

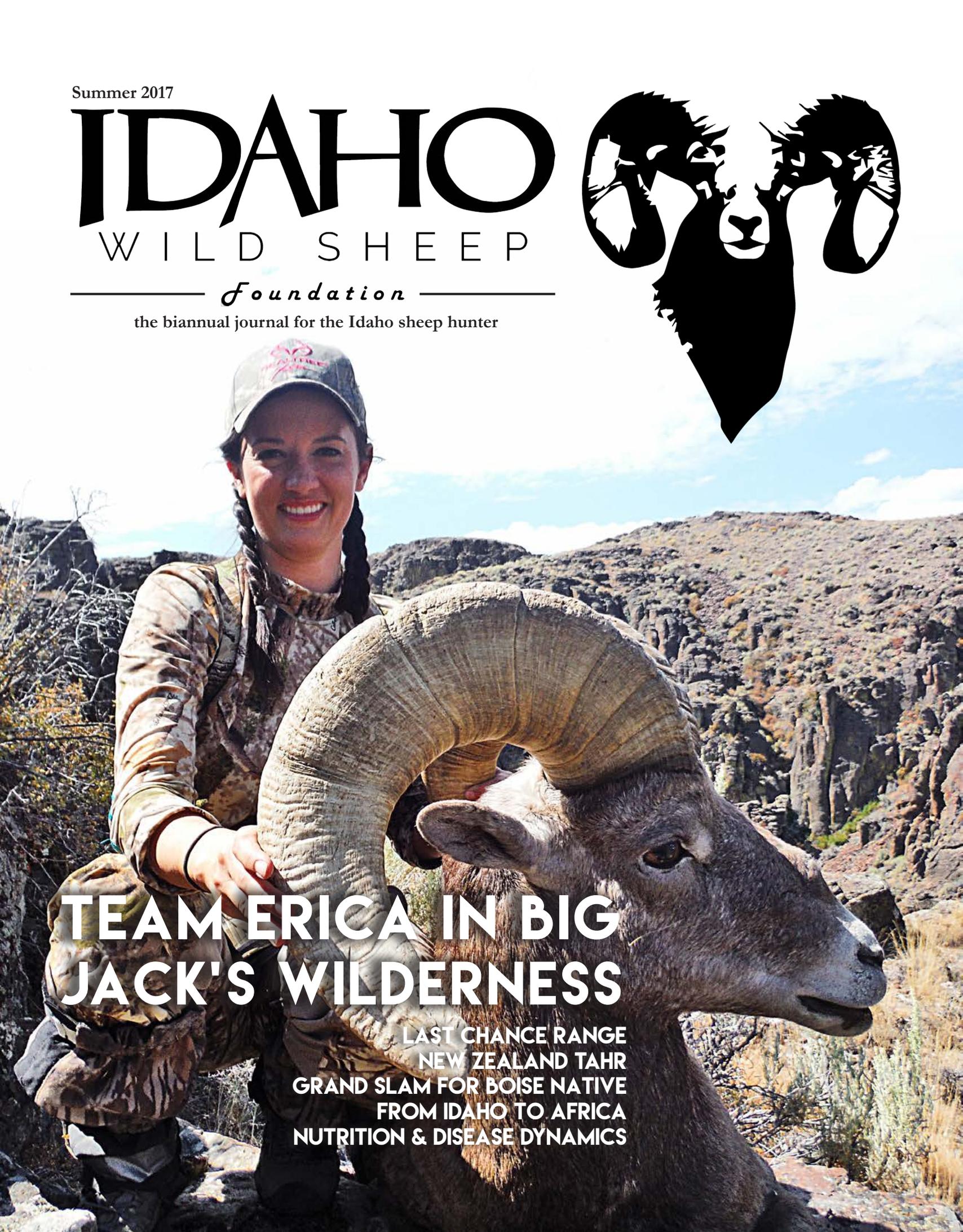
Summer 2017

IDAHO

WILD SHEEP

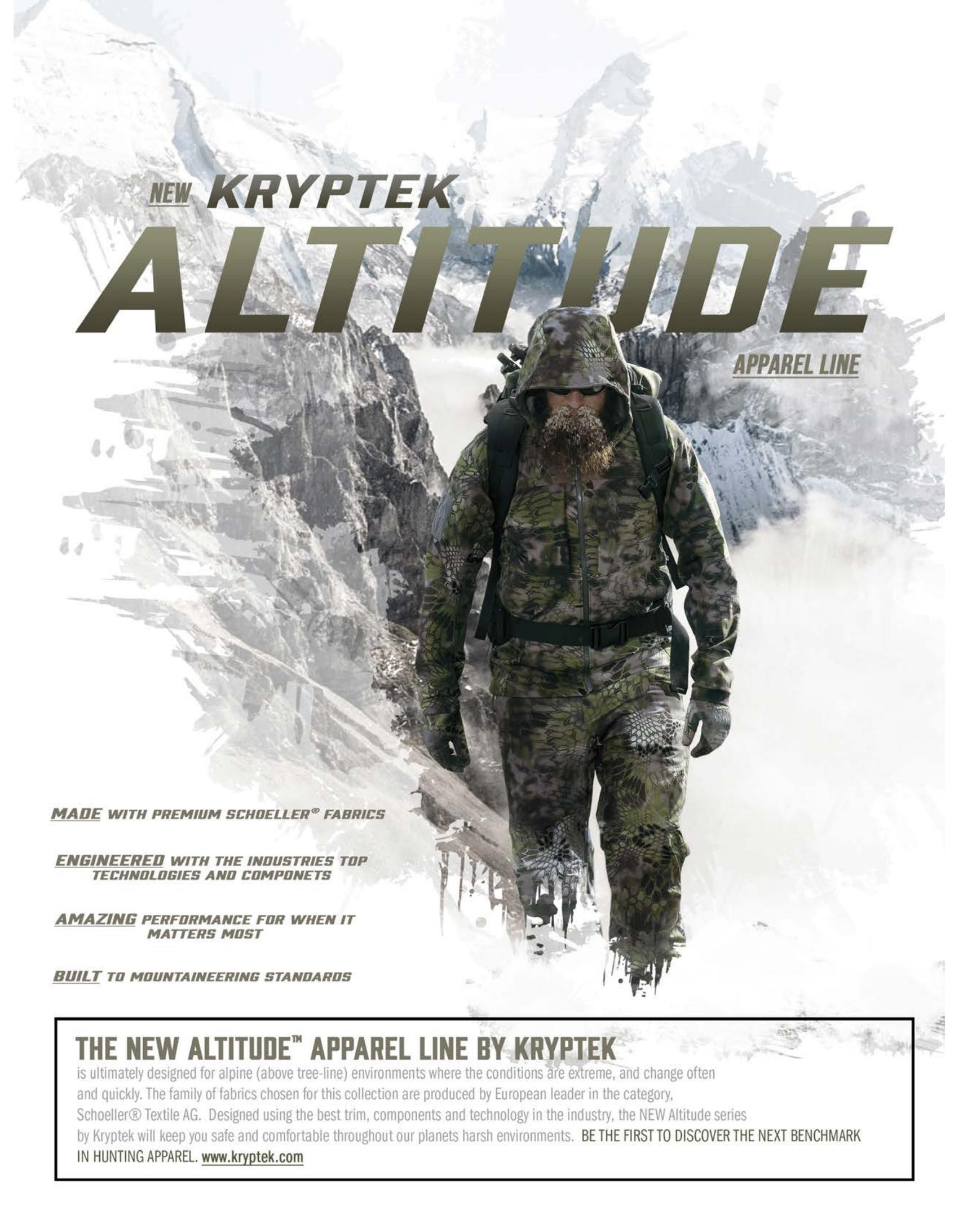
Foundation

the biannual journal for the Idaho sheep hunter

A woman in camouflage gear and a cap is smiling and holding a ram's head with large, curved horns. The background is a rocky, mountainous landscape under a blue sky with some clouds.

TEAM ERICA IN BIG JACK'S WILDERNESS

LAST CHANCE RANGE
NEW ZEALAND TAHR
GRAND SLAM FOR BOISE NATIVE
FROM IDAHO TO AFRICA
NUTRITION & DISEASE DYNAMICS



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THIS ISSUE

FEATURES

- 11 LAST CHANCE RANGE
First Chance on a Desert Bighorn
- 13 NEW ZEALAND TAHR
A Visit to the South Island
- 18 GRAND SLAM FOR BOISE NATIVE
WSF Life Member Breakfast Raffle Winner
- 20 FROM IDAHO TO AFRICA
An Adventure Begins at the IDWSF Banquet
- 24 TEAM ERICA IN BIG JACK'S WILDERNESS
A Family Effort to Land the California Bighorn

INSIDE IDWSF

- 6 2017 BANQUET RECAP
- 8 PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
- 9 2018 DALL SHEEP RAFFLE FORM
- 16 2017 IDAHO BIGHORN LOTTERY REVIEW
- 17 2018 IDAHO BIGHORN LOTTERY ENTRY FORM

CONSERVATION

- 28 IDWSF CONSERVATION REPORT
- 30 NUTRITION & DISEASE DYNAMICS
Summer 2017: Owyhee Bighorn Research Study
- 25 INSIDE IDAHO FISH & GAME
An Overview of IDFG's Bighorn Initiatives

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It's that time of year we all look forward to...and save our sick days for! Hopefully many of you have lined up some epic hunts to enjoy this fall hunting season. I want to thank each and every one of you for the incredible outpouring of support and enthusiasm the IDWSF board has received following our first publication of our new journal. It is our hope that we can continue to grow this publication into a true resource for the Idaho (and beyond!) sheep hunter.

For our Summer/Fall edition I was so excited to receive so many submissions! It is a special and rewarding thing to read your experiences and then be able to share your stories among fellow hunters, adventurers and outdoorsmen and women. In this issue we have stories ranging from Nevada to New Zealand, an African Safari bought at our very own banquet auction, and a local Idaho California Big Horn hunt in our backyard of Mountain Home. We are excited to share these multitude of experiences from our members, because (unfortunately), we can't hunt sheep all the time! In our conservation section we also wanted to make sure we included information about what initiatives the IDWSF has been supporting in conjunction with IDFG and other state agencies to continue to keep our bighorn sheep healthy and on the mountain.

As always, I encourage you to continue to submit your stories and photos to us so we can share and support each other in pursuit of this passion. We are always looking for advertisers and support as well. We have a small but mighty membership that allows businesses to get in front of a targeted audience. If you're interested in advertising with us, please don't hesitate to contact me for our special introductory rates!

I just returned from a trip to Ireland, so I'll leave you with this traditional Irish blessing:

*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be ever at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and the rains fall soft upon your fields.
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.*

Lindsey Cleghorn
creative director/editor in chief
Idaho WSF Board of Directors

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2017 BANQUET RECAP

April 1st, or April Fools Day as it is commonly referred to, was a day of prosperity for the 32nd IDWSF Banquet in Boise, Idaho. After outgrowing our previous venue, the IDWSF board of directors made the decision to host our event at The Boise Centre on the Grove. Widely known as Idaho's premier event venue for its ability to host large crowds while providing a comfortable atmosphere and delicious food, it also came at premium cost.

