even know what snowshoes were, but after trying them, wants some of his own. Lexi told me the cold miserable



we saw 60+ sheep. They also joined my 6th and 8th graders for Biologist Teal's current "State-of-the-Sheep-Address." For the first time, she was able to share preliminary mapping data from the GPS collars our ewes wore. The location map for a single ewe is hard to comprehend. But that's nothing

hikes last year were core memories and she is inspired to become a wildlife biologist. I love watching kids get enthralled by the outdoors, even if Hoyt won't let me forget that he found shed antlers in places I told him he wouldn't, and Coy out-glassed me to find sheep! Moments like these are some reasons why I'm here, and they motivate me to keep "Putting kids on the Mountain!"

Thanksgiving on Carmen Island

By: Adam Millburn

Sheep hunts come in all shapes and sizes. There are fourteen-day horseback versions, where you leave the mountains sporting saddle sores, possibly never having glassed a legal ram. You also have the challenging, but rewarding wilderness backpack hunts, typical of the mountains that Stone and Dall rams call home. The list goes on and on, and all certainly provide wonderful experiences of their own, but sometimes it takes a while for the pain to convert to a warm fuzzy memory. A sheep hunt on Carmen Island, however, is pure enjoyment from start to end.

Over the years I have heard wonderful reports from those who hunted this island paradise. Situated in the Sea of Cortez, Carmen consists of 37,000 acres of superb habitat for the Weemsi subspecies who call this landscape home.

When I was presented with the opportunity to bid on a Carmen Island sheep hunt, I decided to go for it. As the auction concluded, I stared, half surprised to see that I had won the hunt. Just like that, this dream was becoming a reality.

One of the time periods available to hunt was the week of Thanksgiving. Since this fit our schedule,



plans were finalized for my wife Rene and son Blaine to join my pursuit for a Carmen Island ram.

We arrived in Loreto, Mexico on November 25th and were greeted at the airport by Gaspar from Mexico Hunts. Gaspar helped us navigate the airport red tape and soon had us and our gear headed to the boat for the final leg of our journey. In less than an hour from launch, we were approaching the island lodge we would call home for the coming days. The facilities on Carmen are first-class, offering more than we could have asked



for. Everyone at Mexico Hunts went above and beyond to ensure we were well taken care of. Sheep hunting while staying in a resort type setting seemed too good to be true!

That first evening, we verified the rifle was still on target. Then, after an incredible sunset, my family was treated to a fine meal before turning in; full of anticipation for what the morning would deliver.

Before dawn, Gaspar and crew had Blaine and I on the boat heading south in the dark. We were cruising toward a drop-off point to access a wash where we could work our way to the highest points on that section of the island. Gaspar had seen a large ram in the area one week earlier. Although sheep were spotted, no shooters presented themselves during our all-day glassing session.

Our second day of hunting began with a steep climb to an area historically holding good numbers of rams. Once we finally topped out, our hearts had not yet slowed before we were pinned down by sheep. Several rams were seen following a ewe and their route was going to take them within three hundred yards of our position. Blaine shot video of their progression and although one was tempting, we passed and

hoped there was an older ram somewhere in our future.

The rest of the morning had us trying to close the distance on a large ram who ultimately climbed out of our lives into an inaccessible area. The decision was made to hike back for lunch and set a different plan for the afternoon.

We paused to take pictures on the ridge above the bay before our descent. Sometimes we rush through these moments, also life in general, and fail to appreciate the beauty that is before us. The views over the bay were spectacular. From our vantage point, we could see our lodge and the brilliantly white salt flats too. I still could not believe this was a sheep hunt.

Although tired and dehydrated after the morning hike, our spirits remained high due to the great people we were with, the beauty of the island, and the sheer number of sheep we encountered.

That afternoon we had plans to sneak in and glass the hills above a water source.

