

# ALL THAT BUZZ IN IDAHO UNIT 51

RAM DOWN!

LIVING THE DREAM

LUCKY HAT

OREGON STEELHEAD FISHING

ONE AND DONE

THE SCOTTISH STAG

NEXT TIME IS NOW

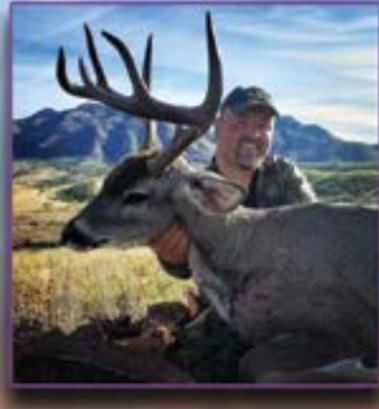


Summer 2020

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the biannual journal for the Idaho sheep hunter

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Contributing photos, articles, stories and research pertaining to wild sheep or the interests of members of the Idaho WSF are always welcome. Contributed material will be published at the editor’s discretion.

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**HISTORY**

The Idaho Wild Sheep 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 which are still very active on our board and committees, we have grown to a thriving organization with over 500 committed members.

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## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

2020 has shown us some challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly left its mark on this world. With these challenging times you get a good perspective of those you are associated with. The Idaho Wild Sheep family is incredible. I am thankful I have been engaged with such incredible people! It was a difficult decision to postpone the first banquet date and even harder to have to cancel the second and go to a virtual event. It's hard when you put forth this kind of effort to make a special night and then have to cancel and miss the opportunity to get together with such incredible friends. I can't thank the board of directors enough for the many hours spent and the short notice meetings to make quick and precise decisions. During every meeting the concern was always what will be the best for our entire membership. We were not willing to risk one member to COVID-19! Every move was thought through and made on behalf of what was best for our members while still holding strong to our mission to generate funds for wild sheep. I am proud of this board of directors solid decisions. Our members and donors really stepped up. When asked to give your registrations and table sponsors it was incredible to see those willing to give. When we reached out to our donors so we could have an online event they really stepped up as well. We got to our online event not knowing where it would go and again the support and giving was incredible.

We have one more step to make in our goal to raise funds for wild sheep in 2020 and recover from the loss of our banquet. We have three incredible raffle packages we will be giving away July 29th with our state wide raffle bighorn tag. These packages and full details are covered in this journal. Please participate in the raffles and support the effort. Any one of these packages is well worth participating in. We hope to see the continued support we have been getting to finish strong with the hand COVID-19 has dealt us.

I hope you enjoyed the "Duke" video brought to you by Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation, Kryptek and Silver Line Films. It was an incredible job capturing this hunt and the story. It was amazing to capture two incredible Idaho rams being taken in one video. I want to thank Doug Sayer and Travis Jessop for sharing their hunt and inspiring us in what a hunt is all about. I hope everyone could feel the heart and thoughtfulness that this video captured. This country needs a whole lot more of this today!

Our stone sheep with Blair and Rebecca Miller with Stone Mountain and Folding Mountain Outfitters sold out. David Carvahlo from California was our lucky winner. David is working on his first sheep and we wish him the best of luck on this hunt and hope he walks away with some great memories.

A longtime supporter and donor, Fred Imler and Big Lost River Outfitters, was the winner of our table sponsor Wicked River British Columbia Moose hunt.

Pat Mansfield was the winner of our single registration WSF Chapter and Affiliates 6.5RPM Weatherby banquet rifle and Boyt single rifle hard gun case.

We will be drawing our state wide bighorn raffle tag on July 29th. This is statewide including unit 11 this year so don't miss out on this opportunity.

Our 36th annual banquet and fundraiser date is set for March 6, 2021. We have a solid start for this event and plan to spice it up even more to make it an epic event. Seating will be limited and there are already registrations in so save the date and get registrations in early so you don't miss out.

During our virtual event we recognized Teri Ottens. If you missed it, Teri will be retiring in October. In 2007 some smart board of directors brought in Teri and AMS. Since the day Teri signed on, she has worked diligently to make a difference for the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation. I know past and current board of directors have been thankful to have Teri there to help guide us in the direction of success and help keep focus on this mission and its financial needs moving forward for wild sheep. Thank you, Teri!

Throughout this journal you will see a lot of ads for our sponsors and donors. We can't support this mission without our membership and its support. We cannot bring in and provide a great banquet and fundraiser for our members without the support of our sponsors and donors. When shopping for a need or want make sure you think of those that are supporting what you do and support them.

We are hoping the borders will open soon for those who have booked hunts for this fall so they are able to get to where they need to be. A lot of state tag results are out and some lucky individuals reading this journal have a sheep tag in their pocket. On behalf of the board of directors, we wish you all a safe and successful hunting season! Soak up the memories and enjoy the new friends you will meet on the mountain.

Jim Warner  
President  
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation





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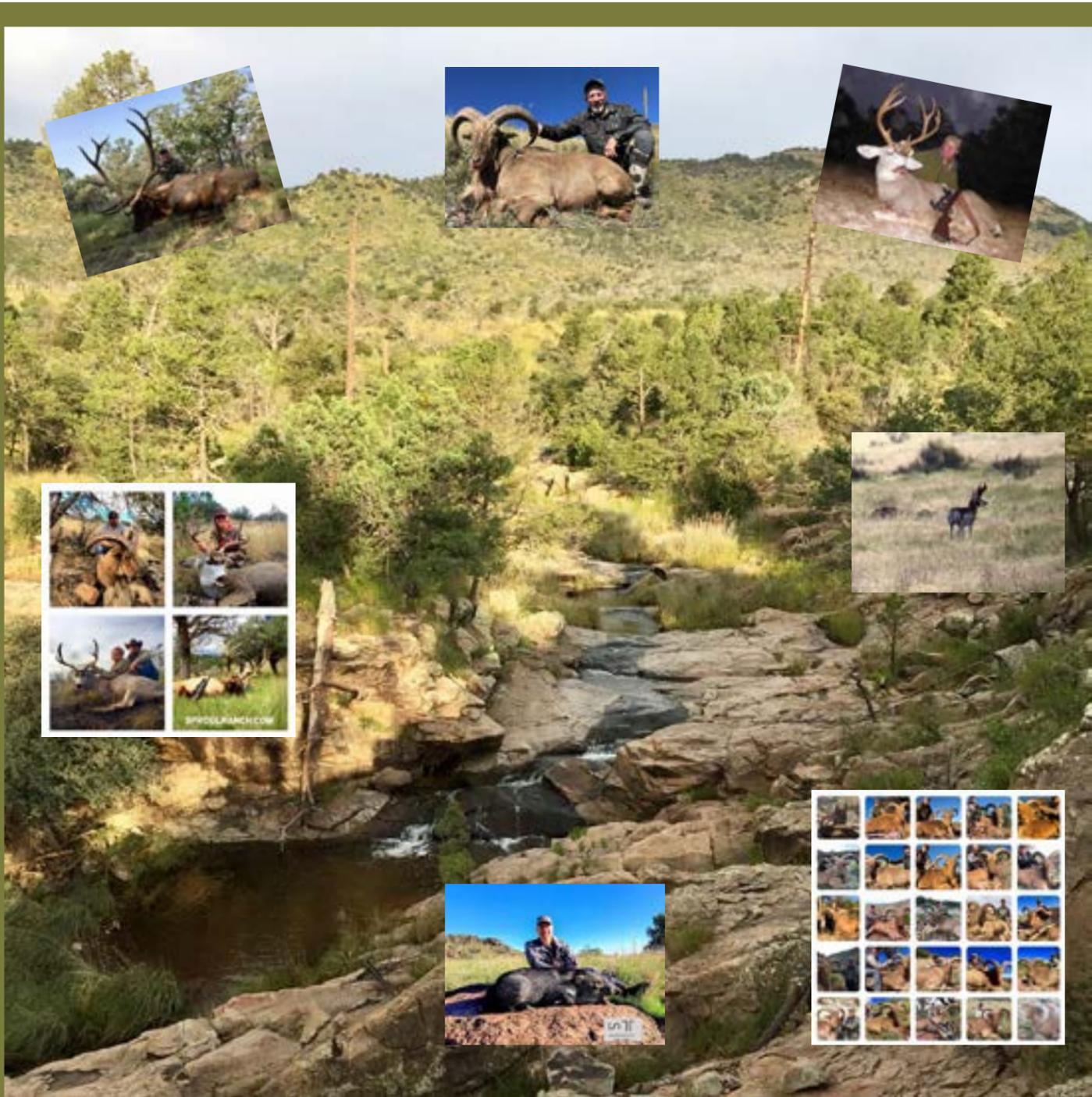
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# WHY AN IDAHO WSF?

by Jim Jeffress and Mike Schlegel, Idaho WSF Conservation Committee

Sportsman and conservation organizations are a critical and vital component in wildlife management in today's world. Most, if not all, were formed for a specific purpose, or because of an issue, for example; the Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, etc. Some are more general in nature, like the National Wildlife Federation. Most dedicated sportsmen belong to several organizations. The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) was founded in 1977 out of concern for declining bighorn sheep populations nationwide.

The Idaho Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation IDWSF), began as a chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) in 1985\*. Dr. Bob DiGrazia and a number of likeminded sportsmen started our chapter because of their concerns about low bighorn sheep populations in Idaho; both the Rocky Mountain and California subspecies.

## Why the concern?

When European man first settled Idaho, the population was thought to be as high as 50,000 bighorns. That rough estimate is based off of historical reports and the amount of bighorn habitat (10,811 sq. miles), as identified today (Idaho Bighorn Management Plan 2010). Pre- settlement, that acreage was much higher and the bighorns more than likely occupied considerably more area. By 1920 the Idaho Rocky Mountain bighorn population was estimated to be 1,000, mostly centered in the interior of the Salmon River drainage. California bighorns, occupying the canyonlands of southern Idaho, were totally extirpated by the 1940's. Through aggressive trap and transplant operations (64), from in state and out of state stock, the populations rebounded to a high of 5,000 by 1990 (IDFG Bighorn Management Plan 2010). Once again, a downward trend was experienced and the populations fell to 2,900 animals and has remained relatively stable with slight modifications up or down.

The decline in the 1990's, plus subsequent declines have been attributed, in large part, to pathogens contracted by contact with domestic sheep/goats. To put the subject matter into context, it is important to look at the long-term existence of bighorn in Idaho, the history behind those populations and the risk factors that have suppressed those populations over the past 150-160 years since early homesteaders settled the state. Background: Archaeological evidence of bighorns in the western United States predates settlement by Native American people 12-16,000 years ago. Outside of evidence collected by hunters and gathers, it is difficult to determine how long bighorn predated Native American's. One of the oldest records comes from southern Nevada (Pint Water archeological site), which dated bighorn remains approximately 30,000 years ago (Hockett 2,000). Bighorns survived while numerous animals such as Mammoths and Mastodons, Saber Toothed Tigers, and Short Nosed Bears became extinct over 10,000 years ago. Bighorns lived with and survived those relic large mammals. Bighorn was the staple large mammal hunted and utilized by Native Americans; a tribe in the Salmon River drainages were known as the "sheep eaters". Early explorers and settlers commented on the thousands of bighorns distributed throughout Idaho's extensive bighorn habitat. Given the suitable habitat that will support bighorn, IDF&G believes the population potential is 15,000+ bighorn (IDFG 2010). We will never see historical numbers due to with the loss of habitat and the influence of man; but 15,000+ bighorn is a huge departure from the estimate today 2900! Currently, only a quarter to a third or approximately 3,670 square miles of that habitat is occupied at a low density of 1.3 bighorn per square miles or .3 bighorn per square mile over their historic and potential range.