Going into this year our banquet committee knew it needed to create an atmosphere and energy unlike any in our history for our calculated larger venue risk to pay off. We are happy to report that we were able to produce one of Idaho's most successful sportsman's conservation banquets of 2017. With guest speaker Dan Adler, a Life Member Bighorn Sheep Raffle, an open raffle for Fannin Sheep, a "must be present" Dall Sheep raffle, and a live auction including a dozen hunts, plus general raffles, silent auction, games, good food and libations, how could anyone not be happy!?

During our event we saw a 30% increase in our membership, sold 28 Life Memberships, and sold 3 Centennial Life Memberships (Our newest life member level). Our 2017 banquet produced a 15% increase in our net returns while fueling the fire and passion for our 2018 event in both the Board of Directors as well as those in attendance. We anticipate another 20% growth in attendance in 2018 based on what our banquet committee is proposing for raffles and accommodations. For those interested in attending our event it will be on March 17th, 2018 at The Centre on the Grove in beautiful Boise, Idaho. Details of the event will be on our website at www.idahowildsheep.org as the event approaches.



ZACH HIGGINS
Idaho WSF President



IDAHO WSF CHAPTER

33rd Annual Banquet and Auction

SAVE
the
DATE

MARCH 17, 2018

Boise Centre on the Grove



IDAHO
WILD SHEEP
Foundation



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

It's that time of the year when days start to get shorter and are accompanied by cool mornings and nights. For me personally, it's the best time of year. The fall colors decorate our beautiful mountains, the screams of bull elk serenade deep timber pockets, and lifelong memories are made with friends and family doing what we love. Many of you may have already spent time in the hills pursuing your passions, and for a lucky few of you that may have meant chasing sheep throughout North America. This time of year is a revered pastime for our great country and we are blessed to be able to head into the hills each fall. This blessing is not just given to us, it is earned and sustained through the conservation efforts of many organizations and volunteers who work tirelessly to protect our treasured resources.

The year 2017 has proven to be a very busy year for our organization. We have been working diligently with the Forest Service and BLM to ensure that bighorn risk of contact is at the forefront of their decision-making, we hosted our largest banquet to date this past April, attended multiple Bighorn Sheep advocacy meetings, and have been working with Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) to assist in field studies. All this hard work and countless hours of our volunteers all help ensure that our states herds are here to stay for generations to come.

One of the more exciting projects we were able to help with was a summer research study on Bighorn Sheep in the Owyhee's and East Fork of the Salmon River. This past spring IDFG reached out to our organization seeking volunteers to help collect lamb and foliage counts throughout the summer. This study took hundreds of hours and many hard-earned boot miles in Sheep Country. Thanks to the efforts of volunteers, IDFG was able to get the much-needed help to be able to successfully conduct its study. Lead researcher, Nicole Bilodeau, has a story with details of her study and findings on page 38 of this journal. We are also hard at work preparing for the 2018 Banquet which will take place on **March 17th, 2018 at the Boise Center on the Grove**. These events require months of planning to successfully pull off a night of fun, laughter, and memories. Over the years the Board of Directors has largely shouldered the responsibilities of set up and take down, but due to our sustained growth over the past four years, **we are in need of volunteers to assist in this endeavor. In addition, we are also looking for donors willing to donate hunts, gear, and artwork.** If you are willing to do so, please contact our office so we can get you a donation form. The revenue from this event largely funds all of our conservation efforts throughout the state and we want to be able to do more because our state's herds depend on our success.

As you head into the hills this fall, IDWSF wishes you a safe and successful hunt while enjoying God's creation. Be assured that the Board of Directors is diligently working to improve our sheep herds throughout the state and abroad. We hope you enjoy the many stories of success and our conservation updates enclosed within this journal, have a great fall!



ZACH HIGGINS
Idaho WSF President



IDAHO WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION PRESENTS

DALL SHEEP

2018

Raffle



MIDNIGHT SUN SAFARIS • HEALY, ALASKA
MASTER GUIDE COKE WALLACE

AUGUST 2018 10-DAY DALL SHEEP HUNT



RAFFLE ENTRY FORM

Hunt is valued at \$20,800 not including flights. Dates are August 21-30, 2018.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Tickets:

_____ 1 ticket \$100

_____ 6 tickets \$500

Winner will be drawn at the IWSF annual banquet held March 17, 2018 at Boise Centre on the Grove. Need not be present to win.

No limit to number of tickets purchased

Payment:

Credit Card

Number: _____ Exp Date: _____

Credit card entries can be faxed to 208-321-4819, emailed to trowley@amsidaho.com, or mailed.

Check Enclosed

Checks with entry form can be mailed to Idaho WSF, P.O. Box 8224, Boise, ID 83707

The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation is a non-profit 501-3-C organization with a mission to enhance the wild sheep populations in Idaho. With partners in adjacent states, IWSF strives to put wild sheep on the mountains for public enjoyment, education, and fair chase hunting; to promote professional wildlife management, and protect sportsman's rights.

IWSF relies on revenues raised by raffles like this, our annual banquet and the generous donations given by individuals and our sponsors. For more information, please visit us online at www.idahowildsheep.org.

Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 8224
Boise, ID 83707
www.idahowildsheep.org
208-345-6171

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LAST CHANCE RANGE

FIRST CHANCE ON A DESERT BIGHORN

by John Greer

The month of June 2016 found me preparing for hunts in Oregon, Montana and Idaho. I had pretty much forgotten about the Nevada draw until my phone began ringing off the wall one afternoon early in the month. I had drawn a Desert Bighorn sheep tag in the Last Chance Range of southern Nevada! Despite the years of applying for desert sheep tags in multiple states, I never thought I would draw one.

I met Garth Carter in 1995 when he was first starting the Huntin Fool. Since that time and using their system, I have applied in multiple states for as many tags as my budget would allow. I have drawn many great tags because of my annual draw tag plan.

Due to work constraints and my already tight hunting season schedule, I opted to hire a guide. After careful research, I booked Jim Puryear of Nevada Guide Service. As we researched the unit, NDOW informed us there had been a die-off in my unit. Going into the hunt, Jim was not overly optimistic about our chances of finding a mature ram. Making success even a little more difficult, I told Jim I wanted to try and take a ram with a bow, but I would not rule out using a rifle if necessary.

The summer and fall were filled with workouts to get into sheep shape as well as shooting my .257 Weatherby and my bow. December finally arrived and I headed down to southern Nevada for my hunt.

Jim had done an excellent job of scouting the unit. Fifteen minutes into Day One and 500 yards from camp we spotted our first ram. He was an immature 2 ½ year old, but this already was like no other sheep hunt I had been on. By the end of the first day we had spotted 14 rams, including a shooter we saw with seven other rams at last light. The band of rams was right below a guzzler. We were glassing them from a mile away, so there was no time for a stalk, but it gave us a good starting place for the next day.

They were bedded down 800 yards behind a public shooting range!

Overnight the wind picked up. We had sustained winds of 30 mph with gusts of 50 mph which continually roared. Despite the elements, we glassed up several bedded rams both days. I made a bow stalk on a 155 class ram that was bedded out of the wind. The stalk ended when I was 85 yards from the ram and an unseen ewe nailed me. The following day was quite a learning experience for me. We glassed the big ram and his band of other rams approximately two miles from where we had seen them last. They were bedded down 800 yards behind a public shooting range! The report of guns and the whistling of ricocheted bullets was not bothersome to them at all, but it was to me! They had figured out that there was essentially no hunting pressure behind the range, and were taking full

advantage of it. Unfortunately, swirling wind gave us away and the band headed out in a cloud of dust.

That night we located another shooter ram accompanied by an immature ram a few miles away. We stalked to within 530 yards of the two. As light failed I opted to pass on the shot that night. The next morning we relocated the rams not far from where we had left them the night before. We still could not close the distance much more than the night previously as cover was scarce, but with plenty of time and a good rest I felt good about the shot. At 510 yards, my Weatherby .257 with 110 grain Accubonds dropped him in his tracks. My Nevada sheep hunt was an unforgettable experience.

Many thanks to Jim Puryear of Nevada Guide Service as well as to the Desert Bighorn Sheep enthusiasts who have done an excellent job in habitat improvement and management of this unique species. ■



Nevada Guide Service, www.nevadaguideservice.com

Coke Story

Coke Story



“That evening we sat on the cabin porch glassing for tahr and sipping wine. Well up the mountain I saw a particularly majestic blond bull tahr standing in the middle of a matagouri patch below some cliffs. I was captivated by these animals with their long flowing manes and tight cropped horns.”

NEW ZEALAND TAHR

A VISIT TO THE SOUTH ISLAND

by Bill London

Like many of my hunting adventures, this one started at an Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation banquet. During the auction I was sitting with my wife Shannon and several other couples enjoying the evening. My longtime hunting partner and IWSF Life Member Rick Southwell bid on and won a tahr hunt to New Zealand with famed Kiwi outfitter Croc Adams of Southern Mountain Adventures. Rick and his wife Shirley asked if Shannon and I would join them. Rick and I have an affinity for high steep places and the animals that inhabit them. Having chased deer, elk, javelin, bighorn sheep, Owyhee rams and mountain goats together it only seemed natural that we would go hunt tahr too.

A year later, we were landing in Queenstown on the south island of New Zealand. New Zealand is a scenic country with truly friendly, sincere people. Based out of Wanaka the four of us had two weeks of touring and sightseeing; The Haast Pass, Tasman sea, cruised the Doubtful sound, Mt Cook, bicycle to the Moeraki lighthouse, horse backed the Rees River area (where many scenes from the Lord of Rings were filmed), climbed Roy's Peak, heard red stags roar, saw rare Yellow Eyed penguins, rode the Taieri Gorge train. We met Wanaka locals who took us spotlighting rabbits and fishing for salmon. Rick slipped off one day with Croc and killed a dandy chamois.

Then the tahr hunt. Croc and his assistant Lora Young base out of a comfortable, rustic cabin on an expansive private ranch (Kiwi's call them Stations) in a large glacial valley surrounded by high mountains. Ruby, a small black dog is the third member of the team. She is loving and affectionate, will sleep on your luggage, and is totally devoted to Croc. She is also the one who tracks wounded game, braving thick matagouri thorns along with the hooves and horns of the critter.

We started by trying to find a red stag for Rick. Far away and high up the mountain Croc spotted a mob of tahr bulls working below some cliffs. Our stalk shifted towards the tahr, but on the way we jumped a stag, a nice stag, with antler points all over the place! It trotted over a rise. Rick and Croc snuck over the rise with Ruby by their side. At a bush, Rick and Croc knelt watching the stag at about 120 yards. Ruby sat beside them, like a Labrador in a duck blind. Rick shot, dropping the stag. As we approached it I was surprised by its 32 points and its size — smaller than our wapiti.