Thirty minutes into our hike, Gaspar stopped and told us to stand still. He had noticed several sheep feeding to the east, below the main ridge. Detailed analysis through the spotter proved one was a mature



my body as we marched directly towards the larger ram. With just enough daylight remaining, we closed to 335 yards, and I set up for the shot.

With Blaine videoing the action, I settled the crosshairs behind the ram's shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The shot was true, and the ram was down! Blaine and I were elated and Gaspar proud of having yet another successfully guided hunt on his behalf. Tomorrow was Thanksgiving, but we were giving many thanks on this fine day for all that had transpired.



ram. Now we had to quickly decide if we had enough time to make a stalk.

Gaspar initially said we would sneak out and come back at dawn but then quickly changed his mind. The stalk was on! Adrenaline pulsed through



Harvesting an 11-year-old Weemsi Desert ram on Carmen Island is nothing short of impressive. However, the holiday meal the team at Mexico Hunts created for us was the icing on the cake. The kindness to make us feel at home on the holiday and the work that went into the preparation of the traditional Thanksgiving dinner will always be remembered. In fact, we have future plans on the calendar to return with Blaine as the sheep hunter!

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Kurt Eisenach
Costa Rica
Sailfish



Ferris-Seminoe Bighorn Sheep Monitoring 2025

By: Teal Cufaude
Saratoga Wildlife Biologist, Wyoming Game and Fish

In January, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department captured and marked 45 bighorn sheep from the Ferris-Seminoe bighorn sheep herd. Bighorn sheep in the Ferris-Seminoe herd unit are doing well. The population is estimated to be near the management objective. It is important that managers understand habitat use, distribution shifts, and other movement patterns given the current population of bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep managers in other jurisdictions have used “circuitscape” analysis to predict, based on GPS collared bighorn sheep (primarily rams), how sheep select habitats outside of their known range to move in between sub-herds or other populations. This information has been used to better understand how

disease is carried across the landscape from herd to herd, thereby informing management decisions regarding population size or density and whether or not to conduct additional transplants. We plan to use the information gathered from this collaring effort to complete a circuitscape analysis on Ferris-

Seminoe bighorn sheep. We identified several sub-herds that comprise the Ferris-Seminoe bighorn sheep herd, including Ferris, West Seminoe, South Seminoe, Miracle Mile, and Bennett Mountains and marked animals in each of these sub-herds.

For this project, we also marked six rams with GPS ear tags. These are small transmitters attached to the ear and collect location data just as collars do. We are excited to work with this emerging technology as a possible alternative to collars that are smaller in size, lighter weight, and avoid some of the challenges with collar fit.

This project was funded by WY-WSF and WGBGLC and could not have been completed without the support of private landowners who allowed access for captures and staging.