Concerns: Early settlers, beginning in the late 1800's noted sick or dying bighorns after association or contact with domestic sheep. It was through the late 1800's to the early 1900's that

bighorn populations plummeted. Granted, a number of factors contributed to this decline, but disease, especially in light of recent research, is known to have been a primary contributing factor. Since the 1970's, wildlife biologists and researchers have made a concerted effort to determine the disease relationship between bighorn and domestic sheep. For decades, various die offs were investigated and samples taken to determine the causative agents or pathogens involved in these incidents. Numerous strains of pneumonia were isolated, but there did not appear to be a single strain of pneumonia that linked these episodes. Through research funded by the Wild Sheep Foundation, and primarily the Idaho, Oregon and Washington chapters; researchers identified *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi) as the common link that predisposes bighorn to a variety of pneumonia causing bacteria.

Movi is an old-world pathogen found in domestic sheep and goats. Native bighorn populations did not harbor Movi, thus they are very susceptible to the bacteria when exposed. The transfer of deadly pathogens to bighorn has been well documented and reported in peer reviewed literature (Besser 2014; Drew 2014). Transmission of Movi is by direct contact when domestic and bighorn sheep co-mingle.

The disease spreads quickly through a bighorn herd, often resulting in a major die-off. When a few of the infected bighorns survive the Movi and pneumonia infection they become "latent" carriers throughout their remaining survival period. The disease is not lethal to them, but they can spread the disease to other bighorns. Also, ewes that are latent carriers infect their own lambs, thus there is little to no growth in these remnant populations. So, if a population is not totally lost during the initial episode, it slowly diminishes because it is not recruiting lambs. In addition, supplementing these populations through transplants is a waste of time and money due to the cycle of reinfection from the latent carriers.

From a management perspective, Idaho has tremendous bighorn habitat and the majority of the Rocky Mountain and California bighorn habitat is interconnected. The downside is that if a disease episode occurs, the disease tends to travel over a wide

area affecting a large portion of the population. The disease can persist and continue to impact bighorns for many years.

Why the need for Idaho WSF? A local chapter, promoting bighorn sheep, is more influential than a national organization trying to deal at the state level. This is especially true in Idaho, given the importance of domestic livestock operations and the politics related to the issue. The following are programs and functions IDWSF has been involved in over the decades.

## Hells Canyon Initiative

IDWSF is involved in the Hells Canyon Initiative (HCI) along with Oregon FNAWS and Washington WSF, the respective state wildlife agencies, federal and other state agencies, various universities and the Nez Perce and Umatilla tribes. Idaho WSF has provided much financial support to research designed to better understand the disease, plus how to avoid contact between domestic and bighorn sheep. Our chapter, in conjunction with other chapters and affiliates, has contributed well over 2.5 million dollars (personal comm: Gray Thornton WSF CEO). That research continues today. The challenge now is how to disrupt the pathogen cycle, develop a vaccine or find an alternative process to limit or remove Movi in domestic sheep and limit its transmission to wild sheep through separation policies.

Research at Washington State University's Department of Veterinary Medicine is ongoing to remove Movi from domestic sheep, plus development of a Movi free strain of domestic sheep.

An outreach and education program has been initiated to work with small flock operators that live in close proximity to bighorn sheep habitat. The thrust of this program is to educate them about Movi, how the disease is spread from domestic livestock to bighorns, and things they can do to prevent contact. IDFG is conducting a similar program in the Challis area with willing cooperators interested in efforts to protect bighorn.

Another encouraging project associated with the HCI is a program to "clear" Movi in remnant populations that have latent carriers. Through resampling efforts, those latent carriers that have a very high potential (super shedders) to spread the dis-

ease are culled from the herd. Although this may seem drastic, results to date look very promising. Lamb survival in several herds in Hells Canyon is up in 2019 and culling super shedders is likely to produce more wild sheep in the long run.

#### Public Lands

A major issue in preventing domestic sheep and goat contact with bighorns is management of certain allotments on public land. Idaho Fish and Game has no jurisdiction over domestic grazing on public lands, thus they are dependent on the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to management allotments to reduce and/or avoid contact between the two species. Recently the Forest Service, with interagency cooperation, developed a model to predict the risk of contact (ROC) between domestics and bighorns. Allotments that are deemed "high risk" are seriously assessed for closure, conversion from sheep or goats to cattle, withdrawal and retirement.

Prior to developing the ROC model, all IDWSF could do was comment on federal land management plans, outlining our concerns and recommending decisions favoring bighorns. The ROC tool, when applied to existing policies, will help IDWSF in making stronger arguments and hopefully gain more favorable decisions into the future.

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has taken the lead on the allotment issue. By applying the ROC model, allotments are rated as to their potential for contact. NWF, working with other organizations, contacts the permittee to discuss their willingness to cooperate, plus discuss available options.

In conjunction with that effort, IDWSF has partnered with National Wildlife Federation (NWF) to help fund the retirements of key domestic sheep allotments from willing operators to remove the risk or help incentivize the conversion of the permittee's permit to cattle. These are negotiated arrangements with operators who are seeking to change their business model or want to exit an industry that has seen a steady decline over the past several decades. Since 2015, IDWSF has contributed \$137,500 toward these efforts and spearheaded the initial negotiated grazing retirement of an allotment in the Lost River Range in 2002. IDWSF was one of many organizations that contributed toward the agreed price of \$187,000 for that original allotment. With the disease factor reduced and subsequent bighorn releases a few years later; that population has grown and represents 20-25 % of the Rocky Mountain bighorn population in the state. The 2002 estimate was 50-60 bighorns, but 444 were observed during the March 2020 survey.

#### Additional Activities

In addition to the previously mentioned programs, IDWSF also provides funding for a variety of bighorn projects. Specifically, funding to IDFG for telemetry equipment, support for aerial surveys and captures, water developments, the small flock operator program, funding to the USFS for a bighorn sheep interpretive program in Hells Canyon, a highway signage and light project near Challis, plus IDWSF manages the Idaho lottery tag program. IDWSF members are also active in volunteer programs; most recently with the Owyhee and Big Creek surveys.

Idaho has the third largest acreage of bighorn habitat outside of California and Nevada, yet we have the lowest number of bighorns in relation to that habitat. In so much as the bighorn

have lived on Idaho's landscape longer than any large mammal and it took less than 100 years to come close to totally "wiping them out"; IDWSF believes our goals are credible and worth pursuing. Without, Dr. Bob DeGrazia and other charter members\*\*, IDWSF would not have made the progress we have attained or be staged to continue that work into the future.

All the programs outlined are pro-active measures that we believe will help further the goals and objective of IDWSF; sustain our current populations and continue to build them toward the potential of 15,000+ bighorn in Idaho. As mentioned previously, state and federal politics are major players regarding how successful bighorn populations are restored in Idaho. The progress toward those objectives will have to come, in large part, from IDWSF and its supporters! Thanks

We, the Board of Directors, thought it important that our members more fully understand the scope of activity and some of the issues associated with IDWSF. The IDWSF Board of Directors extends our "Thank You" for your past support and look forward to your continued support. If you or others have the same passion toward these goals and would like to become more involved, consider becoming a member of the Board of Directors. Contact our office or any Board member.

\* Name changed to Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation in 2008

\*\* Listing of Charter Members; if you know them, thank them!

Mike Best, Russ Biaggne, James E. Blaine, Mike Bland, Mike Brusco, Ed Carr, Bob DiGrazia, Rick Dredge, Harold Eshelman, Ron Gillette, Scott Hayes, Thomas Hinders, Cheryl Hudgens, James Kranz, Burk Mandel, Ralph McClintock, Roger Michener, Ron Morris, Tom Parker, Tom Schiermeir, Wayne Schwabrow, Ed Sweet, Andy Thacker, Jerry Thiessen, Fred Wood, Barry Wood, Jerry Young

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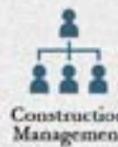
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# Ram Down!

by Wade Kotter

The story of my sheep hunt begins when one day, my mother picked me up after school and drove me to go visit my nanna at work. She told me she had some exciting news to share with me. I wondered why I was there and completely stumped when my dad and Uncle Jim walked in. Why is all this happening? Then she said it. I had drawn my once in a lifetime Idaho Bighorn Sheep tag. I was speechless.

A couple months later, I found myself on the edge of the Salmon River and it was time to go. We saw some nice rams along the way. We knew of a ram from past pictures that particularly stood out to me. He had a broken back leg that happened to him at a young age. There were several pictures of him from down on the river over the past couple years during the rut. Nobody thought he would last as long as he had. We found this ram during the hunt and I had a short opportunity to take him but decided to wait and look over some other rams because he was pretty short in length. The best part of the hunt for me was getting to scout every weekend with my family. I loved hiking the Idaho Mountains, even in 110 degrees. We packed plenty of kipper snacks and Vienna sausages but perhaps next time we will bring more water!

The last eight weeks had been the hardest and most challenging weeks

of my life with the ups and downs. All that hard work would finally pay off on September 22nd. We started out early in the morning, tracking a nice potential ram to shoot. Soon we got to the ideal shooting spot. It's a good ram, but not great, not exactly what I had hoped for. But then in the next couple of minutes, my uncle handed me the gun and got me set up on a beautiful ram that was bedded next to the one I had been looking at. He told me to shoot right as it stands up. What happened next blew my mind. BANG! It's off and running. I must have missed. Soon we realized that I didn't miss, but we thought it was a little high and back. We looked for a bit and my cousin Triston found him on a ledge behind a tree. We got set up on the gun again. I sat in the ready position for what seemed like forever, and then finally he stood up. I fired off another round. The shot looked a little far back. He moved a little higher up and laid down in the cliffs. We gave him some time because we were afraid he would take a bad fall off the cliffs. We decided we had to make a move so we started to hike towards the ram. As we were walking the ram got up and started to run! We heard a crack and a giant thud and that was it. Triston radioed to us to let us know "Ram down!" Words I had been waiting to hear for a long time. Immediately I felt a huge weight leave my chest. Happiness and a

feeling of accomplishment overwhelms me.

I am grateful for the opportunity to get to go on this hunt, and get this amazing experience. I had the best guides I could ask for. Both my Grandparents, Doug and Shelly Sayer, looked for my ram and helped us line out our scouting routes. The time and effort from my Uncle, Jim, who knows this place so well. My dad, Kevin Kotter, was always the hardest worker when it came to scouting and was always trying to help me get me my first sheep. To the rest of my A team Triston Warner, Hannah Quick, Mady Wright, Connor Montgomery, Grant Duncan, Faye Christiansen and most of all I can't forget my little brother, Max, for being there every step of the way and for packing all those kipper snacks and Vienna sausages.