When we had packed back to the truck, Croc looked up and commented that the tahr mob was still there. Croc led us over and up towards the mob, they spotted us and spooked. They were quite a ways out when Rick shot hitting the bull too low. The injured tahr dove into the thick thorn-impregnated matagouri and Ruby went in after him. Pretty



soon the bull appeared on the other side of the draw with Ruby on its heels. One more shot and it was over. Rick had a red stag and a tahr in one day!

That evening we sat on the cabin porch glassing for tahr and sipping wine. Well up the mountain I saw a particularly majestic blond bull tahr standing in the middle of a matagouri patch below some cliffs. I was captivated by these animals with their long flowing manes and tight cropped horns.

The next day (Easter Sunday) I spotted a lone bedded bull tahr about a third of the way up the mountain. Near the top Croc spied what we would call the “Big Boy” mob, three large bulls and a youngster in the high cliffs and scree slopes above the vegetation. Rick and Croc stalked in on the bedded bull. I glassed back and forth between their stalk and the Big Boys. With a single shot of the rifle Rick had his second tahr. After pictures we let Rick pack down his tahr while Croc, Ruby, and I started the climb towards the Big Boys. We ended up a couple miles away and 3,400 feet above the cabin only to have the Big Boys hop over the knife edge ridge and slip us.

Croc and I stayed high through the day finding nannies, but no bulls. The scenery was spectacular. As evening came on we slowly worked our way down, glassing as we went. Soon tahr were showing themselves. We were watching several mobs when I saw the previously spotted blonde bull in the

thickest matagouri. I got to experience a truly Kiwi moment, as we were sneaking down a knife edge I could see the blond tahr on my left and I could hear two red stags roaring in the beech grove on my right! Croc worked me into 142 yards of the bedded bull. I shot and it disappeared. The shot felt good, but the bull was in the brush. We started into the thorns. It was slow going until Ruby started barking, letting us know that she was with the bull. It was quite dead and beyond my dreams of a tahr. Eight years old, he had a long full mane with blond tips and a dark freckled face. Croc and I hiked back to the cabin where Rick met me with a beer and Shannon met me with a kiss. I had wanted to hunt high and hard for my tahr and Croc saw that not only did I get the tahr that I wanted, but also the hunt that I wanted.

I got to experience a truly Kiwi moment, as we were sneaking down a knife edge I could see the blond tahr on my left and I could hear two red stags roaring in the beech grove on my right!

At the cabin we found that Lora’s client had killed a large red stag. That night the wine flowed. Lora made lobster for appetizers and stag steaks for dinner. Lora is quite amazing, she was the first up in the morning brewing coffee and making breakfast, and then she guided all day and returned to

prepare incredibly delicious dinners. All of this with an ever present smile.

The next day we took it easy, Shannon went jogging, and Rick helped Croc set up another camp. Later we went fishing. After my rest day I decided to hunt for a second tahr. The next morning broke with low clouds hiding the mobs we had spotted the evening before. We headed out as a large group with Croc, Lora, Rick and I as well as another client from Colorado. After hiking up into the clouds, Croc, Rick and I split off from the others with Ruby of course following. Croc navigated us through the fog and onto a knob where we quietly waited for a view. The clouds raised and lowered, giving us a glimpse then hiding the mountains again. Then there they were, four bedded bulls above us by a scree slope. The closest was at 280 yards, the furthest at 400. Croc told me the close one was the largest and asked me if I wanted to shoot it. "Yes, I sure do." I replied. Plenty of time to set up my shot as the clouds moved in and out. At the single shot the bull jumped up, ran down hill, and collapsed. A beautiful 11 year old bull with silver tips on its dark mane. Bob Ulshafer of Sundance Taxidermy will be doing the mounts from this trip.

I strongly endorse not only Croc Adams and Southern Mountain Adventures, but also New Zealand. You won't be disappointed by either. ■

Author's Note: All of the rifles we shot in New Zealand were suppressed. The .270 we used on tahr, the .22, and .223 we used on rabbits too. In New Zealand big game season is year round, so hunters share the field with backpackers, tourists, bikers and birdwatchers. They consider it to be rude and ungentlemanly to shoot a loud unsuppressed rifle. Additionally, the suppressed shots do not spook other game in the area and are much easier on the hearing of both hunters and guides. I was able to keep my hearing aids in to better listen to Croc's whispered directions and yet still comfortably shoot the .270 rifle. Maybe if I had been using suppressed rifles all of these years I would not have hearing aids.

Southern Mountain Adventures, www.southernmountainadventures.com

Sundance Taxidermy, Bob Ulshafer, 208-376-6330



2017 LOTTERY REVIEW

25TH ANNUAL BIG HORN LOTTERY TAG DRAWN

The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation held the 25th Annual Big Horn Sheep tag lottery drawing on July 26, 2017 at the Idaho Fish and Game Headquarters. John M. Taylor of Arroyo Grande, California was the happy winner of a hunt of a lifetime. Two alternates were also drawn in case Mr. Taylor is unable to make the hunt. The winning ticket this year was drawn by Nicole Bilodeau. Nicole is a graduate student doing her thesis on big horn sheep and has been working with the Idaho Fish and Game on sheep counts in Idaho. The lottery for this bighorn sheep tag has raised over \$1.6 million dollars for wild sheep in Idaho over the past 25 years.

The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation has been hosting this lottery since 1992 with the proceeds going back to the Idaho Fish and Game to help Bighorn sheep research and habitat development. This year, the lottery raised \$83,135 that will be spent towards the benefit and enhancement of bighorn sheep in Idaho.

The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation is a non-profit organization formed to enhance wild sheep populations in Idaho, and with partners in adjacent states, for public enjoyment, education, and fair chase hunting; to promote professional wildlife management, and protect sportsmen's rights. The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation was founded in 1982 by two dozen concerned sportsmen who wanted to "put more bighorns on Idaho's mountains." From that core group, many of who are still very active on the board and committees, the organization has grown to a thriving group with over 300 committed members.



Grad student Nicole Bilodeau draws ticket!

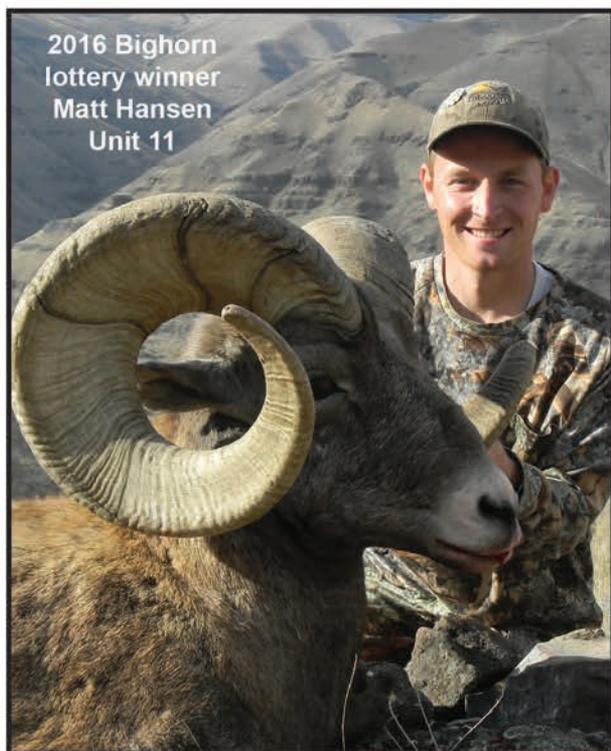


IDWSF President, Zach Higgins makes the winning call!

For more information please contact the Idaho WSF office at 208-345-6171 or visit their website at www.idahowildsheep.org.



2018 IDAHO BIGHORN SHEEP LOTTERY



2016 Bighorn
lottery winner
Matt Hansen
Unit 11

GUIDELINES

- ▶ The 2018 Lottery Tag shall be valid for use in any open controlled bighorn hunt, except Unit 11.
- ▶ Applicants must be eligible to purchase a hunting license in Idaho in order to obtain these special tickets.
- ▶ Applicants must be at least 18 years old to purchase.
- ▶ Void where prohibited.
- ▶ This tag is non-transferrable. No purchase necessary. Hunting license and tag will be provided to winner.
- ▶ Drawing will be conducted on Wed. July 25th at 2pm.
- ▶ Once-in-a-lifetime rule is waived for this raffle tag
- ▶ Need not be present to win



Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization. Funds from the Idaho Bighorn Sheep Lottery are used for the benefit and enhancement of bighorn sheep in Idaho. This form is also available on the IDWSF website, www.idahowildsheep.org.

RECEIPT

Tickets are not sent to buyer.
Keep this stub for your records.

Date: _____

Amount: _____

Payment method: _____

No. of tickets: _____

Drawing to be held on
Wednesday, July 25th at 2pm.
Winner will be notified
by phone.

Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation
PO Box 8224
Boise, ID 83707
208-345-6171
www.idahowildsheep.org

IDAHO 2018 BIGHORN SHEEP TICKET ORDER FORM

No limit to number of tickets purchased per individual. Tickets are non-transferrable. One individual per order form. This form may be copied. No telephone orders. No website orders.

1 ticket \$20 each	# tickets _____ = \$ _____ total
6 tickets for \$100	# tickets _____ = \$ _____ total
14 tickets for \$166.75	# tickets _____ = \$ _____ total
25 tickets for \$250	# tickets _____ = \$ _____ total

Payment can be made by check or credit card. Mail form and payment to: Idaho WSF, PO Box 8224, Boise, ID 83707. Credit card orders can be faxed to 208-321-4819 or mailed.

Credit Card (*Visa, MC, AMEX accepted*) _____
Exp. _____

Check # _____

Signature _____

Please Print Clearly (all required)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone (including area code) _____

Email _____

TICKET ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MONDAY JULY 23, 2018

GRAND SLAM FOR BOISE NATIVE

WSF LIFE MEMBER BREAKFAST RAFFLE WINNER

by George T. Law

For those who don't know, I was the lucky winner of the Wild Sheep Foundation Life Member Breakfast raffle during the 2016 national convention in Reno, Nevada. The coveted prize was a 2018 Dall Sheep hunt with Arctic Red River Outfitting in the North West Territory. After five names were drawn with those Life Members not being present (must be present to win) the "Sheep Gods" smiled on me! The hunt was scheduled for 2018, but Travis and Rebecca Molnar, owners of Arctic Red, were able to move my hunt up to 2017, and boy was I happy about that.

After 5 names were drawn with those Life Members not being present - must be present to win - the "Sheep Gods" smiled on me!

When I arrived at base camp, everything moved like a well-oiled machine! I had enough time to stow unnecessary gear, and grab a bite to eat before I was off in the super cub flying deep into the Mackenzie mountains. When we landed, I met Kent Robertson who would be my guide for the next 10 days.

