

Rolling Stone: Mark Gilbertson's Terminus Stone Sheep Adventure

Mark Gilbertson was the lucky winner of a Terminus Mountain Outfitters Stone Sheep hunt, drawn after the 2025 Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation Convention in Casper. He recently returned from the field with an unforgettable story to tell—and a beautiful ram to show for it. Here, in his own words, is his report.

A Change of Plans

The morning, I was set to fly into the lodge, the outfitter let me know he wanted to put me into a low-density area they hadn't hunted in a couple of years—on foot. I'd been expecting a horseback-supported hunt, so this was a bit of a curveball. I rearranged my pack, ditched several items, and made it work.

After a bush-plane, a night at the lodge, a float plane, and a night at the lake camp, we were finally hiking in. It was a heavy couple of days going in, mixed with getting caught in a rainstorm and drinking tarp-caught rainwater on the side of a mountain. Welcome to Norther BC stone sheep country! Despite these challenges, my legs and back felt great. As you can imagine, it was even heavier coming out... thankfully!

Getting It Done

Once in the target area, we saw five rams total over the course of the hunt, two of which were solid rams, including the one I took. Three rams—including a mature, long, twisty ram—kept our attention early, but lived in the craggy cliff country, which was a no-go zone for us two-legged creatures. The large boar black bear and large boar grizzly we found in the timber below the cliffs were likely at least part of the reason for their rocky sanctuary. We followed the rams closely for 4 days but to no avail. They ultimately went deeper into the cliff country.

Fortune favored us on the evening of Day 6, and we found my ram alone high on a ridge and watched him bed in a stalkable location. We knew he had mass, and his body, hips, and sway-back suggested age. The excitement was palpable, and we knew we had a big day ahead of us.

We woke up to frost at 4 a.m. the next day to begin our 1,000-foot ascent at first light. Once up top, we worked our way toward where we had seen the ram bed the night before. This required sneaking and peeking down both sides of the ridge, picking apart every avalanche chute, scree field, and grassy bench, knowing the ram could be anywhere.

Justin was ahead of me, and as I cautiously moved forward, I changed my angle slightly and found the back of the ram's horns, bedded 150 yards steeply below me.

After getting Justin's attention, we consolidated and aged the ram for a solid 15 minutes. No wind. Thermals were right. The sun was coming up to our left. The ram was calm, and so was I—despite the weight of the moment and the 11 months of buildup, planning, shooting, training, and thinking about this hunt.

I'll never forget Justin aging the ram through his spotter, a white ptarmigan feather stuck straight in his cap from earlier that morning for good luck. It helped break the tension.

We knew his horns were full curl and above his nose, and after confirming an age of at least eight (and likely nine), Justin gave me the green light.

The ram stood up and looked directly uphill at us, finally sensing a threat. Sitting on my rear, elbows on both knees, scope set on 4-power, I shot him through the lungs slightly quartering away. It was 8:30 a.m., and the sun was just coming into our side of one of the most beautiful alpine basins I've ever experienced.

We were on top of the world!

We took our time breaking down the ram and enjoyed a truly wonderful and spiritual morning. Grateful for the opportunity and filled with the utmost respect and reverence for the long life he had lived. During the middle of the work, Justin's playlist of classic rock, '90s alternative, and hip-hop music seemed to only cement the moment to memory. Who knew I'd be listening to Eminem and the Rolling Stones on the side of a mountain while skinning out a magnificent Stone sheep ram? It just worked.

I was thrilled that the ram ended up being 10 years old, with beautiful, dark and varied colors. For those who like inches, his bases measured 14.5 inches, and he had more than 37 inches of horn length, coming in at a green gross score of 162 3/8 inches. While the age of the ram and the experience of the hunt trump inches in my book, I must say it was a cherry on top to break 160 inches on this old warrior!

After moving camp up the mountain that evening, we packed out to our lake camp the next morning, Day 8. It was easily the heaviest pack and the steepest and most technical terrain I've done so far. Once at the lake camp that evening, we were finally able to cook the backstraps from the ram. Justin did a "chicken fry" with eggs, seasoning, and crushed saltine crackers, fried in oil over the fire. It was one of the best meals I've ever had (and not just because of the long heavy pack-out—and seven days of freeze-dried meals, ha-ha).

The float plane came the next morning and strategically took us out of the small lake to start my journey back to society.

I've been accused of being lucky. After drawing a random Wyoming bighorn sheep tag in 2020 with only seven points, then winning this hunt in a raffle, I am now halfway to a slam.

Better to be lucky than good, I guess! More importantly, better to be blessed than lucky.

I truly feel blessed to have had this experience at this time of my life. Prayers are deeper and more frequent in the alpine, and thoughts are clear. The cell phone loses its utility for work emails, texting, and social media and becomes merely a tool to navigate maps and document the hunt. When motivation was needed, pictures of my wife and two daughters were incentive enough to keep going. My oldest daughter also gave me her "prayer cards for athletes" in which her aunt gave to her. These little scriptures and prayers also set the tone when doubt or fear crept in.

The Terminus Crew and Lodge

The Terminus crew and lodge made for a great experience from start to finish. The lodge itself was comfortable and accommodating, with great staff and hot food waiting at the beginning and end of the hunt.

In the field, my guide, Justin, was all in. He brought a genuine passion for sheep and the country they live in, paired with a no-quit attitude. His skill—and the care he took with the animal after the kill—was exceptional. His humor and good musical sense also added to the hunt.

I am already thinking of when, how, and where for Dall sheep!

—Mark Gilbertson