This is the best thing that ever could have happened to me and I'm so lucky to have been given this opportunity.

*This is the best thing that ever could have happened to me and I'm so lucky to have been given this opportunity.*



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# LIVING THE DREAM

by Carter Swain

**G**rowing up everybody dreams of something, for me that dream was to be a sheep hunter. Fast forward 35 years and I was living out my childhood dream with my first bighorn sheep tag in hand.

I had applied for Idaho bighorn sheep in the past with every year yielding the same result: unsuccessful. As the release of the 2019 draw results drew near, I was feeling optimistic that this year would be different. I kept riding that positive, hopeful vibe as if just my attitude could affect the outcome of the draw and sway things to my favor. I was at lunch with my kids when a friend texted me to inform me draw results were out. I immediately shifted our conversation to focusing on the results. My group paused, as I anxiously entered my information and waited for the results to load. The next few seconds felt like years as I stared at my phone screen. Finally, the page loaded and my eyes settled on one beautiful word: “successful.” Unable to contain the overwhelming feeling of a dream come true, I screamed out loud. I had finally drawn. My kids, completely understanding the gravity of this situation and recognizing what my reaction meant, screamed as well. Immediately we were all out of our chairs jumping up

and down, giving high fives, and whooping and hollering in celebration. I was totally lost in the moment. The other folks in restaurant, I assume, sat bewildered as to what was so exciting at our table.

As the initial euphoria of having that coveted tag subsided, I knew I needed to focus on how to make the hunt a success. I went into the situation with the sobering knowledge that this may be my one and only chance to hunt a bighorn sheep. It was crucial that I pull out all the stops and do everything in my power to ensure success. I reached out to everyone I knew that was familiar with the area, racking their brains and soaking up every ounce of knowledge they could provide. I spent every free moment throughout the summer scouting, poring over maps and studying google earth. I put countless miles on my truck and my boots, each mile solidifying the feeling that I had an incredible opportunity and needed to capitalize. To ensure I was putting my focus into the right area, I chartered a backcountry flight to fly over the unit and make sure I left no stone unturned. I had an amazing flight with Middle Fork Aviation located in Challis, Idaho. The perspective gained from this flight was priceless.

It brought me peace of mind and the validation that I had been focusing on the right area. As the opener drew near, it was clear my efforts had paid off. I had located several nice rams and was narrowing the list.

With game time approaching, it was time to take everything I had learned and make it all come together. I had continuously taken pictures of sheep throughout the summer and shot short videos summarizing each day’s events following every outing. These pictures and reflective videos were instrumental in putting everything into perspective as I headed into the season opener.

I arrived in the unit two days prior to the opener to set up camp and do some final scouting. I had saved my vacation time to be able to hunt the entire three-week season, if necessary. I had an all-star rotation of hunting buddies that were going to be joining me throughout the hunt to offer any support I needed. The afternoon before the opener, I was joined by the first of my backcountry companions, B.J., and we checked in on the rams that had made my short list. After looking over everything again, I made the decision not to target anything I had seen. Instead, I elected to push further into some new country in hopes of turning up something new.

After a restless night of struggling with my decision to change my course and push into less familiar country, the time to get after it finally arrived. We headed up the mountain, eager for this once-in-a-lifetime adventure to commence. As the morning went on, we saw a few rams, most of them familiar faces. Mid-morning found us glassing the head of a basin I wanted to push through to explore some new territory. As we glassed, I spotted a lone, young ram near the head of the basin. My spirits were high, seeing as the ram was right in our intended course and it was unlikely he was alone. The canyon was rugged and the trek up it took a few hours. As we climbed in elevation, we began to see lots of sheep sign that seemed to be chasing the fresh grass revealed by the receding snow line. As we scrambled through a snow field, the basin opened up to reveal a grassy bowl that had recently lost its snow pack. Off to the right side of the basin we spotted a group of six rams feeding in the open. With no cover to be found, we quickly dropped to the ground, surprised and relieved that they paid us no attention. From our position laying in the rocks, we were able to get a good look at the group as they continued feeding 175 yards away. After several minutes of watching them, I concluded that one of the rams was one of the best I had seen all year. Knowing I had three weeks of hunt time ahead of me and it was just 2:00 P.M. on opening day, I was faced with a difficult decision. Do I take the shot or continue the hunt? As I continued to glass the herd, mulling the question over in my mind, the answer became clear. This was my ram. I gently slid my pack off and slid out my rifle. I settled into a prone position, using my pack as support for the prone shot. With a slow squeeze of a trigger, my lifelong dream finally came true. My ram was down. We gathered our stuff and hustled towards the fallen ram.

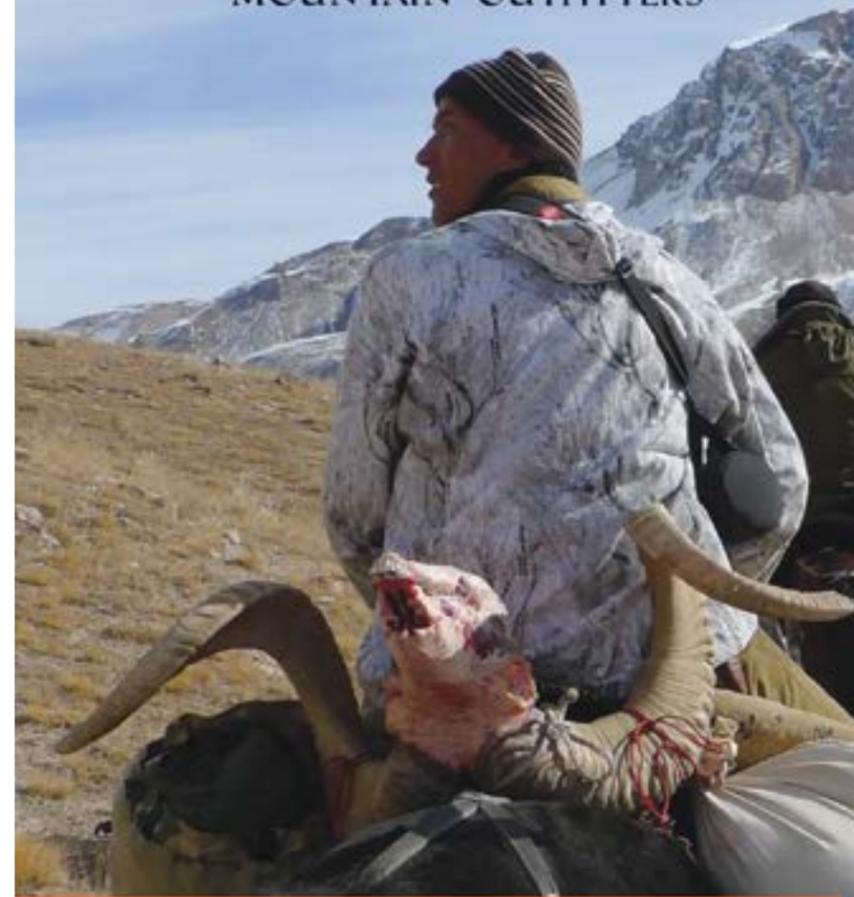
**As we walked up on him, the feeling was absolutely surreal. I could not believe that after years of dreaming about this moment it finally came true.**



As we celebrated and soaked up the moment, we realized the rest of the rams had gone and bedded on the hillside just 100 yards behind us. As we spent the next few hours taking pictures and prepping my ram for the trip out, the remaining rams watched over us, occasionally getting up to feed or dig a new bed to lay in. The trip out was intense, climbing through rock fields and steep terrain. After a few long hours with 90-pound packs we finally made it out. My first ram hunt had officially come to a close.

A special thanks to my wife and kids for tolerating me and for holding the rest of our lives together while I roam. Thanks to BJ for joining me on the hunt, as well as to many other friends and family for their unending support on this adventure. Also, thanks to the members of the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation and their conservation partners who work tirelessly to keep wild sheep on the mountain and these beautiful wild places alive. Your relentless efforts truly make a huge difference, because of you the wild sheep population lives on. I have thought about this hunt countless times since, replaying every second in my mind, savoring the memory.

**It has made me realize that while the opportunity to harvest a sheep is an amazing privilege, the experience of spending time in the purely wild places these sheep call home is the true reward.**



Azerbaijan Dagestan Tur



Mid Asan Ibx, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan



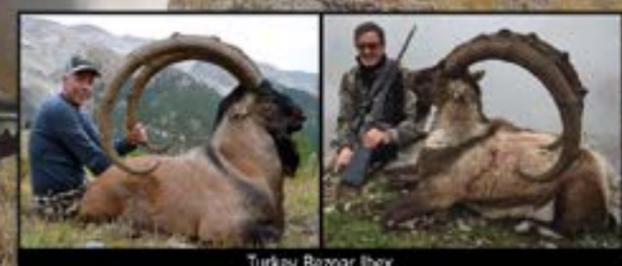
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# THE NEXT BEST THING

## OWYHEE LAMB SURVEY

by Josh Miller

Do you know what the next best thing to going hunting with a sheep tag in your pocket is? Some of you may or may not know that feeling of having a sheep tag in your pocket. Those that have had a tag know the excitement and the adrenaline rush of hunting sheep. For all of you that are still dreaming, I can tell you its better than you can possibly imagine. Last year, I was fortunate enough to hunt sheep successfully in the Middle Fork. This year after not drawing but a couple doe antelope tags, I decided to do something a little different, and outside my typical comfort zone. I volunteered with Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation and Idaho Dept of Fish and Game to assist on a lamb survey in the Owyhee River Wilderness.

Let me tell you, this experience truly was the next best thing to hunting with a sheep tag in my pocket!

A few months ago I got the email from Idaho WSF asking for volunteers to help with some lamb surveys. They were looking for help in the East Fork of the Salmon, the Little Lost, and the Owyhee's. When I got the email I thought to myself that could be fun. As I read through the email and what was needed, I was checking off boxes in my head of all the gear that was needed like backpacking gear and optics and knew I could be of assistance. They were looking for people with telemetry experience as well, which I had none. I knew that if I volunteered I would be paired with someone who had that skillset. I had a little bit of apprehension in the idea of sharing a camp with someone I didn't know for several nights. I went ahead and talked myself into it thinking it could be cool to see some new country and meet someone new that has a shared interest in sheep. I sent off the email volunteering to help with the Owyhee survey.

After a few back and forth emails and phone calls between Rachel Curtis, Regional Habitat Biologist, in charge of

the survey and Bill London with ID WSF we had our dates set for Bill and I to go in for 3 days and survey This survey is being conducted as a joint effort between IDFG and Nicole Bilodeau, a masters student with University of Idaho. The objective of our survey was to locate collared ewes and collect data on number of ewes, rams, yearlings, and lambs. As well as observe them for signs of poor health and some basic behavior observations.