The weather took a turn for the worse right from the start with clouds dropping to the river and the rain pouring down on us. We ended up spending two days in our tents before we were able to head deeper into sheep

country. We moved camp three times, covering close to 30 miles, seeing plenty of sheep, but nothing worth pursuing. On day five, we found three rams almost on the valley floor that deserved a closer look, but by the time we got to our perch, they were back up the mountain in the cliffs, so up we went. First stalk we couldn't get close enough so we headed back down, just to turn around and go even higher. At this point, Kent thought he could predict where he knew the sheep would go and he was right on!

We moved camp three times, covering close to 30 miles, seeing plenty of sheep, but nothing worth pursuing.

My ram presented me with a 265 yard shot! First shot was on the money, but the tough bugger was still standing so I let the .284 do its thing again! My ram is 11 years old with a wide flaring of 37"!

First shot was on the money, but the tough bugger was still standing so I let the .284 do its thing again! My ram is 11 years old with a wide flaring of 37"!

I had the privilege to be on this hunt with five first-time sheep hunters, and to see their smiles and share in their

stories is beyond words! Five new sheep hunters born!

I had the privilege to be on this hunt with five first-time sheep hunters, and to see their smiles and share in their stories is beyond words! Five new sheep hunters born!

Thank you Wild Sheep Foundation for the opportunity for this great adventure! Putting and Keeping Sheep on the Mountain! Thank you Arctic Red River Outfitters for an outstanding hunt in the NWT's! We went 8 for 8 on this hunt with seven rams being eleven years old and one being 10. I will be back!

WSF Life Member #675
Idaho WSF Life Member #16
Wyoming Life Member #479
Montana Life Member #163
Washington Life Member

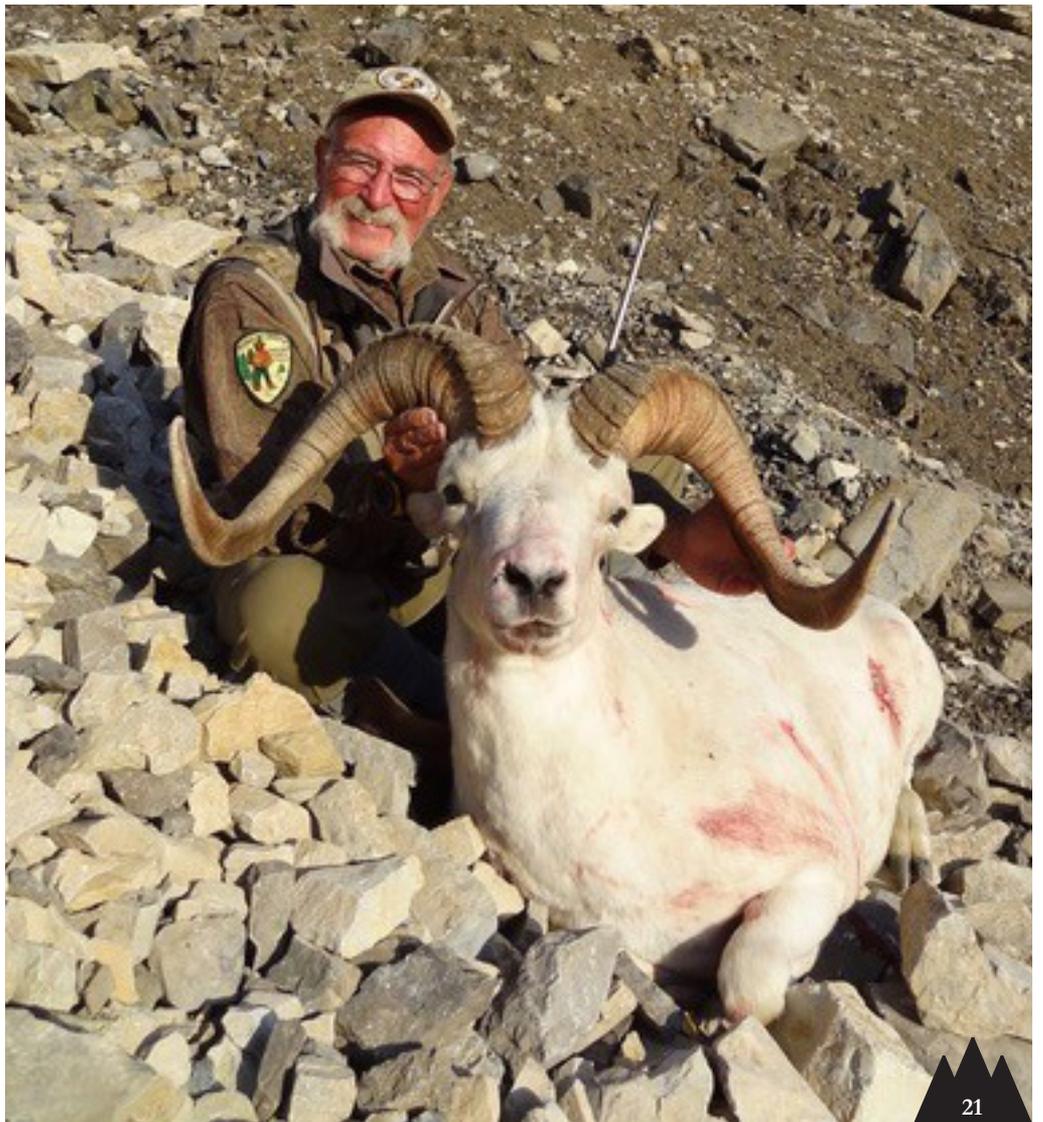
GRAND SLAM #976 ■

To become a Life Member of the WSF, please visit their website at www.wildsheepfoundation.org.

To become a Life Member of the Idaho WSF chapter, there is a form included in this issue, or please visit us at www.idahowildsheep.org.

Thank you to Arctic Red River Outfitting, www.arcticred-nwt.com.







From left to right: Kudu bull, Cape Buffalo bull, the town of Cape Town.

FROM IDAHO TO AFRICA

AN ADVENTURE BEGINS AT THE IDWSF BANQUET

by Don Colter

Adventures can start in many places. Countless times around a campfire, a duck blind, a backpack elk camp, sitting on a cliff watching bighorn sheep effortlessly walk up a scree slope, being at the rifle range or in the shade of a Ponderosa Pine tree, the stories and dreams of hunting and adventure are shared with members of your hunting tribe. For me, stories about hunting Africa have stirred my soul since I was a little boy. As an adult I devoured every book by Capstick and Ruark. Countless times I dreamed of myself in the thorn bush of Africa, pursuing a wily Kudu, on the lookout for lion, watching a magnificent elephant in the Mopane, intently listening to the trackers, following the fearless PH as he leads the hunt and experiencing the sights and smells that only Africa can deliver.

One such adventure began at the 2015 Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation banquet. My good friend and fellow dreamer, Bill London, had experienced Africa many years ago, on numerous occasions we relived his hunt and he told me “You need to go to Africa”. Not that I needed a lot of convincing. Early in the banquet, Bill excitedly came and whispered to me “There is an African hunt in the silent auction!” We quickly went to the display to see what might be in store. Graham Sales Safaris had donated a seven day hunt in South Africa including Impala, Warthog, Duiker and a Jackal; what could be better? I tried my best to nonchalantly put in my bid.

Throughout the night both Bill and I would ease by the bid sheet to see how my bid was faring. It was clear someone else had the same idea, so the game continued, excitement building in anticipation of what might be. Finally, the deadline neared, and Bill looked my way and confirming the winning bid was mine. Let the adventure begin!

I contacted Graham and we set a date. July 4, 2016 would be the day to start the safari. As luck would have it, I was working in Las Vegas during the Safari Club Show and was able to meet Graham before the hunt. As a good Professional Hunter (PH) should, he wanted to know what I would like out of the hunt. I told him that I was open to whatever the hunt would bring, but I would love to hunt Cape buffalo, however I didn't think my budget would allow for that. Graham then told me that he had just received an allotment of cull cow Cape buffalo permits, and offered me one. The buffalo permits were available on the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, over 100,000 acres open to Kruger National Park, truly free range. The Klaserie is one of Graham's concessions, which offers free range buffalo, elephant and hippo. The cull cow permit fit my budget and I would get the full experience of hunting free range Cape buffalo. As soon as I left Graham's table, I called Bill to let him know what I had added to the adventure. I think he was as excited as I was.



I wanted to share this dream with my wife Margo. She isn't a hunter, but she wanted to go along on every hunt to see my dreams fulfilled. South Africa has something for everyone. The adventure grew. We decided to start with four days in Cape Town, fly to the Mpumalanga region in Northeast South Africa for the hunt and cap the trip off with 3 days in Kruger National Park.

Graham helped arrange a tour guide for us in Cape Town, Stephen Mueller. Stephen is a third generation resident of the area, full of knowledge and a truly wonderful gentleman. The Cape Town area is rich in history, a cultural melting pot with much to see and learn. The tour included a trip around the peninsula, including a stop at the Cape of Good Hope and the Boulders penguin colony, tour of Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, Stellenbosch and Franschhoek wine country, cable car ride up Table Mountain and a tour of the City of Cape Town.

We said goodbye to Cape Town and flew to Hoedspruit with eager anticipation. Upon landing we were greeted by warthogs along the runway! Graham picked us up at the airport accompanied by his trusty trackers/drivers, Albert Jameson and Kaunda Nyoni. From the airport we traveled to Moholoholo Forest Lodge, which would be our home for the next eight days. The lodge was everything you read about in African hospitality, thatched rondavels, wild game freely wandering about the grounds, baboons and vervet monkeys curiously watching from the trees, warm staff and Crystal the incredible camp manager.

After settling into our own rondavel, we were escorted to the Moholoholo animal rehabilitation facility for a tour and presentation on the mission of the facility. Incredible what they do to educate the people about wild African animals and the role that hunters play in their conservation. Back at the lodge, we were introduced the lodge's chefs, Comfort and Siezwe, who are truly chefs in every sense of the word.

After arriving at the Klaserie headquarters and taking care of paperwork, it was off to the rifle range. We needed to check the zero of the .375 H&H. Bullseye on the first shot, the scope was still sighted and we were ready to go. We loaded up in Graham's truck, I was in the back looking out over the scenery as we drove, feeling like I was in John Wayne's movie *Hatari*. After a few hours, luck struck close, and we drove upon a 60-head herd of buffalo. The truck was parked and we pulled the rifles out, me with a .375 H&H, Graham with a 500 Nitro Express double and Andre with his bolt action .458 Winchester Magnum. Quietly, we formed a plan and moved toward where we had last seen the buffalo, which were spotted quickly. They didn't seem to be too concerned, although we were at a reasonable distance and posed little perceived threat to them. Graham explained at a certain distance they are aware, but often won't spook, they live their life with lions and hyenas, people don't concern them. We moved closer to get a better view and identify the old cows in the herd that were suitable for culling. There were several cows that met the criteria, but one in particular was the best choice. She was very old and bore the scars of lion battles on her withers, likely she wouldn't make it through the dry season.