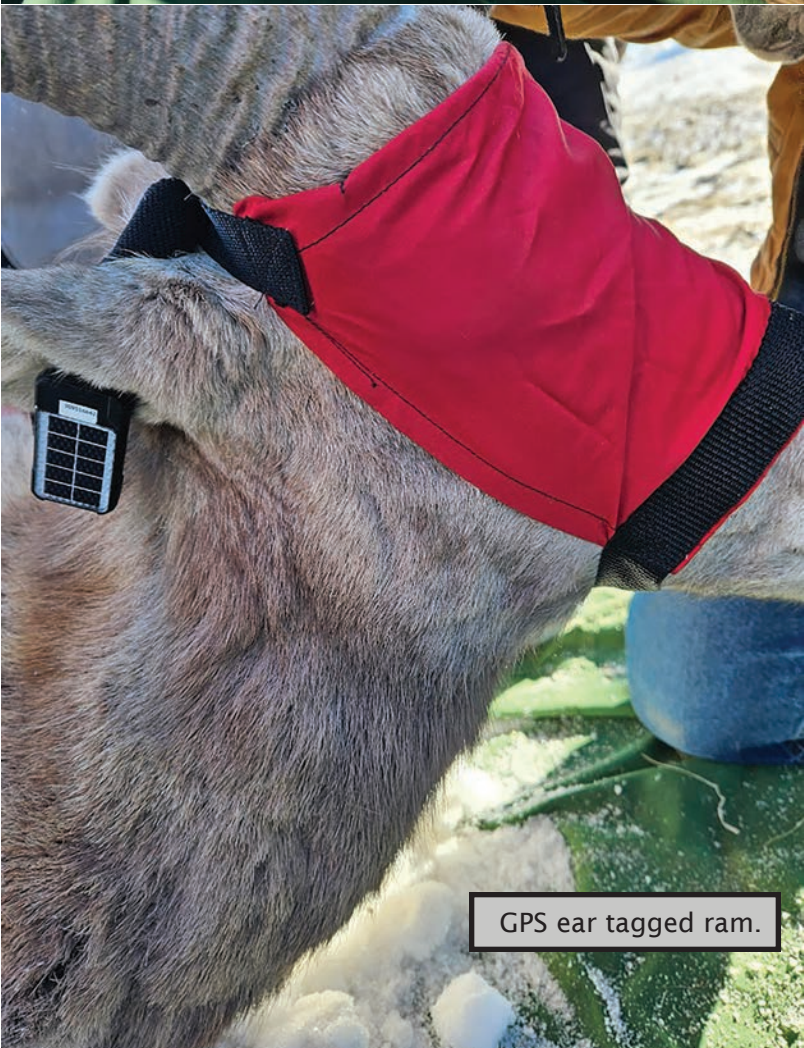
Brandon Werner (Casper Wildlife Coordinator) with ewe.



Adrian Lopez (Laramie Regional Wildlife Specialist) with ram.



GPS ear tagged ram.



GPS ear tagged ram.



Stan Harter (Lander Wildlife Biologist) and Sara Weller (Wildlife Disease Biologist) with ram.



Dan Quinn

Ross Gorman

Jeff Frost

Tera Butler

Ward Hineman
Chamley Outfitting

Ron and Ryan Amundson. Oryx.
New Mexico. 2024.

Scott and Tera Butler.
Dan Webb. Kenzie Palmer.

Ricardo Fernandez

Bralli Clifford

Greg Clifford

Chadd Hartwig. Ian Tator.
Ryan Amundson. Utah. 2024.

Dave Bauman

McDermott's. Pheasant Hunting.
Casper, Wyoming.

Brett Evans

Larry and Zach McDermott.
"The Commissioner"

LJ Planer (Veteran). Jimmy Owens. B. Joe Coy.
Lost Creek Outfitting.

Brandon Flanagan

Member's
Gallery

Type 2 Ram Licenses: Preventing Disease and Providing Opportunity

By: Ashley Umphlett
Rawlins Wildlife Biologist, Wyoming Game and Fish

Every year, starting on September 1st, a lucky few hunters across the state of Wyoming have the opportunity to begin their pursuit of a once-in-a-lifetime animal: the bighorn sheep. However, for nine hunters in 2024, their bighorn sheep hunt deviated slightly from the “typical” ram hunting experienced by others, as a result of the creation of a new license type the previous spring. Type 2 licenses were proposed and granted in two different herds: five licenses in the Devil’s Canyon herd (Area 12), and four in the Ferris-Seminole herd (Area 17). These licenses allowed hunters to pursue and harvest younger bighorn sheep rams, specifically those that are unbroomed and less than $\frac{3}{4}$ curl on either side.

Following the hunting season in 2022, the Devil’s Canyon herd experienced a significant mortality event. Managers and lab personnel concluded that the event was caused by a novel strain of the pathogen *Mannheimia hemolytica*, which caused pneumonia and ultimately resulted in the loss of over half

the herd. While losses across both sexes and all age types were observed, rams were better protected from the die-off due to behavioral patterns that push them to congregate in bands at higher elevations than ewe/lamb groups. This, coupled with the loss of many sexually mature ewes, resulted in a much higher ram ratio that could hinder future recovery of the herd.