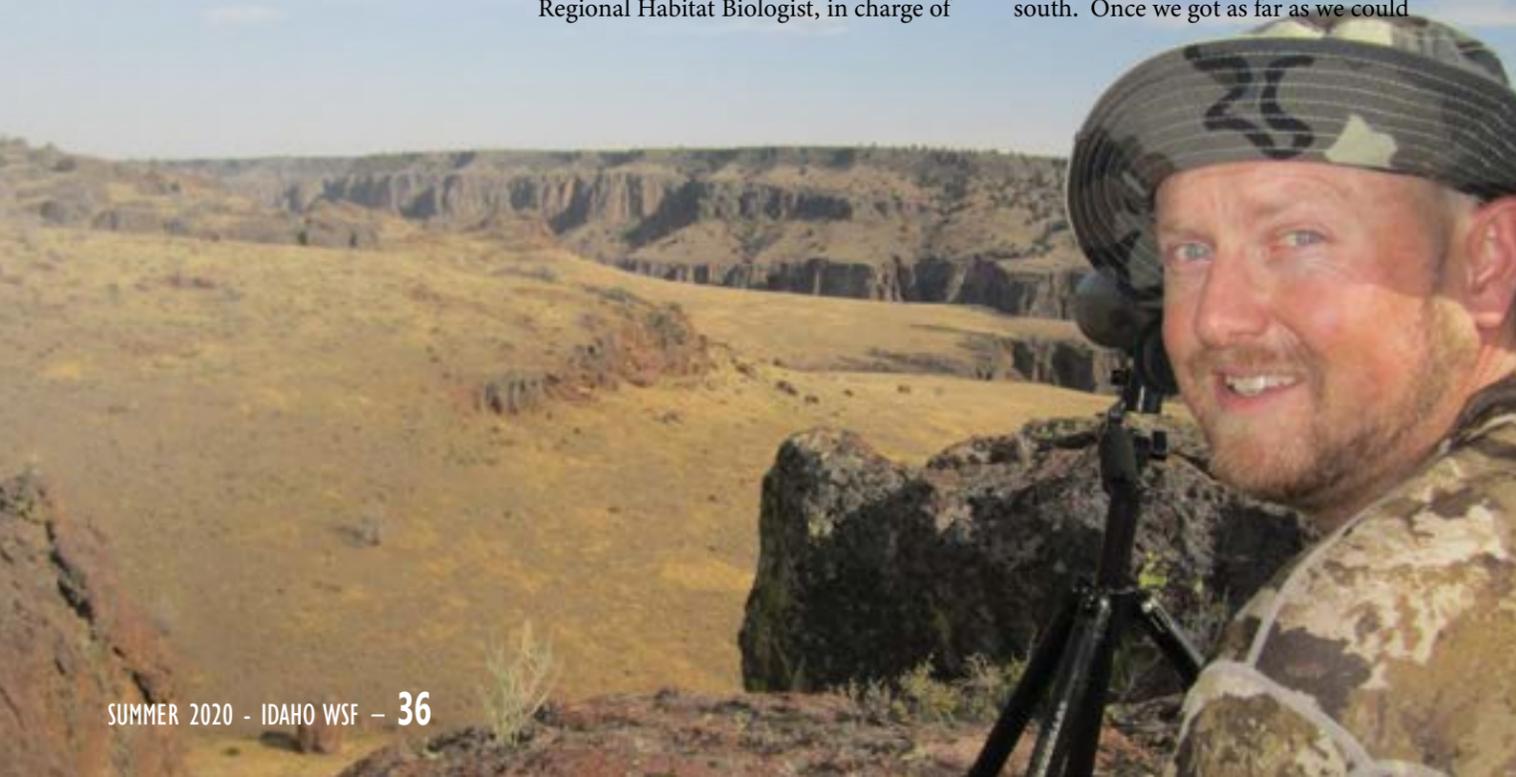
I met Bill for the first time and stayed the night at his house the night before we left for the Owyhee's. We stayed up way too late talking about past hunts and reviewed maps of our area and talked about what the plan was. He said the Rachel had given us what she considered her hardest area to get data. The terrain there is the most difficult to locate sheep in and one of the collars may not even be working any longer since they had not been able to get any readings at all this year. We were up for the challenge though! The next day we loaded up everything, hooked up to the departments Polaris RZR and headed south. Once we got as far as we could

take the truck and trailer, we unloaded the RZR and loaded it up with all our gear and coolers with a lot of ice and cold water and headed south on what was more like rock crawling courses than roads. It took several hours to get to our first location but we still had a few hours of light to look for the first collared ewe. We set off with our optics and the telemetry equipment. We were not having any luck getting a signal in the incredibly broken country these sheep call home. We spent several hours glassing in the 100-degree heat moving from vantage point to vantage point, checking the telemetry for pings from the collar. At about 5pm Bill and I had split up and I was walking a rim checking below and glassing crevices. I heard what sounded like rocks falling and about that time Bill whistled and pointed. I didn't need binoculars to see it was our girl with the collar! I got down and made my way to Bills location and we began to count sheep. Its hard to imagine a ewe giving you as much of a rush as she did but I honestly had almost as much excitement in seeing those sheep as I did when I was hunting my ram last year. We spent 2 hours watching them through the spotting scopes and recording data. It was quite disheartening when we had to

record 0 lambs though. There were some yearlings in the group at least. They eventually fed out of sight. We gathered our equipment and hike back up and out to the RZR. We found a location to set up camp for the night and enjoyed our early success for the evening talking about the sheep and telling hunting stories.

We woke up the next morning, broke camp, and headed for the 2nd location that we hoped to find the two remaining ewes near. We climbed to the top of a hill and Bill used the telemetry and immediately got a ping from one of the collars. He handed me the equipment and showed me how to use it. I was able to get a signal from the same collar and with Bills help was able to narrow down the direction the signal was the strongest. He gave me the frequency for the ewe that they weren't sure if the collar was working. I entered it and began scanning for her signal. I quickly picked up a signal and adjusted the frequency and gain on the receiver and found the signal to be very strong to the South East. Bill looked through his binoculars in the direction I had the receiver pointed and immediately found a small herd of sheep! We set up spotting scopes just in time to see at least 10 sheep go

over a small knoll and out of site approx. 3/4 mile away. This is where the fun really began. We made our way down and up the next ridge and began to put a stalk on this group of sheep just as if we were hunting them. We worked the little bit of cover we had and the edges of the canyon peering down chutes carefully. We tried using the telemetry to narrow down our search but we were getting signal bounce off the canyon walls. As we crept towards a tiny knoll I saw horns through the grass and we dropped to our knees. They were feeding right towards us! We stayed low as the ewes closed to within 40 yards. Then all of a sudden the winds shifted and they caught our scent and immediately bailed off down into the canyon. Being busted already, we sat on the ledge of the cliffs and watched them and did our counts. Unlike the previous group, we found 3 lambs and multiple yearlings! It was awesome watching these sheep and the things they could do. At one point the herd moved up out of the canyon bottom and scaled the rock cliffs jumping from one ledge to another. Even the lambs jumped across a 40-foot deep crevasse with ease. After they decided we weren't a threat to them many of the sheep went back to feeding and just slowly fed



away from us. We collected our gear and found a nice tree to get out of the sun and eat a late lunch.

After lunch and a quick power nap, I told Bill it was time for us to go for the hat trick and find the last ewe we were searching for. We made for a high point and I pulled out the telemetry and could only find a very faint signal but couldn't narrow down a direction to make a definitive decision. We concluded they had gone into the bottom of a draw and decided to go in the direction that the signal was strongest earlier that morning. We made our way to another ridge and tried the telemetry again. I got a fairly strong signal straight west, I pulled up my binoculars and sure enough I could see 4 sheep 3 ridges away! We scrambled down the rocks and across a couple draw to where we could see the 4 sheep. We set up the spotting scopes and started identifying the sheep. 2 ewes and 2 lambs!! Awesome! 100% lamb survival in this tiny group! However, neither of the ewes had the collar on. I pointed the telemetry at them and did not get a signal. We determined that I must have been getting some signal bounce off of some rocks and it was just coincidence that there was sheep right where I had pointed it earlier. We recorded our findings of this bo-

nus group and began scanning for our collared ewe again. We finally found her signal but it seemed to be moving. We would get to one point and have a strong signal and by the time we got to the next point the signal was weaker and in a different direction. We scrambled to the top of a hill and as soon as I got a signal, Bill spotted them about 1/2 mile away walking away from us. We got the spotters set up and were quickly able to see the collared ewe. She had a yearling and another Ewe with her. We jotted down our notes and observations before they went out of site. We sent Rachel a text on our inReach, the good news that we found all 3 of the ewes she assigned us. By that time we were about 1.75 miles from the RZR, HOT and low on water. We made our way back to the RZR and our coolers of ice-cold water and drank and drank. We found a great spot to camp in the trees out of the sun and relaxed for the rest of the evening, drinking a few celebratory beers, eating, and telling hunting stories till midnight like old friends. We slept in the next morning then headed back to the truck, then back to Nampa where we handed off all our equipment and data to Rachel who was very happy with what all we accomplished. After we got back to Bills house I loaded up my truck and headed back to

Idaho Falls.

On the road home, since my radio doesn't work, I thought a lot about the previous days and the experiences I had. First and foremost I made a new friend, with Bill, that at times I couldn't tell who was more excited about the sheep we were looking at! My initial concern about sharing a camp with someone I didn't know was somewhat humorous now, as immediately Bill and I got along and acted like guys who had been friends for years. I also learned a lot more about sheep from Bill who has been involved with Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation and worked with sheep for years. I got to see a part of Idaho I had never seen before and despite the heat, found it to be incredible country. I have a newly found appreciation for the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation and the work they do behind the scenes for the species so that hunters like us will continue to be able to hunt for these iconic animals. At many times, I had the same feelings I had during my hunt and the excitement each time we found sheep and I can't wait to go back and help again. I would encourage any of you that are reading this to think about volunteering for the next opportunity to assist on a survey and help give back so that we can ensure sheep are always on the mountain for everyone to enjoy.