We moved closer and the buffalo became more aware of our presence, they began to stand and the bulls moved up to the front in protective defiance. We were at a mere distance of 35 or 40 yards to the bulls. I read Robert Ruark's description that a buffalo bull looks at you like you owe him money, I will attest that is a true statement. The look pierces through your soul. The herd was paying more attention now and began to slowly move away giving us time to find the cow we wanted. We spotted her at the back of the herd, slowly walking away. Graham put the shooting sticks up and I placed the rifle on them. Quietly I confirmed with Graham that the last cow is the one, "Yes, sir," he said. As she stopped, I placed the crosshairs on her shoulder, the rifle roared and the cow made the telltale drop and lunge. She ran a short distance and piled

up in cloud of dust. Just like the videos, the buffalo made the classic death bellow, which is unlike anything I have ever heard.

For plains game Blue Wildebeest and Bushbuck were of particular interest to me. Graham said he would do his best, but the Bushbuck was not likely as they are shy and secretive. The next day was spent driving through the concession getting a feel for the country and what animals were available. As we drove into the hunting area, we spotted a herd of Blue Wildebeest at a distance. It had a very nice old bull. Quietly we prepared the rifles and stalked toward the herd. The wind was in our favor allowing us to move into position. Once on the sticks I confirmed the correct animal with Graham, again I heard, "Yes, sir." The resulting shot was exactly where I wanted it to be. The bull made a mad dash and piled up. What a way to start the day! Off we go to the skinning shed, with the local people coming to see what animal has been taken and to get food for their day. After the skinning was done, we returned to the lodge for a delicious lunch and to plan the afternoon hunt.

At the next waterhole we were reviewing the game camera pictures, with Margo and Albert standing near the truck chatting. Margo noticed the movement of a small animal slipping through the brush. She made a silent motion with her chin to Albert. His eyes grew wide and he slowly moved back to tell Graham who slowly moved toward the shooting sticks and my rifle. It was a Bushbuck, a large one at that. I took careful aim, boom... nothing happened, I had hit a tree! The Bushbuck must have thought I didn't see it. However, luck was with me and the second shot was on the mark. I'll take luck anyway I can get it, and lady luck shone brightly that day, a very large Bushbuck that allowed a second shot. Wow, two magnificent animals in one day!

The next day we were up before the light, quick breakfast and out to the blind by a watering hole in the darkness hoping for the nocturnal Bushpig to show. I learned that hunting Bushpig is much like a leopard hunt, mostly patiently waiting in the darkness. They are seen in the dark using the aid of red filtered light. Daylight came and no bushpig. Seeing what comes into a waterhole is amazing: baboons, zebras, wildebeest, duikers, warthogs and a mixture of birds. Soon I noticed movement to my right and tapped Graham. It was a Nyala bull, which gave Graham a sense of visible excitement. I briefly questioned Graham if this was a Nyala that I should take, which was confirmed again by, "Yes, sir." At the shot, the bull ran, but I was sure the shot was true. Graham radioed for Albert and Kaunda to bring the truck. It's difficult to be patient, wanting to follow up the animal quickly, but it's more important to wait for the trackers. We went to where the bull was standing at the shot and found

him piled up a short distance away. There was no ground shrinkage on this bull; it was bigger than I thought!

Two days left for my hunt, time was moving too quickly. We decide to drive the concession again to see what we can find. For me, driving and not finding suitable animals is never a hardship, just another opportunity to drink in the landscape, people and culture of the area.

The last day, I knew it would come, but I wasn't ready yet. However you can't stop time and we decided to make every moment count. Into the Bushpig blind we went but darkness again slipped away into daylight, and still no Bushpig. Concerned that an errant breeze was blowing our scent into the bedding spot of the Bushpigs, Albert and Kaunda had repositioned the blind. We decide to move to the blind where I took the Nyala. Soon, animals of all kinds and sizes moved in for a quick drink and then back into the bush. A small group of Kudu cows slipped into the waterhole, thus far we haven't seen any mature Kudu bulls. Then, like a gray ghost, a very large bull glided in. A Kudu hadn't been at the top of my list, but sometimes you just have accept what the hunting gods present. Graham indicated it was a very nice bull, a quick glance at Margo and nod from her, and I shot! Loading something as large as a Kudu with those kind of horns is almost an act of magic, one that Graham, Albert and Kaunda have done numerous times. Wow, what a day, what a trip, what could be better? But we still hadn't found our bushpig.

Midafternoon, we headed back into the blind in eager anticipation. We watched intently as various animals passed by. Soon the light began to fade till I could hardly see through my binoculars and I thought the hunt was really over. Then, Graham leaned over and whispered, "They're here." My heart raced, trying to see them in the darkness. Graham held his binoculars in one hand and slowly moved the red filtered spot light in their direction. They appeared modestly aware of the red light, but not frightened. Graham identified a boar on the left, but just as I was about to apply pressure to the trigger, the herd shifted! Slowly, they settled down again and Graham saw the biggest boar broadside to the right. Boom! The shot felt good, but in the darkness it's difficult to tell.

The possibility of a wounded Bushpig in the blackness leaves one with an uneasy feeling, but it's part of the hunt. As we got our headlamps on and ready to follow up the Bushpig, Graham tells me he will have to shoot the animal if we find it and it shows any aggression. Although a Bushpig doesn't have the tusks of a Warthog, they have formidable teeth of their own right. We found my bushpig standing, visibly wounded, and not being aggressive, giving me the opportunity to finish him off with a quick shot. What an





Top to bottom: Blue wildebeest bull, bushbuck ram, bushpig boar, Nyala bull.

the rest of the Moholoholo staff were friendly, warm and hospitable, making us feel at home the entire time. But, further adventure awaited. Graham had arranged a guide to take us on the rest of our trip through Kruger National Park.

Kruger National Park, located in the Northeast portion of South Africa, encompasses 7,523 square miles. It is true wild Africa in every sense of the word. Having a personal guide for Kruger is the way to go. Kruger is so vast with such a diversity of terrain, flora and fauna it would be easy to miss things. Luckily, our guide knew the key spots to see various animals and the highlights of the park. One of the quests of the trip was to photograph the Big Five. A huge benefit to visiting Africa during their winter, our summer, is that the light is great all day and gets better from there. Equipped with our DSLR camera, telephoto lens and iPhones, we were ready.



In my opinion, for sheer awe, it is difficult to beat the elephant. As you drive through Kruger, there are ample opportunities to get up close to elephants. Having them tower over your vehicle gives true perspective to their size. Based on my limited experience, the lion earns their name King of the Jungle. Looking at the amber eyes of a large male lion gives a chill down your spine. We were fortunate to see a family of lions up close. There were two females with three cubs and one old male that bore the scars of many battles. The male was feasting on a Cape buffalo with the others waiting their turn along with several vultures hoping to pick off a morsel or two. During our time in Kruger we saw one leopard. I am still perplexed at how they blend into their environment and seemingly disappear without moving. What an incredible creature. At the Klaserie and on Kruger, we saw several rhino. The rhino are awkwardly majestic. I'm certainly glad that rhino poaching is considered a very serious crime in South Africa and I truly hope that the battle can be won.



amazing way to finish off a safari of a lifetime!

The last dinner at the lodge was great. Part of the safari experience for us was to sample the local cuisine. Delicious is all I can say. We had the opportunity to partake Springbok carpaccio, Impala kebabs, Kudu bobotie and grilled Nyala. All wonderful and different from our North American game. My favorite was the Nyala, perhaps the tastiest game meat I've had.

Last morning at Moholoholo, goodbyes are always difficult. Graham, Albert, and Kaunda are masters in their craft and great guys to be around. Crystal, Comfort, Siezwe and

A trip of a lifetime. The people, the hospitality, the landscape, and the animals made for an unforgettable experience. I was so glad that Margo and I could make this so much more than just a hunting trip. This story is only a fraction of the whole event. Look me up at the next Idaho Wild Sheep banquet, I will be happy to tell the story over again. Remember, Adventures Can Start in Many Places! ■

*A very special thanks to Graham Sales Safaries for donating this special hunt, www.grahamsalesafaries.com
<http://welgelegen.co.za/>
<http://www.moholoholo.co.za/>*



by Hollie Miyasaki

Photo CC by IDFG

INSIDE IDAHO FISH & GAME

AN OVERVIEW OF IDFG'S BIGHORN INITIATIVES

Editor's Note: In August, the IDWSF Board of Directors was able to sit down with Hollie Miyasaki, IDFG's bighorn sheep biologist, about ongoing conservation projects Fish & Game is pursuing for our bighorn sheep populations. The following is an overview of these current projects. It is IDWSF's goal to continue to keep our membership apprised of developments regarding these projects as well as offer more in-depth analysis in future issues.

1 Conservation Genetics and Pathogen Transmission in Idaho Bighorn Sheep. IDFG is conducting a statewide analysis of gene flow, genetic diversity, and pathogen transmission. The goals of this project are to understand connectivity in relation to gene flow and disease transmission in Idaho bighorn sheep populations. This is one component of a broader effort to develop an integrated model of landscape ecology, animal movements, gene flow, disease transmission, and population dynamics

of bighorn sheep in Idaho. In addition to providing a clearer picture of the ecology of Idaho's bighorn sheep, we hope this analysis will help identify effective strategies for increasing the number of wild sheep in Idaho and contribute to similar efforts elsewhere.

Current Analysis: Microsatellite DNA analysis of 658 samples showed that California bighorn sheep populations are genetically similar to each other, have relatively low genetic diversity, and are distinct from Rocky Mountain populations. Gene flow among native Rocky Mountain populations is moderate. Reintroduced populations appear to be less-connected but translocations complicate inferences about dispersal.

2 Assessing whether Source Populations Differ in their Contribution to Successfully Reestablishing Extirpated Bighorn Sheep Populations using Empirical

and Simulated Genetic Data.

Understanding the relative fitness of different source populations could help inform effective decision-making and increase the success of future translocations in Idaho and across western North America. We aim to test the hypothesis that fitness of translocated individuals is related to their population of origin. To accomplish this, our study will focus on six population management units (PMU's) of bighorn sheep in central Idaho that were extirpated and subsequently re-colonized through translocations. We will use microsatellite markers to evaluate the genetic composition of these populations, as well as the source populations. We will then use simulation models to evaluate the expected present-day genetic composition of the re-established populations, under the assumption that translocated individuals from each source population performed equally well. By comparing the empirical





genetic data with the simulation results, we can evaluate whether the assumption of equal fitness across translocation sources has been violated, and therefore whether certain source populations are more successful than others.