Similarly, in the Ferris-Seminoes, the greatest threat to herd health is the possibility of disease transfer from domestic animals outside the herd unit. Ferris-Seminole bighorn sheep have been at or near the objective of 300 sheep for the past four years; as overall numbers continue to grow, so does the amount of sheep that attempt to wander to ranges outside of herd unit boundaries. To limit the potential for sheep, particularly younger rams, to wander and ultimately bring back disease that could result in widespread mortality events like the ones seen in Devil’s Canyon, managers found themselves in need of another management tool. That tool is the

Type 2 license, designed to focus harvest on younger rams that are more prone to disperse and make long-distance forays when “searching for love” - a search that could potentially bring back harmful pathogens, leading to additional die-off events. Harvest of these younger aged rams helps to address high ram:ewe ratios and maintain reasonable levels of sheep on the landscape for continued habitat health.

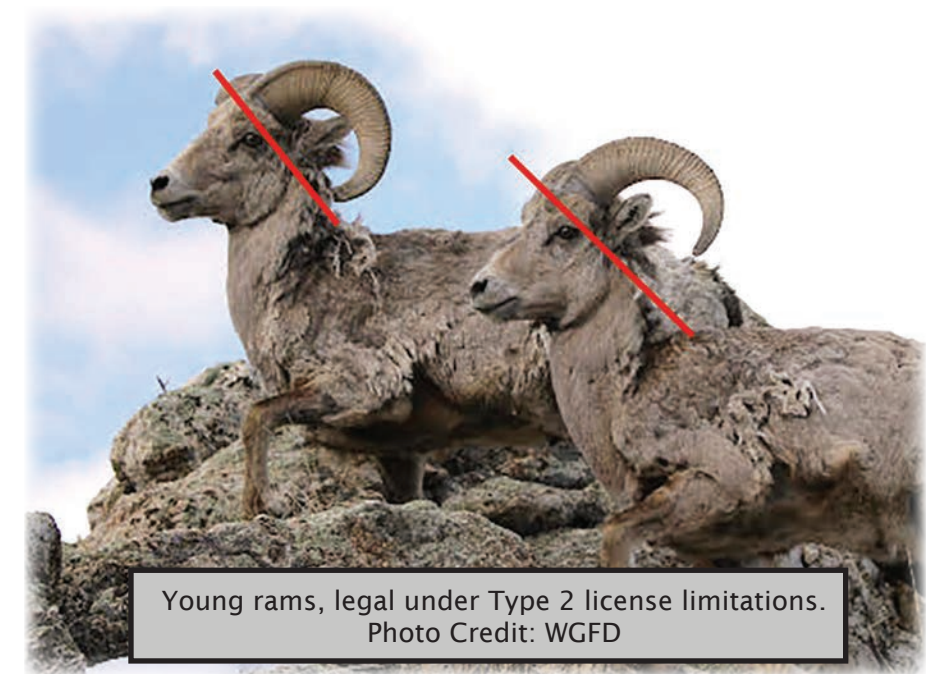
While preventing disease and maintaining herd health are the primary reasons for creation of the Type 2 license, many hunters who had the license cited the increased opportunity to harvest a bighorn sheep at all as the reason for applying. Bill Ames (a Type 2 hunter from Area 12) and Gene Fowler (a Type 2 hunter from Area 17), both emphasized the fact that as older hunters with “limited” points, they likely would not have had the chance to draw a standard Type 1 license; with the creation of a Type 2 license, they both had the opportunity to hunt and were ultimately successful in harvesting their once-in-a-lifetime animals.

Fowler and Ames were not alone in their success; the Type 2 license saw 100% success in both hunt areas. Despite overarching success, many hunters noted that one of the biggest challenges of their hunts was finding a ram that would be considered legal under current regulations. Amanda Shivley (a Type 2 hunter from Area 17) stated “It was a good opportunity and I’m glad that I put in for it, but it was actually harder than I thought to pick a sheep that was under $\frac{3}{4}$ curl.” Due to the novelty of the license, managers sent out informational packets with pictures and descriptions of legal

vs. non-legal rams before hunting season started, and remained available during the season to answer questions and concerns, some even going so far as to receive pictures from hunters while they were out in the field to judge legality before harvest. As the Type 2 licenses continue to be issued, managers and hunters alike will gain insight on how to better adapt regulations and assist hunters in having the best experience possible.