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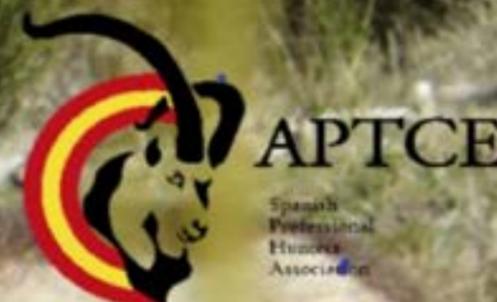
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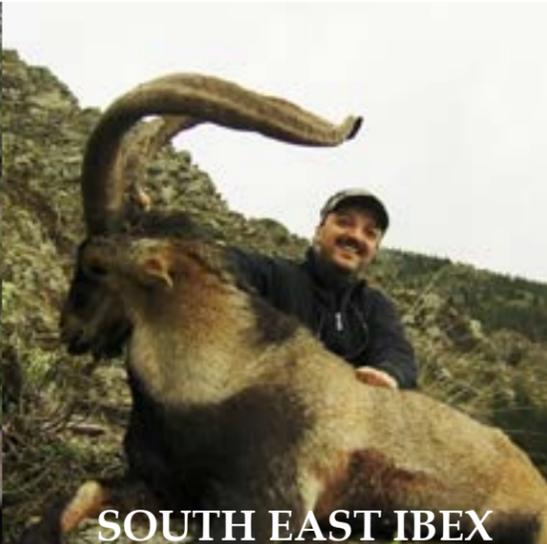
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# LUCKY HAT



standings. I told Chuck that I had already taken the four species of North American Wild Sheep and I would NOT compromise Chuck's hunt under any circumstances. Chuck would get first choice and shot if opportunity presented. I assured Chuck that I would NOT shoot before him, nor would I shoot at a Ram that he wanted. Chuck was fine with that understanding. Due to snow and visibility limitations it wasn't until the third evening of the hunt that I glassed up a solo ram and then a group of rams including a couple of shooters. We watched them until dark and then grabbed some restless hours of sleep. Next morning before first light we were in position and glassed up a couple of bands in different locations containing shooters. One band grazed over a distant divide putting them out of play for that day. The second group contained two shooters and we watched until they grazed over a ridgeline but never reappeared. They were likely shaded up mid-morning. We left our support group of spotters and helpers on the valley floor below while Chuck and I commenced with our stalk. The climb up the near vertical mountain was no cake walk and required the use of all four hands and feet at times. This was Chuck's first Wild Sheep hunt and my seventh so I shared insights collected from several decades of hard earned lessons learned including agonizing blown stalks. A dead tree on a ridgeline served as cover to break up our silhouettes as we peered into the next drainage where we hoped to find our band of Sheep. I told Chuck that if he had opportunity to shoot the lead Ram the group would likely bunch up in confusion after the shot awaiting guidance from their boss. It played out exactly as expected. Chuck killed the best ram in that group with a fine 200 yard shot. The rest of the sheep bunched up nervously and after the longest several minutes imaginable, the 2nd in command ram stepped out of the group to stare down the ravine where the boss had disappeared. He then tumbled down the same ravine following my shot. Our backup crew miles below had witnessed through their optics my ram's reaction to the shot. Moments later they heard the report of my rifle. What Chuck and I could not see was that behind the Sheep was a series of cliffs and our rams had pin-balled and careened down a near vertical, boulder-strewn chute and they came to rest 15 feet apart at the bottom. We had doubled on fine Desert Rams and had the rare opportunity to take photos together. Before we completed our photo session our buddies arrived at the kill site in record breaking time, ready and willing to assist with the pack out. Our journey off the mountain included heavy packs, treacherous footing and roping packs down vertical cliff sections of dried waterfalls. As dusk approached and light faded closing a perfect day, it became headlamp time. Our exhausted bodies and spirits were lifted by the sight of a distant campfire. Our friends had preceded us off the mountain and built a warming fire near two side-by ATVs parked at the mouth of our canyon saving miles of trudging through sagebrush on our return to base camp. True friends are priceless not only in Hunting, but in all aspects of life.

It has now been 28 years since my Lucky Hat accompanied me on my 1st successful Sheep hunt during 1991. Annoys me a bit that one of my son's hunting maniac friends recently saw my latest

Desert Sheep photo and placed "Dibs" on my Lucky Hat. I'm only 65 but apparently it's obvious that either my remaining time above dirt is perceived to be limited, or I won't have legitimate future needs for my Lucky Hat? Bleeping Gen-Xrs and Millennials anyway!

Careers and family responsibilities had separated my friend Scott Stuart and myself for a couple of decades. Wife Jean and I had planned to link up with Scott and Karen as empty nesters to resume our friendship during our "Golden Years". Unfortunately, however, fate had other plans and my dear friend was taken by Parkinson's and health issues earlier in 2019. He didn't make it to his 65th birthday. Similarly, my guide in 1991 Shane also passed tragically in a floatplane crash leaving his beautiful wife Hanna and their two young sons to carry on without him. Sadly, my Lucky Hat had ties to both of those fine men. I wore it again with thoughts of them and a heavy heart on my 7th successful Wild Sheep hunt during November 2019 in Nevada's Stillwater mountains.

**Apply for your dream hunts because they just might come your way. Revel in the magic of your outdoor adventures and enjoy them to the fullest. Do your personal best to share the outdoors with the next generation by "passing the torch".**

Love those you cherish while you can because fate might change your plans. Cheers to those who have moved on ahead and are scouting out the other side of that Great divide. We'll all join them soon enough!



by Scot Jenkins

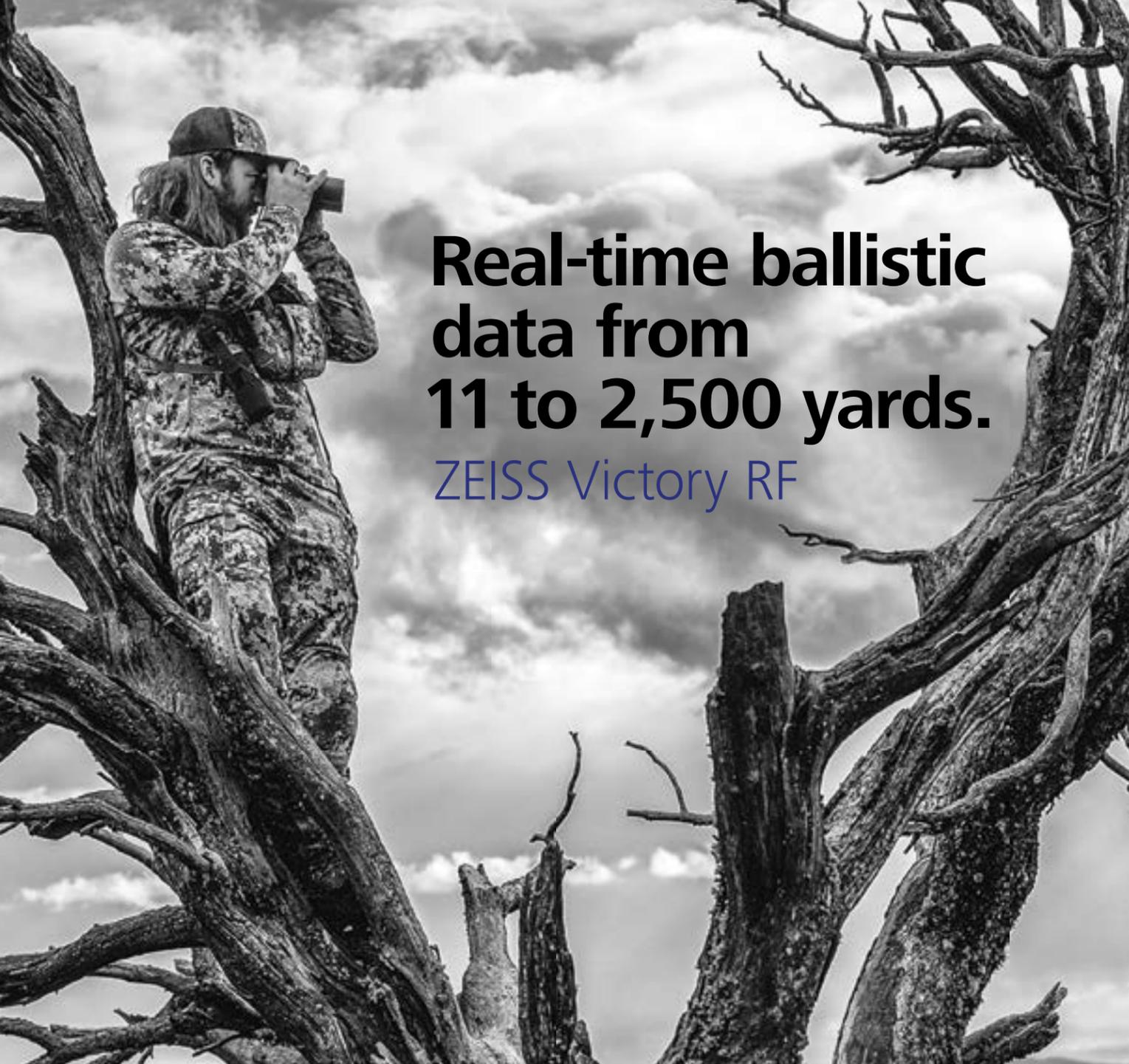
I met Scott Stuart in 1962 on the first day of our 2nd grade elementary school class. We became fast friends and camped, fished, hunted, rode dirt bikes and later double dated with our girlfriends. After settling down and marriage we took our brides on vacation together. During that couple's vacation in the 1980s I bought a ball cap with a Leupold emblem on front. I later wore that hat on my first guided hunt for Dall Sheep in the NWT in 1991 with Arctic Red River Outfitters. I was guided by a tough-as-nails young Canadian from Whitehorse named Shane Buchanan. Shane was tall, slender and wiry and although I had been running 5Ks, a half marathon and a full marathon in preparation for that adventure, I could barely keep up with him on that fly-in backpack hunt. Shane guided me to a fine Dall Ram and took photos of me wearing my newly christened "Lucky Hat".

Limited Entry controlled hunts became my escape long ago from crowded opening day hunts long before most Western States initiated Point systems. Anticipating the future of hunting I committed to participating in as many "Point Systems" as possible for myself and my four children when they reached legal age. Admittedly point systems face challenges in supporting long term applicants while attempting to attract new participants. Despite their difficulties, point systems have provided tremendous rewards. During 2019 my son Seth drew a WY Bighorn Sheep tag with 17 points, I drew a Desert Sheep tag in NV with 23 points and Chuck Knox used 11 points to draw a Desert Sheep tag in the same NV Unit. The Market value of those three 2019 draw tags in current Alberta

or Sonora hunt prices would allow the purchase of a decent home in many nice towns.

During September 2019 Seth, myself, guide Scott Kincheloe and friend Zach trailed a pack string of 9 horses and 1 mule many miles into the Absaroka Wilderness West of Cody WY. Outfitter Josh Martoglio set us up with Scott who is an outstanding guide with a lifetime of backcountry experience. Seth made an excellent one-shot kill at 425 yards on a solid mature WY Bighorn ram. Scott's mule named "Tater Tot" proved his worth by climbing the cliff-strewn hillside with us and retrieving Seth's ram without mishap while nine of his horse buddies grazed contentedly in the high elevation basin below. Nearby glacier patches of ice and snow never have opportunity to melt with mountain peaks topping 11K feet elevation.