3 Bighorn Sheep Resource Selection Models for the Lemhi & Beaverhead Mountain Ranges. During 2001-2014, Idaho Department of Fish and Game deployed GPS collars on bighorn sheep in the Beaverhead and Lemhi Mountain Ranges as an effort to understand movement and connectivity between the many isolated herds. To add value to this effort, IDFG would like to use the location data from these animals to develop a habitat selection model to predict the potential value of bighorn sheep range in the shrub-steppe mountain ranges of south central Idaho.

4 Movi Strain Typing. Statewide analysis of the different strains of Movi affecting bighorn sheep populations.

5 Chronic Shedders. IDFG is monitoring effects of removing pathogen carrier adult females on lamb survival in the field and in complementary captive experiments at both Washington State University and South Dakota State University. We collected samples from 165 bighorn sheep of all age classes in Hells Canyon to monitor infection and exposure to pneumonia. We found active infection in Unit 11 and across the Snake River in Oregon. Other Hells Canyon populations where we removed carrier females remain uninfected and healthy, as do sheep in captivity where exposed sheep are segregated from carriers.

6 Bighorn Sheep Nutrition, Movements, and Demographics. Data from >150 sheep collared in the Owyhee River, Hells Canyon, East Fork Salmon River, and Lost River Range will be used in one M.S. and one Ph.D. project beginning at the University of Idaho investigating the relationships between sheep body condition, landscape forage quality, movements, lamb and adult survival, and

herd composition and abundance. See page 32 for in-depth article.

7 Alternative Monitoring Methods. We will evaluate alternative methods to monitor bighorn sheep population sizes. We will collect scat for noninvasive genetic capture/recapture population or survival estimation, and ground-based surveys including capture/recapture population estimates of previously collared individuals. When complete, we envision a multi-faceted approach to monitoring bighorn sheep that incorporates variables such as diverse topography and habitat, widely varying population density, and ground access, among others. This framework will produce various data products depending on statistical, logistical, and species natural history constraints.

8 Movi Free Project. We are working with owners of small domestic sheep and goat flocks to remove Movi from those flocks and keep their status Movi free. ■



TEAM ERICA IN BIG JACK'S WILDERNESS





“HOW DO YOU TALK TO A NEW SHOOTER ABOUT A 375 YARD SHOT? CALM AND PATIENT - I EXPLAINED THAT EVERY HUNTER I KNOW HAS MISSED A SHOT AT THIS RANGE - SO THERE IS NO PRESSURE.”

by F. Jeffrey Peterson

Erica grew up in Idaho and had been in the mountains a few times with her father, but she did not take Hunters Education until she married my youngest son, James. She carried a rifle a few days hunting mule deer three years ago, but never got a chance to fire the gun. The past two hunting seasons were interrupted by a baby boy named “Hunter”. The spring of 2016, Erica applied for a big horn sheep tag in Big Jack’s Creek south of Mountain Home and she was fortunate to draw one of four tags in the hunting unit!

Big Jack’s Creek is a high desert area which gives way to steep rugged canyons. In 2009 it was designated as wilderness which means there is a 2 to 3 mile hike to reach the canyon rim. To prepare for the hunt, Erica spent time at the shooting range getting comfortable with the .270 rifle and scope. She also spent part of each day jogging and pushing baby Hunter in the stroller.

Five scouting trips were made to the unit, each time learning access points and looking for sheep. Big Jack’s is big country and a couple of ewe and lamb groups were found. Only one smaller ram was spotted so Team Erica learned a few places they did not want to return to. Four days before the hunt, Eric’s father hired an airplane to fly the area at first light – the flight was a success and was able to locate a couple of ram

IT'S A FAMILY EFFORT TO LAND ERICA'S FIRST BIG GAME ANIMAL, THE CALIFORNIA BIGHORN

groups – the flight also energized Team Erica with the idea that there really were rams in the vast hunting unit!

Good sheep hunters are a little different bunch – they have to be positive in all circumstances. I have been on hunts where you may go a couple of days without seeing a thing and the good hunters are absolutely positive that tomorrow is the day! It is a mental and physical challenge! I have three friends that spent 16 days hunting Big Horn sheep in Idaho over two or three different seasons and they never even saw a sheep. A sane person would quit but each one of the three now have a nice Idaho Ram. Sheep hunting, or rather hunting in general, can have high rewards and it can also have low disappointments and frustrations. Working hard to get an opportunity and then missing the opportunity can bring big emotional swings. Good hunters encourage and pick each other up after the down turns – usually after a shot is missed.

Opening day brought excitement as four rams were spotted before 8 A.M. with two of the Rams being big mature animals. Sheep can see through solid rock and the rams had us spotted before we saw them. They were 1200 yards away and bedded down while we huddled and made a plan. Trying to retreat from their view was hard and the rams got nervous and walked over the ridge. By 3 P.M. we had circled and searched the entire point of the ridge in the 95 degree heat with no sign of the rams. We retreated to fix a flat tire and get a new spare.

Early the second morning we walked two miles to the canyon rim and Erica soon spotted a group of rams feeding toward the rim on the far side of the canyon. Through the spotting scope we could see that one of the rams had heavy horns with great mass. As the rams fed out of view we got up and moved quickly along the rim gaining a vantage point to watch the rams climb down into the canyon. We froze suddenly as a smaller ram stood in front of us on our side of the canyon. We sat down and glassed the area. At 280 yards there was a second larger ram that looked 4 or 5 years old. He was a nice ram, but not nearly as good as the heavy horned ram across the canyon. “Do you want to take the shot?” I asked. Erica thought about it and said, “this one is on our side of the canyon, but I think we should go and get a better look at the other rams.” Ok – we were up and moving to the rim while the two closer rams moved off.

At the rim we quickly located the heavy ram bedding down half way below the canyon cliffs. The ram was accompanied by three others. The rams were ranged across the canyon at 375 yards; a long shot for an experienced hunter. We crawled to the rim and could not see any way to get closer to the rams without them spotting us. We watched them for 20 minutes

trying to decide what to do. After whispered discussions we decided to set up for the shot where we were. We sat a pack down for Erica to sit on and another pack on a higher rock to rest the rifle on. Since the rams were bedded we were not in any hurry. Erica looked through the scope and re-adjusted the packs a little until she was very comfortable with the rest. The grass in front of the barrel was pulled leaving a clear lane to the sheep. The sheep would stand up one at a time, look around, re-adjust their position and lie back down.

How do you talk to a new shooter about a 375 yard shot? Calm and patient - I explained that every hunter I know has missed a shot at this range - so there is no pressure. You explain that the shots she made at the 100 yard range will extend to the longer range if the same shooting mechanics are followed. Take your time, don't shoot till you are ready breathe out before the shot and squeeze the trigger. The scope was set to 14-power and the parallax dial set for 400 yards. The scope contains additional tic marks down the lower vertical crosshair. The first tic mark is set for 350 yards, the 2nd for 400 yards and the third for 450 yards.

Erica was calm and listened very well. She indicated that the crosshair was steady at 14-power. I responded that I was confident she was going to hit the ram. We discussed which tic mark to use and then we factored in the downhill slope and changed our mind. The gun is sighted in for the horizontal distance not the slope distance. The new range finders can calculate the horizontal distance but our range finder was older. We decided to hold the main cross hair on the top of the back. Erica practiced pulling the trigger four or five times without a bullet in the chamber. It gave her a feel of the trigger and let James watch for any flinches.

She was ready! We just needed the ram to stand up. It was now 11:30 am. I laid down while Erica and James watched the sheep. Five minutes later James slapped my boot – the rams were up – it was go time. The big heavy ram was facing away so there was more waiting; after a minute or so it turned broad side and James whispered, “When you are ready.” It seemed like a long long time as Erica composed the shot while James and myself concentrated through binoculars. Waiting, waiting, silence, then the explosion as the bullet was sent. The big ram remained upright – two of the other rams started uphill and the big ram moved away along the side hill with the smallest ram following it. The big ram disappeared in a small bunch of yellow brush. The adrenaline had kicked in and the excitement level was off the meter. Erica had a new shell in the chamber. “Turn the scope power down so you can find the sheep!” I blurted out. James could not see the big ram as it slowly walked out of the brush across a talus slope. I stood and moved to point over James' shoulder – Erica looked where I was pointing and both she and James





“It seemed like a long, long time as Erica composed the shot while James and myself concentrated through binoculars. Waiting, waiting, silence, then the explosion as the bullet was sent.”

found the sheep quickly. Erica was fighting the adrenaline and calmly cranked the scope back to 14-power and quietly asked which tic mark she should use for the next shot. “Use the 2nd tic mark,” I quickly responded. The ram had easily moved 80 yards further away.

At that point I was a little excited and was the one who could now not find the ram again! Erica lined up the second shot as the ram paused – James had the ram in the binos – I was a really interested 3rd party. The shot rang out and James announced that the Ram was down and that it slid downhill out of view. High Five, hugs, and congratulations were in order as the breathing slowed somewhat and relief swept over Team Erica. Wow, wow, wow! She had really done it! Wow!

It took over an hour to descend the canyon and climb the slide rock using all fours to get up the other side. Finally, we were close and then there it was. The ram had slid only a short distance which was fortunate! 20 to 30 feet further and the ram would have gone over a 200 foot vertical cliff.

The ram’s horns were heavy and massive, the ram was at least 10 years old and the hunters were in awe and all smiles. Lots and lots of photos and a lot of work ahead! Erica had hit the ram on both shots. The first shot was almost over the back catching the liver just under the spine. The ram would have died but we may not have seen where it went down. The 2nd shot at 450 yards was through the lungs and the ram expired immediately.

Big Horn Sheep are considered the hardest animal in North America to hunt. Erica her 1st big game animal and it was the California Big Horn! Wow! Erica was mentally and physically prepared for a long hunt but was also prepared to be successful on the 1st day or in her case the 2nd day. Erica showed great poise and drive by passing up the ram earlier in the morning; that was an impressive call. Erica remarked that she really felt the adrenaline and excitement that comes to most hunters at the moment of truth. She also concluded that hunting was way more exciting than gathering! “Gatherer” will likely not be the name of the second child! ■

IDWSF CONSERVATION REPORT

by Mike Schlegel

The IDWSF Board remains active in collaborative policy and conservation issues. The addition of new Board members with substantial experience will help improve our capacity to engage in new and upcoming issues/opportunities. Our interaction on both national and state level efforts is important to ensure progress is made to maintain and restore Idaho's bighorn herds.

The Board is engaging with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to work with small flock domestic sheep owners in and/or near bighorn sheep habitat to prevent contact with bighorn sheep. Many operators are not aware of the disease transmission issue, however most are willing to learn management techniques regarding how they can prevent contact. A very encouraging program is the propagation of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi) free domestic sheep. Although this appears to be a practical solution for small flock operators, at this point in time it is not suitable for large flock operators. We will be working closely with IDFG to educate private landowners and identify site-specific solutions for small flock operations.