Given the need for this management tool and its popularity with hunters, Type 2 licenses will once again be offered in both Areas 12 and 17. Sam Stephens, Wyoming Game and Fish Biologist for the Greybull District, noted that because of pneumonia circulating throughout Devil’s Canyon since 2022 and subsequent lower lamb recruitment in the following years, the herd is missing three years’ worth of lamb crops. As a result of this, and the prolific nature of these sheep to quickly grow past the $\frac{3}{4}$ limitation, the herd has fewer rams that would qualify as legal under Type 2 limitations than in years past.

Derrick Dietz, a veteran hunter who had an Area 12 Type 2 license donated to him through Hunting For Heroes, said “Sheep are going to do what Mother Nature wants them to do, and that’s go out and find a way to make more sheep. But if they pick up a disease in the process of going from Point A to Point B, then they’re going to hurt their herd more than help it.” With a Type 2 license in the conservation tool belt, “you’re keeping those sheep from wandering off and picking up a disease,” while simultaneously providing hunters with a terrific opportunity to harvest a once-in-a-lifetime animal and assist in the management and conservation of bighorn sheep.



Young rams, legal under Type 2 license limitations.
Photo Credit: WGFD



Young ram, illegal under Type 2 license limitations.
Photo Credit: WGFD



Ram group in the Seminoe Mountains.
Photo Credit: Ashley Umphlett



Derrick Dietz with his bighorn sheep ram, harvested under a Type 2 license in Area 12. Photo Credit: Derrick Dietz



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A Lifetime of Conservation and Hunting Experiences

Told By: Mark Chapman, Written By: Kendra Young

A successful 2024 bighorn sheep hunt was just the culmination of a lifetime of hunting and conservation efforts for Mark Chapman—a Wyoming resident who now splits his time between Wyoming and Arizona.

Mark's love for the outdoors began at a young age. He started applying for big game licenses when he was eighteen years old – applying for hunting licenses in Wyoming before the point system was implemented by the State; even applying for twenty-plus years before being successful in a bighorn sheep tag draw in Area 24 (Big Piney Area). Mark's lifetime hunting goal is to harvest every Wyoming species. He has harvested several deer, elk, and numerous black bears and lions over his lifetime. Prior to the Fall of 2024, the only harvestable species in Wyoming Mark was lacking, was a bighorn sheep and a mountain goat. Mark has also been an avid archery hunter, beginning in 1977.

Mr. Chapman was successful and drew a bighorn sheep tag in Area 24 in the mid-1990's. There were four tags awarded that year – three resident tags and one non-resident tag. Mark was lucky enough to acquire one of the resident tags, but his luck was about to change. In accordance with bighorn sheep hunting tactics, Mr. Chapman spent fifty-nine days straight on the mountain, scouting and hunting for a legal ram. During this time, Mark saw some sheep (ewes and lambs), but never a legal ram – one $\frac{3}{4}$ of a curl or better. After this time, Mr. Chapman discussed his findings

with other area hunters. Rumors were saying that prior to the season opening, one mature ram was spotted in the area, but he hadn't been seen since before the season. After talking with Wyoming State Game and Fish employees, FNAWS, Wyoming Game and Fish Commissioners, and even the then-current Wyoming Game and Fish Director; they said they had spotted two mature rams during the previous winter's flights. However, when Wildlife employees flew the area after this hunt, they didn't see a single legal ram. After this finding, Mr. Chapman was allowed to return his unused tag and have his points reinstated. The hunt area was also closed to hunting for several years following that season and the subsequent herd counts.