The 2019 Desert Sheep hunt in Nevada's Stillwater Range opened November 20 2019 running through December. I knew that other tag holders would be there along with Outfitters and support crews for the opener. Planning to go self-guided, I had lined up some friends and family to accompany me later during the second week of December, expecting less hunting competition. I decided to scout/hunt solo during the first week of the season to get a feel for the area and learn where the Outfitters and other hunters were experiencing success. While glassing for Sheep I met and befriended a solid crew from Nevada who were there assisting friend Chuck Knox with his tag. They generously invited me to link up with them and I accepted on the basis of certain under-



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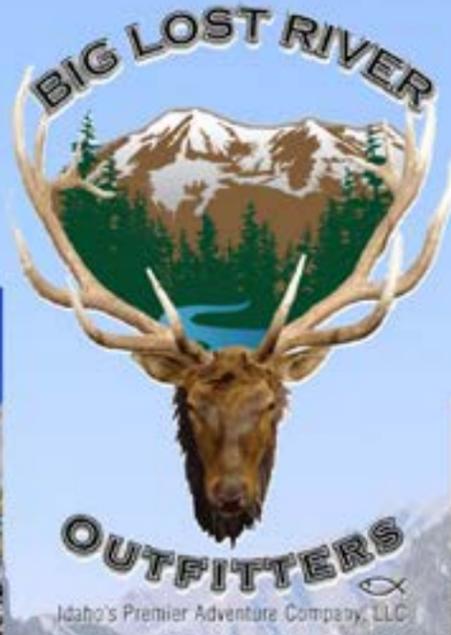
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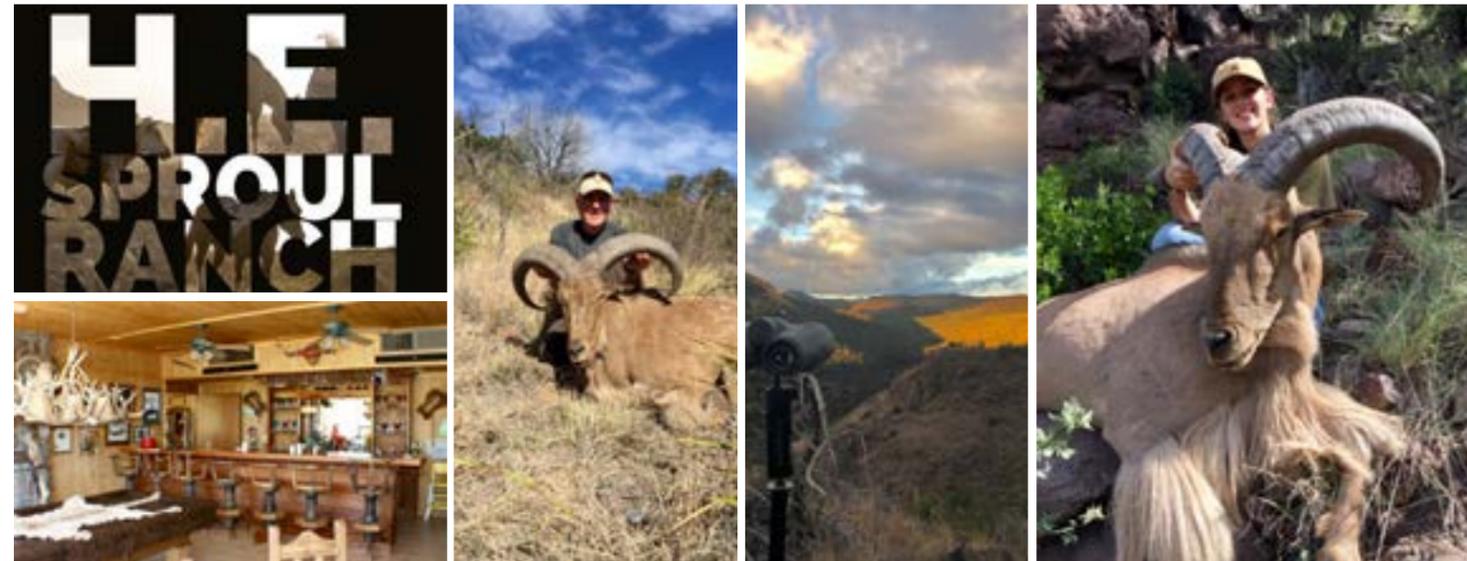
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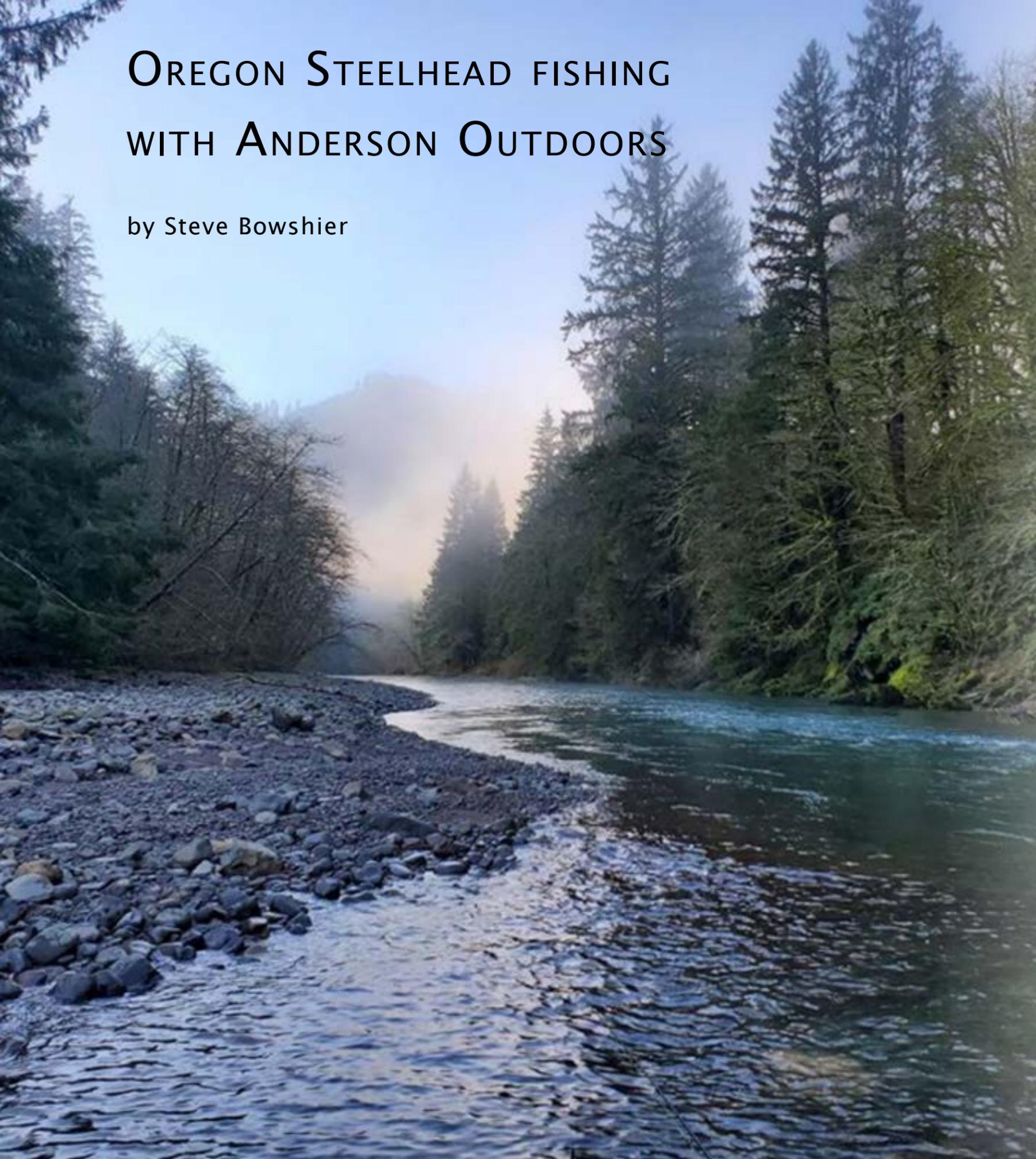
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# OREGON STEELHEAD FISHING WITH ANDERSON OUTDOORS

by Steve Bowshier



**A**t the 2019 Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation I was sitting with my family enjoying the auction when my father-in-law bid on and won the Oregon steelhead fishing trip for two with Anderson Outdoors. Having never caught a steelhead I quickly put dibs on the second spot for the trip. Early 2020, Bill London and I were driving to Pacific City, Oregon. We were nervous about Oregon rains in February, turns out the timing was lucky since it was before Covid-19 shutdowns had started. Besides we had rain gear. The Anderson Outdoors fishing trip included two days of fishing and three nights at the Surf & Sand Inn. Kent Anderson met us at the inn, then gave us a tour of town while discussing how each river was fishing. Kent fishes southern Tillamook County; the Nestucca, Trask, Wilson and Kilchis Rivers which flow into Tillamook Bay. All the rivers have similar steelhead runs in regards to timing and numbers. The rivers are short coast streams originating in the Coast Range Mountains, most less than 40 miles long.

The first morning was rare for the Oregon coast, frosty and clear. A beautiful day. We headed for a small coastal river that ran through a steep forested canyon, then into dairy pasture lands. Drift boating while “side drifting” bait with light spinning rods is a relaxing way to fish. The scenery quietly and slowly passes by until a cry of “Fish on” is heard. Then rods bend, drags scream, steelhead run and jump, pictures are taken and smiles come easy. These fish were ‘chromers’, bright silver steelhead that were only a day out of the ocean.

Fishing with Kent Anderson is fishing with an easy going and knowledgeable friend. He explains the tackle and techniques in simple terms. His knowledge of the river was exceptional – down to which rock to cast behind or branch to cast under. Kent had nine rods fitted and ready at all times. Whenever we would snag up losing an outfit Kent just

handed us a fresh one and we kept fishing. Truth be told, Kent passed most of those rods to Bill.

Our fishing days were FULL day, dark to dark. We made two drift runs down the river that day. Kent joined us for dinner that evening at a local restaurant overlooking the ocean beach.

The next day was misty and cool. It had rained overnight and new steelhead were in the river, even brighter than yesterday’s fish! Some of them still had sea lice in their gills. We made two drift runs on the small river catching plenty of fish, then an evening run on a larger river where we caught four more.

It was a good trip; good people, good country, great fish, and it didn’t rain.

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# ONE AND DONE

by Kyle Poppleton

I was sitting with friends at the 2018 Idaho Wild Sheep Banquet. We have a rule that we each have to bid at least one time on one item. The item that caught my eye was the Lynx Hunt offered by Jeff Baher Trophy Adventures in British Columbia. It sounded like an experience I would not have anywhere else and lynx was an animal I had never pursued. When the auction came up there were two bidders prior to mine, I raised my hand and the hunt was mine. My first “one and done” auction bid.

January, 2019, I drove to Boise then caught a flight to Fort St. John, British Columbia. Jeff Baer met me in the lobby of the airport. We made a quick stop at the farm supply store then were off to his cabin near Hudsons Hope on the shores of Williston Lake. There I met Boris my hunting companion, a cardiologist from eastern Europe.

We got up the next morning to a full breakfast of eggs Benedict and were off at 7 am. There were about 4 inches of fresh snow. I was riding with guide/houndsman Clinton and his 5 dogs. Boris rode with Jeff and his pack of dogs. We were hunting the breaks of the Peace river. The area consisted of random hard woods and pine forest. Oil pipe lines and ser-

vice roads broke the area up into multiple sections that allow one to cover a lot of area to cut a fresh lynx track.

The first day, as always, started with the excitement of a new experience and over the radio we heard Jeff call that a fresh set of tracks had been cut. I was thinking, “Wow, this is going to happen fast.” Jeff released two of his dogs on the track. Watching the Garmin display we watched them go in half a mile, then turn around and head back. They had lost the track. Pushing waist deep snow Jeff walked the dogs back on the track but the dogs could not pick up the scent. Lynx give off little scent and can be very difficult for a dog to scent.