During early June, a Board representative participated in a "Washington DC Fly-In". In addition to WSF's Legislative Affairs chair and co-chair, and Legislative Affairs Consultant and Lobbyist Greg Schildwacher, members representing AK, CA, CO, MT, and NV attended the fly-in. WSF Legislative Affairs Chair Brett Jefferson summed up the trip as follows:

"We made progress on two of our Legislative Affairs Vision + Agenda priorities: 1) Maintaining a steady, positive policy from the Congress on advancing Risk of Contact analysis; and, 2) Building a bipartisan group of members of Congress who understand the entire agenda for wild sheep. We sought support for the Fiscal Year 2017 Omnibus Interior Appropriations report language which provides Congressional direction to the Forest Service and BLM to prevent disease from spreading on grazing allotments. Recent spending bills have directed agencies to identify risks which involve sportsmen and grazing permittees in eliminating these risks. This keeps pro-multiple-use groups together in resolving a difficult problem through consensus. This approach identifies potential for alternative grazing

where disease risk is low, also including the involvement of states and other federal agencies. Senators and Representatives have reinforced this direction with several sign-on letters to the USDA and the Interior Department."

The Draft EIS for the Dubois Sheep Experiment Station was reviewed and comments submitted. The Final EIS was recently released and most of our concerns and comments were basically ignored. A concurrent effort by IDWSF and other sportsmen's groups has been made to close and relocate the Dubois Sheep Experiment Station over the last several years. In addition, past administrations, in their budget proposals, have recommended the closure and relocation of the experimental work done the station to another existing station. The primary objective of IDWSF and other support groups is to close that portion of the station's activities in the Centennial Mountains. This is needed to minimize and/or eliminate contact between domestic sheep and bighorn populations from Idaho, Montana and Wyoming that use the east-west corridor for movement, plus to protect bighorn populations in surrounding areas in all three states. A letter was sent to our Idaho legislative delegation expressing our concerns, plus recommending alternative uses for the Dubois Station. Unfortunately our elected officials have not been helpful regarding the sheep station issues.

The conservation committee is engaging with a bighorn advocates group that includes several organizations with which we do not partner. Our chapter, as well as the WSF, and the OR FNAWS and WA WSF chapters, thinks it is in the best interest of bighorn sheep to work together as a united front regarding bighorn sheep issues rather than to work individually. A more coordinated effort will help us be aware of issues and avoid counterproductive measures which might influence any group's ongoing efforts.

The Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Restoration Committee, in addition to continuing population monitoring work and disease work, has formed a subcommittee to develop a pilot project designed to enhance the Black Butte population. The major objectives of this study will be to manage the disease within the population and to prevent new disease outbreaks. Basically the results of the 'shedder' study will be

applied, with ewes that are chronic shedders removed from the population. To prevent new disease outbreaks, an active 'public outreach' program will be initiated for domestic sheep owners in the study area. We have representation on this subcommittee.

We submitted comments to the USFS regarding the management plan for the Jim McClure-Jerry Peak, Hemingway Boulder and the Boulder White Cloud Wilderness areas. Our recommendations included: 1) applying the existing management plan used for the Sawtooth Wilderness and Sawtooth National Recreation area; 2) prohibit the use of pack goats; 3) prohibit the use domestic sheep and/or goats to activate vacant allotments; 4) conduct Risk of Contact on existing domestic sheep allotments; and 5) allowing the IDFG to use helicopters to conduct management and research.

The Salmon-Challis National Forest has begun a forest plan document. IDWSF is involved and has recommended bighorn sheep be give "species of concern" status for the planning process. ■

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Five months after my hunt, Tyler was involved in a roll-over accident breaking his neck and paralyzing him from the chestdown. Although there is still hope, Tyler may never walk in sheep country again and it makes our experiences together hunting my ram even more special.

CHERISHED TIME

by Zach Higgins

There are moments in everyone's life that stick with you so deeply that by merely closing your eyes you are instantly taken back to that place and time. The people, conversations, sounds, and smells are so ingrained in your mind that for a brief moment you can relive those memories time and again. I have been blessed to have many of these times in my life, especially while hunting. Since the age of 12 and my first hunt, I can tell you the exact detail of the hunt of every animal I have been fortunate enough to harvest, and many more of the ones I've missed. This story begins with one of these very cherished times.

It was late on a Sunday night in March of 2016 and I was filling out my Nevada Hunting applications while on the phone with one of my best friends, Tyler Curry. Tyler and I were going over the draw odds and trophy statistics for each species and unit I was applying for. We spent most of our conversation discussing which Muzzle Loader Mule Deer Hunt to apply for together since neither of us had many points for deer and figured we could find a sleeper unit with good drawing odds to secure ourselves a hunt for the fall. We were planning a backpack hunt in a unit that neither of us had hunted and it seemed that, aside from a tag in our pocket, we had the whole hunt planned.

When it came time to discuss California and Desert Bighorn Sheep, it was a pretty short conversation. I had wanted a sheep tag more than any other for as long as I can remember, but given the odds as a non-resident, I didn't want to get my hopes up. Especially since there are over 8,000 applicants for five California Bighorn tags and not much better odds for Desert Bighorn. Tyler, having drawn both of these tags as a resident, told me that I just needed to stick with it and it would happen. That night, just as I had done 13 years prior, I made what I thought was going to be another application donation to NDOW and moved on.

A few months later on the night before the results were to be posted, and my wife and I were getting ready for bed and I told her that given my work load, as a new owner of a business, I didn't think this would be a good year to draw a sheep tag. She laughed and said, "You watch, this will be the year it happens!" In 2012 she drew a Nevada Desert Sheep Tag, which was the same year we had our first baby. "It always happens when you aren't wanting it to," she said. I laughed and told her that kind of luck only happens to her and went to bed hoping that at least Tyler and I would draw the deer tag we had applied for.

Knowing tag results are posted around 5:00 PM, I spent the day trying to stay busy and burn time off the clock. Tyler and I spoke around lunch and confirmed our plans for the deer tag we were both hoping for and as the day wrapped up, I started checking HuntNevada.com. Five o'clock came and went with





no results, so I figured that NDOW was playing a cruel trick and delaying the tag results. I decided to head home and enjoy the weekend with my family.

As I left my office parking lot, I disappointedly called Tyler to see if he knew why the tags weren't posted. When he answered, he calmly asked how I was doing and I told him that I was pissed the tag results weren't up yet. He laughed and said I should check again and to call him after I looked. I frantically asked if we had drawn our deer tag and again he told me to take a look and call him back.

Driving down the road at over 50 mph I immediately hit the brakes, threw my hazards on, and pulled off into the borough. When I looked up my name I was in disbelief, I had drawn a Non-Resident 034 CA Bighorn Sheep tag.

Driving down the road at over 50 mph I immediately hit the brakes, threw my hazards on, and pulled off into the borough. When I looked up my name I was in disbelief, I had drawn a Non-Resident 034 CA Bighorn Sheep tag...in the same unit that Tyler killed his record book ram!. The person in traffic who pulled up next to me must have thought I was a lunatic as I was screaming at the top of my lungs banging on my steering wheel, but I didn't care, this was a dream come true!

When I called Tyler back he was already on the road headed to my house to celebrate with me. I called my wife and she was almost as excited as I was and as wives do, said to me "I told you so!" After many calls to friends and family it started to sink in that after 13 years of applying I finally had a sheep tag in my pocket and I had the support of friends and family to make the hunt possible. By the time the weekend was over I had a plan in place for scouting over the summer and which weeks I was going to plan on hunting during the season.

Over the course of the summer I reached out to every possible resource to gain information about where mature rams would be. Fortunately for me, between Jim Jeffress, retired NDOW Biologist/IDWSF Board Member, and Tyler's knowledge of the unit I had two aces in the hole. We made three scouting trips and saw rams at every location they had said they would be. On one trip we saw 23 rams in one day, and although none were shooters, I was ecstatic with the number of rams we were seeing in every corner of the unit. I knew then that it was just a matter of time before we found my ram.

Aside from the rams, the time spent in the hills with my closest friends creating priceless memories of sleeping under the stars, resting sore legs in natural hot springs, laughing until we couldn't breathe, and enjoying one of our favorite regions of Northern Nevada during a time of year we had never seen it. I will never forget Tyler's fear, confusion, and laughter as a burrow owl hit him square in the face as we drove in our



side-by-side one night headed back to camp. The owl and Tyler survived the encounter unscathed which made the experience all the more funny.

As opening day approached I made the decision not to hunt in hopes that a few of the eight tag holders in the unit would fill their tags so I wouldn't have to be bumping shoulders with anyone over the same rams. With the rut coming on in October, I planned a four-day hunt in the middle of September, and 10 days in October. To my surprise, after speaking with NDOW, there were no rams killed opening day, or the following weekend.

Somewhat regretting my decision not to hunt either weekend, I turned my focus to my Uncle, Tony Reviglio, and his non-resident Oregon Rocky Mountain Bighorn tag at Lookout Mountain. He had hired an outfitter for six days and said he was prepared to go the full length of the 15-day season by himself to find his ram if it came to that. Knowing that he was potentially going to be hunting by himself, I offered to skip hunting my Ram in September to make sure he got his. On opening morning of his hunt, I watched as Tony squeezed off on a beautiful 175" ram of his dreams that he scouted two days before his season.

The timing of things couldn't have worked out better as Tony had already planned to be gone for two weeks and now had

time to help me on my hunt. He offered to drive down to my unit on Wednesday to set up camp and spend some time scouting the few remaining areas of the unit I hadn't been able to cover during the summer. In addition, Jim Jeffress offered to come and help out along with Tyler and fellow partner-in-crime, Pat Mansfield. I knew that I had a team of friends of family I could count on to do whatever was necessary to ensure we had the best chances of punching my tag.

When Jim and I arrived at camp on Thursday evening we pulled into Tony cooking dinner. Tony had a huge grin on his face as he handed Jim and I a beer and told me he thought he had found my ram while glassing back into that area. Skeptical, I thought he was pulling our leg and trying to justify why he was at camp drinking beer and not out looking for sheep!

After looking at our maps Tony continued to tell us that he found a group of five rams, and although far enough away he couldn't put a score on them, there was a mature ram in the group that had a beautiful chocolate coat. We made plans to return to his glassing point the next morning to see if there was a ram we wanted to make a move on. Hours before the sun rose we were loaded up in the side-by-side and headed up the mountain. After an hour of glassing we finally caught what seemed like ants moving through the spotting scopes. All five rams were only about 200 yards from where Tony had seen them the day before. Just as Tony had said, there was a dark



chocolate ram that was mature and appeared to be bigger than any other rams we had seen all summer.

Tony, Jim, and I spent the next hour watching the rams feed along the hillside before bedding down. My excitement was palpable, but Tyler and Pat weren't set to arrive till that night and since both had put in the hours with me over the summer, I wanted them to be a part of the experience. We made the decision to leave the rams alone and make a move on them the next morning with the hope they would be in the same spot. We spent the rest of the day looking for other sheep and planning our approach for the next morning.

After watching him for two hours we talked about backing out and looking elsewhere for a different ram, but thoughts of not seeing one this big again tore me up.