Mr. Chapman continued to apply for a bighorn sheep hunting tag in Wyoming following that hunting season. As the years passed, the chances of going on a successful sheep hunt were slowly diminishing for Mr.

Chapman. Numerous health issues were starting to plague Mark and age would make it difficult to hike in and spend extended amounts of time in the backcountry; but still he was persistent. In 2024, Mark had the maximum number of points allowable for a bighorn license, and he drew a Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep tag for a unit in central Wyoming.

Even facing numerous challenges, Mark Chapman was going to make this a successful hunt to remember. Mr. Chapman's lifetime passion and goal was to archery hunt all of the species he harvested. This added another level of challenges to an already hard hunt. Mr. Chapman and his family had a Plan B for this hunt though. Mark's son builds custom rifles, and Mark and his son spent the months leading up to the hunt "learning to shoot long range" and learning the nuances of long-range rifles. Mark highlights his shooting-school accomplishments as being able to shoot a three-shot group in a four-inch circle from seven

hundred yards. They also spent time scouting the area, just looking around the landscape, and talking with others familiar with the unit. During the actual hunt, Mark and his family and friends saw fifty to sixty sheep a day – ewes, lambs, and little rams. But they were looking for the grandest of them all and were okay with waiting until later in the season to harvest.

On the season opener, Mark and a friend were driving in their side-by-side, with both the rifle and the bow on-hand, when they spotted two rams on their way back to camp. After discussing it, they decided to continue looking; after all it was opening day and they thought there would be "better" sheep in the area. Mark had heard stories of a 180 ram in the unit. He had also heard of past hunters harvesting 170 rams out of the area. Mr. Chapman's grandson was late getting into camp, so Mark and his son left camp the next morning to continue hunting, while Vic (the family friend) stayed in camp to wait for the grandson to arrive. Mark and his son opted to drive his truck on their scouting trip, leaving the side-by-side in camp. This also meant the bow was accidentally left back in camp. They passed the same set of rams that were seen the night before.

By this time, both pairs of men were in the field and spotting sheep. Vic's group held the higher ground, and Mark was lower on the slope. Vic could see a group of five rams, Mark could see only four. After discussing it with his son, Mark decided he was going to shoot one of the four that were visible to him. At this point, he would have to use the rifle, since his archery equipment lay forgotten in camp- yet the rifle of choice was a custom-made rifle



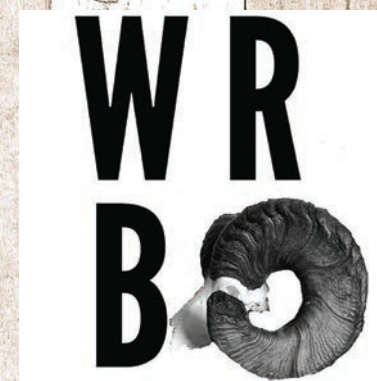
made by Mark's son. Mark got ready for his shot; the chosen ram stopped walking, turned around, and changed direction. Mark put the crosshairs on his shoulder and pulled the trigger – effectively “missing” the shot. During the original shot, Mark noted that he flinched, the ram was still standing there, and the safety was still engaged on the rifle. After a quick regroup, Mark re-placed the crosshairs in the ram's shoulder, took a deep breath, and pulled the trigger. Mark watched the shot hit the ram. He thought the sheep would immediately drop, but the ram started to run away. His friend yelled at him to shoot again. Mark didn't want to shoot again. His friend yelled again to shoot again. But after running uphill for aways, then running back down hill, the ram dropped – conveniently close to the vehicles necessary for carrying it out. There were also several people on hand to help with packing out the ram- including family and very close friends. This hunt was unique in several ways for Mark Chapman. His family and friends got to be a part of his successful sheep hunt, he is now only one animal away

from harvesting every species available in Wyoming, and even though the ram was not harvested using a bow it was taken using a very special rifle. Mark also notes that besides some recent coyote hunting, the last time he successfully harvested something with a rifle was in 1977 or 1978 (as a bow is his weapon of choice). Mark field-scored the ram at roughly 170; with a 35-inch horn length and 15-inch bases.