As the first track was a bust, we all loaded up into the trucks and started driving roads and oil well pads looking for sign of cats. While there were tracks everywhere most were old having been filled in with the previous night’s snowfall. Finishing up about 3:00 pm without a new track, it was back to the lodge for a nice hot meal, taking care of dogs, and discussing the next day’s plans.

The second day we were up again at 7am for a hot breakfast. We packed lunch and were off. Outside we found a skiff of

fresh snow. This day’s excitement came as a radio call from an oil worker who had spotted two lynx in the middle of a road. At the location there were the fresh tracks! Excited to see them closer, I climbed through the snowbank to have a closer look. These animals are amazing. The lynx tracks were only 4 inches deep in the snow, but I sunk into the snow above my waist. It was a struggle to get back to the plowed road.

Dogs were released and off we went. In about 20 min caught up to the dogs who had bayed up a female lynx with a kitten. The lynx was cornered in a creek bottom and holding her ground with the hounds around her baying. We leashed the dogs and left the lynx alone. It was exciting to see such a magnificent creature so close.

The rest of the day was spent searching for new tracks. Clint and I went down river, where earlier in the season Jeff had cut a lion track, and we found a fresh lynx track, but also wolf tracks. With wolves in the area we were not going to release the hounds until we knew where they were.

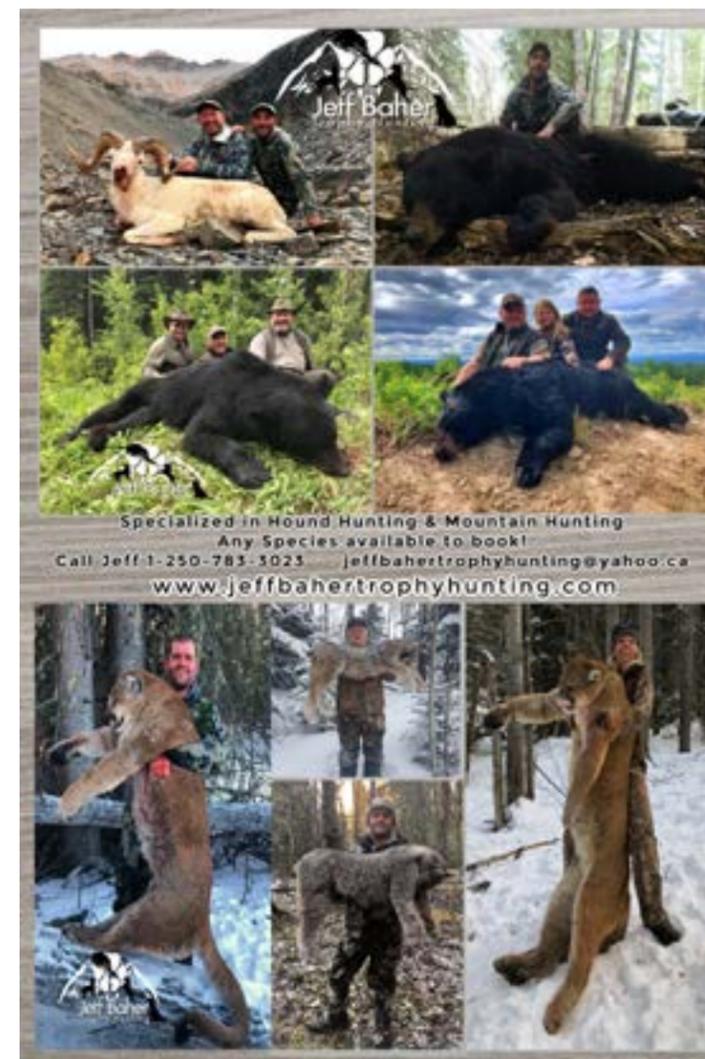
Day three was miserably cold, -25 F as we returned to the river breaks. The 4 inches of fresh powder made it a task to drive into the area. We were fighting through covered ruts and deep snow. Once at the breaks, Jeff and Clint unloaded their sleds. Their first task was to figure out where the wolves had gone to. They tracked the wolf pack down to the river and then out of the area. By then the lynx track was not fresh enough to work. The rest of the day was spent most of the day checking the roads and power lines looking for a track. Jeff found a lion track but by then it was too late in the day to release dogs. I was starting to wonder if there was going to be an opportunity for a cat. After a cold day sitting in the truck we loaded Clint’s sled into his Tacoma. I drove Jeff’s F-150 and we headed down the hill to pick up Jeff. I struggled to keep Jeff’s F150 going down the road as it’s the rear wanted to slide out on me. Finally, we made it to the highway, found Jeff, loaded up, and went back to the warm lodge.

The next morning was perfect, a half inch of fresh snow was on the ground! We were off, back to the oil pads. It wasn’t very long before Jeff cut a fresh track and released two of his hounds. They were off and headed east along a ridge. All of the sudden they had done a U-Turn and appeared to be coming back on the same track, but then they cut to the south! They were still trailing the cat. Ten minutes later Jeff told me to run up to a pipe crossing above us with the .17 HMR rifle. Off I go. Just as I got there Jeff called me back to the creek bottom, but the cat crossed under the bridge 30 seconds before I could get down there. Clint released 2 more dogs on the fresh track. This is like a relay race. Four minutes later, here come the tired original dogs to be gathered up and put into the kennel. Since the lynx have snowshoe-like feet a houndsman has to replace his dogs on a long chase, otherwise the dogs become too slow to ever catch the lynx. Shortly after kenneling the first dogs the Garmins marked “treed” and we could hear the other dogs baying in the trees. Just as we are about to hike in on the dogs, they are off again, indicating the cat had jumped out of the tree. Off they go! We tried to get ahead of them on another road, but when we get there a road grader operator told us that he had seen the cat cross the road just a few minutes earlier.

Off go a third set of two dogs chasing the lynx. This will provide another hour of chase in that square section of woods. Clint and I travel to an oil pad to head off the cat only find lynx and dog tracks running through, too late again.

Then Jeff radios. He can hear the dogs baying. We all meet up and soon here come the dogs, tongues hanging on the ground, completely spent from running in the deep snow. But there’s the lynx track in the snow. It’s time for the fourth brace of hounds! They are released, almost immediately Jeff yells, “There he is!”. I look up to see the most beautiful cat I have ever see. It’s walking across a pipeline right of way. I grabbed the Savage .17 HMR as the lynx sauntered into the woods. I pulled the trigger and nothing I had missed. Luckily, the lynx just turned. The second shot found its mark. I had harvested my second North American cat.

Congratulations were given all around and the dogs were allowed to “wool up” or mouth the cat as their reward for catching it. On the way back to camp I was excited, but I also knew the next day I would be catching a flight back to the real world of work, and not chasing around in the Canadian woods. Boris would get his lynx the very next day, the largest lynx ever taken in Jeff’s camp.





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# Is this your last issue?



## RENEWAL & UPDATE FORM



Print and complete this form, and mail with payment to the address below. Membership can also be completed online at [www.idahowildsheep.org](http://www.idahowildsheep.org). Credit cards accepted online. Life and Centennial membership payment plans available on the website.

**Yes, I want to help "Put Sheep on the Mountain".**

I am a new member

This is a renewal

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Photo credit Bruce Mincher

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# THE SCOTTISH STAG

by Christopher Benfield

**6**AM came very early and our driver was anxiously waiting for my wife Christina and I outside the Lands of loyal hotel. We were guest of Michael Grosse with International Adventures Unlimited who stages all his Scottish hunts from the wonderful accommodations. A former rally car mechanic and driver, Gram piloted the Pugio diesel as if it were on rails. Soon after leaving the cobblestone streets of the small village of Alyth, we were sailing through the mist as the sun rose over the Cairngorms forest. As my wife napped, Gram and I passed the time discussing our mutual love for reloading, his life as a game keeper, and the absurdity of UK restriction on gun owners.

This day's adventure began at the 2017 Idaho Wild Sheep Banquet. Call it a wild hair or maybe the glass of Pendleton whiskey, I found myself raising my hand again and again for the chance for Christina to hunt a wild stag in Scotland. When the auctioneer pointed to me and exclaimed "SOLD" Christina's face erupted with joy and almost knocked me out of my chair with a forceful embrace. A dream of hers from the first moment a hunting show featured the sight and sound of a roaring stag. I couldn't resist giving her a chance to fulfill this dream.

Arriving at the game keepers' station, on land owned by the Glenfiddich family, Gram passed us over to the head game keeper Russ. His 20 years of experience and great Scot-

tish demeanor immediately gave my wife and I the feeling that a stag would be in our possession by the end of the day. First stop was the range, where Christina confirmed with Russ's suppresses Sako, that there would be no issue placing a Nosler Ballistic tip in the proper location.

Satisfied Russ loaded us in a well-used Toyota HyLux and we headed for the hill. The area we would be stalking was part of a larger 70,000 acres property. Consisting of open heather mountainsides bracketed by a dense forest of evergreen and cedars to the north the classic highland flora. A crystal-clear, trout filled river wined its way through the valley between us and heather fields to the east. Russ stopped the Hylux on an access road high on the western slop. As we stepped out, the cold mist filled air greeted our lungs. As if on que from the forest below the visceral deep expression of red stag testosterone pierced the morning mist. The unseen stag's roar was followed by one closer to us in the wood then another further up on the heather covered hill. The sounds of the roars could have easily been mistaken by an unacquainted ear as the rumblings of some ancient beast angered by intruders into his domain. It put goosebumps on our skin and a massive smile on Christina's face.

We spend an hour looking over the hillside. We spotted several groups of stags and hinds before Russ and Christina agreed that a stag guarding a harem of eight or

so hinds next to the evergreen wood line deserved closer inspection. The early morning thermals were perfect for an approach, so we loaded our gear and headed out. Russ's long frame seemed to float over the undulations and hidden ditches as we descended the hill to the river bottom and up the far side. Christina and I did our best to keep pace, but our uninitiated feet seemed to find every peat filled hole and spongy plant along the way. We hugged the wood line, stopping only to allow Russ to assess the situation in front and to the right of us for movement. As we approached a rise in the ground our pace slowed. Peering through the mist the forms of hinds and our target stag come into view 400yds away. He is still with his hinds, who have decided to bed on the open hillside a hundred or so yards for the edge of the wood. The stag would prefer they keep going so he is making rounds to try and coax them to their feet. We slip back down into cover and hug the trees moving closer.

"From here on out we will crawl" Russ whispered. I stay behind and video the stalk. It takes them a while to creep above the twelve-inch-deep heather and into a position 50 yds in front of me. While they creep closer, the stag is putting on a fine display of rutting behavior. His swollen neck, gray almost silver colored mane, and chocolate black antlers with ivory tips are impressive as he runs back and forth checking hinds and roaring at every opportunity. As the stag chases away a rival red deer who has come to inspect the hinds, Russ and Christina quickly move to a spot that provides enough elevation for a shot. The hinds have spotted them but aren't sure if they should move. The stag returns

trotting victoriously, kicking up peat and water with every stride. As if scripted, he stands broadside in the clear overlooking his hinds. Long anxious moments pass until the still is broken by the suppressed crack of the Sako and a resounding "thwack" is audible as the stag lurches forward a few yards and flounders onto his side. legs in the air kicking, he quickly expires from a perfect heart shot taken at a little over 200 yards.