Knowing I could possibly punch my tag on a ram for the first time in my life I could barely sleep. While tossing and turning in my sleeping bag I heard Pat and Tyler pull into camp around 3:00 AM after working all day and driving all night to come help. Friends like that are few and far between and knowing they were going to be there with me on my first ram after all of our hunting experiences made things feel right.

A few hours later, our alarms started going off and we began loading up. We made a plan to split up with Pat and Jim going back to the glassing point to locate the rams as Tony, Tyler, and I walked to the top of the rim where we'd seen the sheep the day before. We headed our separate ways hoping that within a few hours we would seal the deal. When we reached the edge of the wilderness the sun was just starting to rise, it was a sunrise that Northern Nevada is known for with clouds of every color painting the sky. I couldn't help but think it was a good luck sign as we hit the trail on a two-mile hike hoping that the ram I had been looking for was at the end of it.

As we approached the edge of the basin our radio cracked with Pat and Jim letting us know the sheep were in the same spot as the day before. My heart started beating out of my chest knowing that only 400 yards away I would be looking up close at these rams. As we slowly crested the edge of the rim Tony hit the deck. He had the rams spotted at 270 yards below us bedded down. After locating all five rams, we crawled into a rock outcropping to get the spotting scope out and try to put a score on the ram. We could tell he was at least an 8.5 year old ram, but I wasn't sure if I wanted it all to come to an end knowing I had 10 days in October to be back out there. I had my goal set on a 158" ram, which would make Nevada book, and we thought this ram was right there, but I didn't want to regret pulling the trigger too soon on a ram we couldn't guarantee was going to meet that mark.

After watching him for two hours we talked about backing out and looking elsewhere for a different ram, but thoughts of not seeing one this big again tore me up. I said a quick prayer and asked God to show me a sign and blurted out that I was ready to leave. Just then Tyler, a very conservative scorer, asked me if I was sure that's what I wanted to do. I knew that was my sign and I made the call to take a shot at this ram.

Still bedded down, we waited for another 45 minutes as the rams slept waiting for a chance to shoot. Killing time, we whispered funny stories of times past. Tyler was in the middle of telling a story that literally had us in tears when we heard rocks start tumbling down the scree slide below us. We quickly got into action focused in on the sheep. Two of the younger rams decided they were going to make a run for their watering hole and my ram stood up to see what was going on. After making sure Tyler and Tony were on the ram I flipped off my safety and settled in behind the shoulder. I squeezed off on the trigger and quickly reloaded not knowing if I hit him. The sheep took off running away from us and lined up in a tight group that didn't present a shot.

Story continued on page 40 ►►►



by Nicole Bilodeau

Clear Creek Sheep. Photo by author

NUTRITION & DISEASE DYNAMICS

SUMMER 2017: OWYHEE BIGHORN RESEARCH STUDY

Editor's Note: Earlier this summer, IDWSF sent out a letter asking for volunteers to help Nicole Bilodeau, a Master's student, in her search to find how native foliage affects ewe and lamb survivability in varying ecosystems across the Owyhees and East Fork of the Salmon River. We had an amazing outreach of support and are excited to help Nicole with further research as this study progresses.

The morning air is crisp as dawn peaks over the horizon, illuminating the landscape in a golden hew. Our team sets out from camp at first light, headed for the rim of the canyon. As the terrain becomes more uneven and the cliffs seemingly rise out of the river, we know we are getting close. Silently we sit and glass, scrutinizing every inch of the canyon walls for movement. Just when the anticipation couldn't get any higher, we see them; a group of bighorn sheep traverses the rocky slopes, stopping periodically to graze on small outcrops. Young lambs skip and race around the herd, causing scree to tumble down the impossibly steep walls. Finally, the opportunity we've been waiting for

presents itself, and we quickly get to work pulling out data sheets, spotting scopes, and telemetry equipment. We focus our scopes on the collared ewes to determine which individuals have lambs and which do not. Once we have finished our observations we can't help but sit a little longer and watch as the lambs nuzzle their mothers, practice butting heads, and leap from rock to rock. These lambs are the next generation of our bighorn sheep populations, which is why it is important to understand the complex factors that influence their survival.

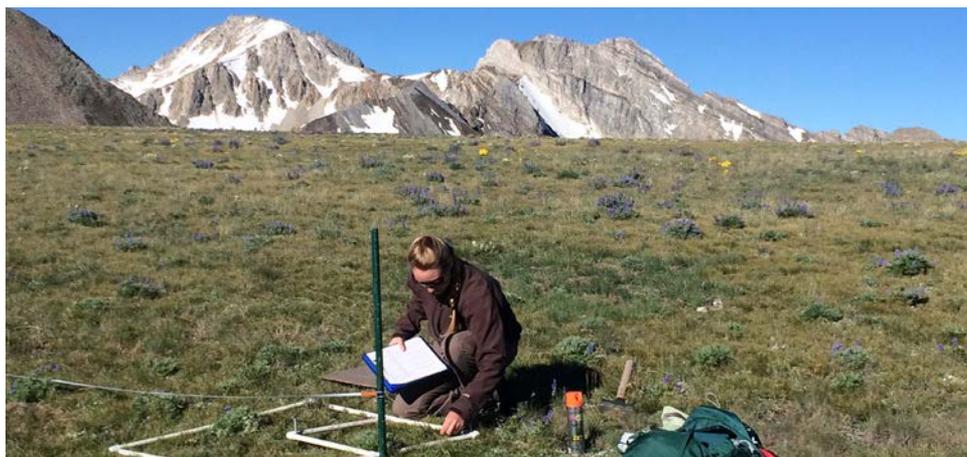
Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) has been studying bighorn sheep populations for decades, and has learned a lot in the process. For example, we now know that disease, and pneumonia in particular, is the cause of depressed bighorn sheep populations in some parts of Idaho. However, we also know that poor nutrition can predispose wildlife to increased mortality from disease, making it critical to understand relationships between nutrition and disease dynamics in bighorn sheep. Over

the next few years we will be studying the effects of nutrition on disease prevalence and lamb survival in two populations of bighorn sheep in Idaho. This research was initially developed and funded by IDFG as an extension of an ongoing management project, and is being conducted as a graduate project in collaboration with the University of Idaho.

"Poor nutrition can predispose wildlife to increased mortality from disease, making it critical to understand relationships between nutrition and disease dynamics."

The project is currently comprised of 49 ewes collared with GPS transmitters in two study sites: the Owyhee River (OR) and the East Fork of the Salmon River (EFSR). Both sites have unique habitats and bighorn sheep populations: the OR is characterized by Great Basin type

to volunteer to help with Nicole's continued research, please contact her at nicole.bilodeau@IDFG.Gov.Idaho



habitats and California bighorn sheep, whereas the EFSR is characterized by diverse high-elevation habitats and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. At both sites we conducted aerial surveys this past spring to count the number of newborn lambs associated with collared ewes and then we monitored lambs from the ground throughout the summer and early fall. We will use these observations to help us estimate lamb survival rates. In addition to lamb surveys, we set up habitat phenology plots at each site, which we revisited on a monthly basis throughout the summer to track stages of plant growth (i.e., new growth, flowering, fruiting, mature, cured) and forage availability. We also collected fecal pellets from adult sheep to determine their forage selection and diet composition. Essentially, we want to determine what the sheep are selecting to eat vs. what plants are available for them to eat during the summer and then evaluate the abundance and nutritional quality of those plants. Lastly, to assess disease prevalence we are collecting blood, mucus, and tissue samples from

sheep when they are collared and from any fresh carcasses.

Essentially, we want to determine what the sheep are selecting to eat vs. what plants are available for them to eat during the summer and then evaluate the abundance and nutritional quality of those plants.

When field work begins again next spring we will be adding two additional surveys that will help us to evaluate the nutritional quality of the landscape at each site. First, we will conduct habitat composition surveys, which will allow us to assess plant species composition and availability of key species during the peak of the growing season. Secondly, we will be estimating forage biomass and collecting plant samples to determine

how much forage is available to sheep and the nutritional content of each plant species. These surveys will help us to compare the nutritional quality of the landscape between our two study sites. This past summer was the first of three field seasons, so we still have a lot of work to do. We could not have completed our surveys this year and accomplished so much without the help of countless volunteers. In particular, we are constantly in need of enthusiastic and able-bodied volunteers to help with lamb surveys during the summer. It is an exceptional opportunity to spend time in the field hiking in rugged country, exploring some of Idaho's most unique landscapes, and observing bighorn sheep. It doesn't get much better than watching lambs frolic around on the rocks! If you are interested in volunteering next summer, be on the lookout for volunteer announcements from the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation next spring. ■



Continued from Page 36 ►►►

We anxiously watched as my ram stood looking around. I could see his back end was a bit wobbly, but I couldn't see any blood and we hadn't heard the sound of a bullet striking home. Just as he started to turn downhill he presented a shot and I let another round off scattering all the rams. My ram still didn't show any signs of being hit and I was getting really nervous that I had just blown my chance. When he stopped after running about 20 yards I sent another one at him and he finally dropped into a small clump of sage brush next to the scree slide. I watched as his head got wobbly and he finally tipped his head up towards the sky and was done.

I was so overcome with emotions that I had finally punched my tag on a ram after 19 years of hunting. We all hugged and reveled in what had just happened, and as I sat down on a rock I felt tears of appreciation and joy. To this day, I still can't fully explain these emotions, but I will never forget them. After making our way to my ram I couldn't believe I had considered walking away, he was everything I was looking for. He had mass, age, character, and I was able to share the with my best friends.

After a couple hundred photos we started the hard work of processing the ram and hiking out of the basin. Although we were only a couple miles from the trailhead, it was a brutal climb through a scree slide and up to the rim 500 yards above us. As we crested the top I saw Pat and Jim making their way towards us in the distance. They had driven two hours around the range and hiked in to help us pack out. As I lightened my pack I was again reminded by the friends I am fortunate to have in my life.

After we arrived back at the side by side I called my wife and kids on a satellite phone to share the good news. I will never forget the excitement in my wife and kid's voices as they heard of our success. Back at camp the celebrations began, but before things got too out of hand we taped the ram and scored him at 159-1/4" and aged him at 10.5 years old!

Five months after my hunt, Tyler was involved in a roll over accident and broke his neck paralyzing him from his chest down. Although there is still hope, Tyler may never walk in sheep country again and it makes our experiences together hunting my ram even more special. All of the planning, laughter, and success after a combined 14 days in the field is truly something I will always cherish. Events like Tyler's accident bring life into perspective because at a moment's notice things may change forever. I am forever grateful to all those that helped me fulfill a dream, especially my wife Amber, Dad, Brother, Tyler, Jim, Pat, and Tony. Without you all I couldn't have done it. ■



*To follow Tyler's recovery journey,
please consider donating to his medical fund at:
<https://www.gofundme.com/tyler-curry-medical-fund>*



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