Besides being an avid hunter, Mark Chapman is also involved in several conservation efforts and organizations. Mark is a member of the Bowhunters of Wyoming (B.O.W.) and served as the organization's president for several years, after being an area representative then vice president. He is also the recipient of the B.O.W.'s Bowhunter/ Sportsman of the Year award. He has been involved in several wildlife and habitat projects; including numerous fundraising efforts, shoveling snow out of cattle guards to keep wildlife off roadways, and keeping antelope near Granger out of high-use areas and off railways. He has worked as a hunting guide for deer and elk in Utah, Colorado,

Idaho, and Wyoming. Mark has even traveled to Alaska a couple of times, taking his camera along – including the 35 mm film. For thirty years, Mark has taken the month of September off of regular work, to be in the field. He has hunted black bear in British Columbia, black bear in Wyoming, and javelinas in Arizona, in addition to other species and more locations; while his hunting-buddy son has harvested a Dall sheep in Alaska. Mark credits his least favorite hunting experience as the year he successfully harvested a 6-point bull elk and a 4-point buck deer on opening morning – leaving the rest of his time wide open and earning the moniker of the “worst year ever!”

Successfully harvesting a Rocky Mountain bighorn ram is a noteworthy feat for anyone. But learning of and overcoming the quirks of what made this hunt possible, makes Mark's 2024 sheep season even more remarkable. Mark's final quote describing his 2024 sheep hunt was, “I have spent lots of time hunting, this one was very special, my son and grandsons were involved, I'm not going to forget this.”



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Conserving an Icon:

Nestled in the dramatic Wind River Range of Wyoming, the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep herd is a symbol of wild resilience and the intricate relationship between wildlife and humans. However, like many bighorn sheep populations in North America, this iconic herd faces a future fraught with challenges. Decades of research and conservation efforts have painted a complex picture of what it takes to conserve these animals in their rugged, alpine home. As described in past articles, the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Herd (WMBS) has been the Midwest Chapter's adopted herd since 2019. Midwest's partnership and fundraising efforts helped to kick off the creation of the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Plan and continue to support the implementation of this plan for the recovery of this iconic herd.

A Storied Past

Whiskey Mountain once boasted the largest wintering population of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in North America. In

the 1960s, the herd numbered over 2,000 individuals. These sheep were a source of awe for visitors, a vital part of the ecosystem, and of great cultural significance. Additionally, this herd was the source herd for many bighorn sheep supplementations across the West. However, by the 1990s, the population had plummeted by more than half.

The decline was attributed to several factors, including disease outbreaks, habitat loss, and changing climatic conditions. Respiratory diseases, particularly those caused by pathogens like *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M. Ovi), are the most deadly and pressing issue for bighorn populations across the West. Understanding and mitigating these threats has become a cornerstone of ongoing conservation work.

Collaborative Conservation

The Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Working Group, a coalition of state and federal

agencies, nonprofits, and researchers, has spearheaded efforts to conserve the herd. This collaborative effort emphasizes science-based strategies and community involvement. Through this process, four main focus areas emerged in the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Plan and continue to be worked on collaboratively, including the support and partnership of the Midwest Chapter.

Project Updates

Disease Research and Management

Disease remains the biggest and most complicated hurdle to the recovery of the Whiskey Mountain herd. Respiratory diseases appear to have become endemic within certain herds in Wyoming, including the WMBS herd. Within the past year, researchers have published studies suggesting why some herds can bounce back from die-offs while the Whiskey herd doesn't. This seems to result from a complex play between habitat access, forage availability, nutritional quality, and population dynamics. After several years of research from the University of Wyoming and the work of others around the West, the WMBS herd managers have employed the Test & Remove strategy to remove chronic carriers of M. Ovi from the herd. This work began in the Winter of 2021-2022 in the Red Creek sub-herd. After seeing success and an increase in lamb recruitment in Red Creek, this project has been extended to the larger reaches of the herd. Testing and removal continued last winter and are currently being implemented in the winter of 2024-2025.

Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Herd Project Updates



Habitat Restoration

Bighorn sheep rely on expansive, connected habitats with access to nutritious forage and escape terrain. Over time, encroaching vegetation and human development have altered these landscapes. Historic restoration projects on Whiskey Mountain have aimed to improve winter range conditions by controlling invasive plant species and encouraging the growth of native forage. Prescribed burns and mechanical treatments to remove conifer have been used to open up landscapes and rejuvenate critical habitat areas. However, recent data has suggested that the limiting habitat for the WMBS herd is their high-elevation rocky summer range. It is difficult to enhance the habitat in these rocky areas, so managers are now focusing on opening up transition habitats between summer and winter ranges through prescribed burns and conifer removal to provide more forage and nutritional quality for sheep going into



winter. The Whiskey Mountain Conifer Removal project is in its second year, and biologists are seeing bighorn sheep utilizing the newly opened areas.

Movement and Migration Studies

Advances in GPS collar technology have revolutionized wildlife tracking. For the WMBS herd, these collars have provided invaluable data on movement patterns, seasonal habitat use, and management needs. The data from these collars have directly led to the prioritizing habitat projects in certain areas and, in conjunction with disease surveillance, informed the decision to Test and Remove in this herd.

Public Engagement and Education

The Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep herd is as much a cultural asset as a biological one. Engaging local communities and visitors is essential for long-term conservation success. We are thrilled to work with and help support our partners at the National Bighorn Sheep Center in Dubois, Wyoming. These folks are neighbors to the WMBS herd and do a beautiful job of implementing outreach initiatives, curating interpretive programs, developing educational materials, and partnering with schools to inspire future generations of conservationists. We are helping to support the National Bighorn Sheep Center in their educational bighorn sheep webinar series, the annual Camp Bighorn program, and

their national outreach efforts.

Why It Matters

The Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep herd represents more than just a species; it embodies the spirit of Wyoming's wild landscapes and the delicate balance required to maintain them. Each sheep reminds us of what is at stake and stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and partnership in tackling complex conservation challenges.

We can't thank the Midwest Chapter enough for its continued commitment to the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep herd, its support of Grant in Aid projects, and its truly outstanding partnership in bighorn sheep conservation.

Executive Director Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation



Photos by Mark Gocke, WYO G&F Dept.



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Smothered Elk Shoulder Steaks

- 3 to 4 Shoulder Steaks
- 8 Ounces Sliced Mushrooms
- 1/2 Sliced Onion
- 1 Can Cream of Mushroom Soup
- 2 Teaspoons Minced Garlic
- 1 Teaspoon Paprika
- 1 Teaspoon Pepper
- 1/2 Cup Beef Broth

- 1) Place steaks in bottom of crock pot
- 2) Place mushrooms and onions on top of the meat
- 3) In a separate bowl, whisk together soup, broth, garlic, paprika, and pepper
- 4) Pour mixture over the meat in the crock pot
- 5) Cook on low setting for 6-8 hours (or high setting for 4 hours)

Wild Game Recipes

Crock Pot Game Tips and Mushrooms

- 2 Pounds Stew Meat (Any Type)
- 1 Cup Sliced Mushrooms
- 1 Can Cream of Mushroom Soup
- 1/2 Cup Beef Broth
- 1/2 Cup Sour Cream
- 1 Teaspoon Garlic Powder
- 1 Teaspoon Onion Powder
- Salt and Pepper

- 1) Put meat and mushrooms in slow cooker
- 2) Mix all other ingredients and pour over meat
- 3) Cook on low for 8 hours
- 4) Stir well and serve over rice, noodles, or mashed potatoes

The RamPage is starting a community wild game recipe page. Send your favorite bighorn sheep (or any wild game) recipes to RamPage@wyomingwildsheep.org!

*See you in
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Banquet
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Photograph: Dan Quinn