Christina was given the honor of a Scottish bleeding rite; Russ painting the stag's blood on her cheeks. This is an ancient tradition dating back to St. Herbert in the seventh century.

Since arriving in Edenborough, we had explored as much as possible. Christina and I had ventured via rental car and ferry to the western isles, down single lane roads for miles to ancient castles, along the shores of several lochs, and to the most northern part of the mainland where the North Sea raged with whitecap waves and rainbows. Wining this hunt not only provided the fulfilment of a dream but also sparked an unforgettable experience. Taking in Christina's emotions as she inspects the beauty of her stag and caressed his mane, I am overcome by the feeling that this would not be our last trip to Scotland.

P.S. – A special thanks to Michael Grosse and his wife Danielle with International Adventures Unlimited. They truly understand what is required to run a successful hunt. If you plan to hunt Scotland their packages cover everything from the meals to the trophy importation back to the states.

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“This was one of the coolest moments in my hunting life. To share such a time with my son was especially memorable.”



# ‘NEXT TIME’ IS NOW!

by Darren Paige

It all started at the 2017 Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation banquet. My hunting partner Chris and I watched the bidding war on the Texas aoudad hunt. When it was all done, we had missed out on it. So, when the 2019 banquet came around, we told ourselves we were going on that hunt. And next thing I knew we had the winning bid and were planning the hunt for Chris, my youngest son Brett, and I.

We had talked with our guide Rowdy McBride numerous times on the phone and he had sent us pictures of the hunters that were successful weeks before we were to fly out to Texas. He was getting us excited as the success was very good so far for the 2019 season. We landed in El Paso the day before our hunt and explored the Mexican border and spent some time at the wall. We then headed to Alpine, Texas 175 miles south east of El Paso. Once in Alpine we met our guide for dinner and discussed the plans for the hunt.

Rowdy and one of his guides, John, picked us up the next morning before light and headed to the High desert in search of Aoudads. We split up and made plans to meet later in the day to see what each of us had found. Chris and John headed to the west side of mountain while Rowdy, Brett and I headed to east side.

I asked Rowdy what the average hunt time was for most hunters. He replied usually from 2 to 4 days. The rams were just finishing up on rut. The Aoudads that were still rutting were running in the herds with the ewes. They were nervous and would run off a half mile or more when they saw people. We didn't see any for the first few hours then around 11 am we started seeing the rams fighting in the rock canyons 1,000 yards away. We made a plan to sneak up on them, but they ran. We chased a couple herds until late afternoon with no luck.

Around 3pm we heard a shot miles away and wondered if Chris had got on one. Just before dark, Rowdy said there was

one more canyon to check out before we call it a day. As we started into the lower canyon, we stopped to glass the canyon walls and there he was. An older ram who was done rutting, on his own laying in the rocks high above the canyon floor. He was about 800 yards away, so we made a quick plan to pursue him before dark. We went around the canyon and came around below him until we were within 250 yards. He still was there and unaware of us. Since only his head was visible, I didn't have a good shot. We sneaked another few minutes below him thru the trees and rocks until Rowdy spotted him at 187 yards. He asked if I could make the shot as the ram was laying down in the rocks.

I settled in and found him in my scope. The sun was setting fast, with the Aoudad on the shady side of the canyon he was quickly blending into the background. I knew this needed to be quick. I then saw that he was then looking right at us. It was now or never. I squeezed off the shot from new my Browning x bolt pro 7mm with 6x 24 Vortex scope. As the shot rang out, I kept my eye on the ram thru the scope. He stood up then fell forward off a 30' cliff.

Once Rowdy, Brett and I found him it was one of the coolest moments in my hunting life. To share such a time with my son Brett was especially memorable.

As we started capping the ram, we saw Chris and John headed our way. They had heard the shot, came our way. At meeting we all high fived each other. Chris said he had killed his ram earlier in the day. Rowdy was surprised as we had both rams in one day. So, we finished up and headed back to Alpine to celebrate the hunt.

Thanks to the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation, Rowdy McBride outfitting, Chantel Crane with Boise Cabela's, and Kryptek for the gear from my Alaska Dall sheep hunt a few years earlier. Looking forward to the next sheep banquet for the next hunt.



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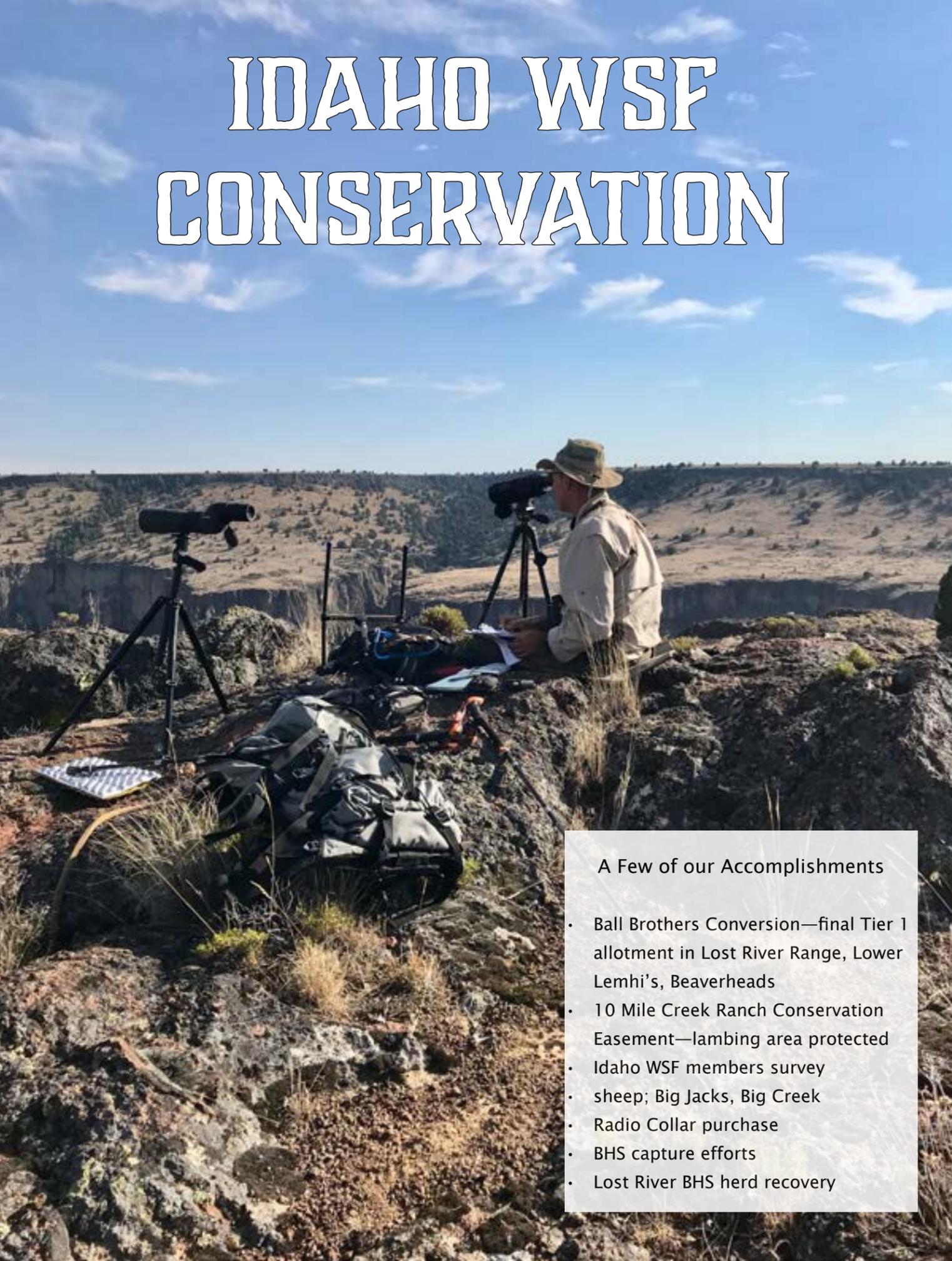


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# IDAHO WSF CONSERVATION



## A Few of our Accomplishments

- Ball Brothers Conversion—final Tier 1 allotment in Lost River Range, Lower Lemhi's, Beaverheads
- 10 Mile Creek Ranch Conservation Easement—lambing area protected
- Idaho WSF members survey
- sheep; Big Jacks, Big Creek
- Radio Collar purchase
- BHS capture efforts
- Lost River BHS herd recovery

## ALLOTMENT BUYOUTS & CONVERSION

### RISK OF CONTACT MODEL (ROC)

Developed to calculate the risk of bighorn sheep contacting domestic sheep/goats  
ROC was applied to domestic sheep/goat allotments on public lands  
Allotments with high risk were identified and modified

Out-right closure in favor of bighorn sheep

Permittee agreed to waive permit back to land management agency upon a “buyout” negotiated through wildlife advocate organizations

Permittee and public land management agency agree to convert allotment to cattle

Conversion usually funded by wildlife advocate organizations

To date, Idaho WSF has spent over \$250,000 on allotment buyouts

To date, Idaho WSF has spent over \$100,000 on allotment conversions

SUCCESS FROM ALLOTMENT CHANGES, GMU'S 37/37A

YEAR	HUNT UNITS	TAGS	HARVEST
2000	1	3	3
2005	2	3	3
2007	2	4	3
2011	2	8	7
2017	3	10	10
2019	4	13	14*

\*1 SPECIAL TAG HARVEST



## SMALL FLOCK OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Most attention has been devoted to domestic sheep and goat permittees on public land. However, small flock operations on private land near bighorn habitat is also a major concern, for example: The total herd die-off on the WA Oak Creek WMA was traced to a domestic goat that strayed off private land.

Small flock owners are contacted and invited to participate in the program.

The domestic sheep/goat/bighorn disease issue and process is explained.

Animals in their flock will be tested and plans developed to become Movi FREE.

Strictly a volunteer program.

### Challis:

IDFG is working with small flock operators in the Challis area.

Support is good and the number of small flock owners participating in the program has increased.

Through treatment, one cooperator has cleared Movi in his flock.

### Lower Hells Canyon:

Sponsored by IDFG, ODFW, WDFW and WSF CHAPTERS from ID, OR & WA.

Field work is contracted through the Asotin County Conservation District; Jennifer Zipse Resource Technician.

Initiated in 2019

HERDS IDENTIFIED/TESTED- 80% of operators contacted

ID-18/5

OR-11/1

WA-25/13

ANIMALS TESTED/+Movi

SHEEP- 19/0

GOAT-150/17

One heard cleared Movi

Dr. Tom Besser, retired WSU Researcher, is donating his time and research knowledge

Key Note Speaker, HERD OWNER OUTREACH MEETING, JULY, 2019

Movi SEMINAR, WSU Wildlife Disease & Small Ruminant Club's. Jennifer Zipse, ACCD, & Dr. Frances Cassirer, IDFG were also presenters.

Has given two presentations for the community and done numerous site visits in Challis.

Provides technical assistance to IDFG statewide.



# 2019 BIGHORN SHEEP GROUND SURVEY GMU 26/TAYLOR RANCH

Rams									
Total	Ewes	Yrlg	Lambs	Yrlg	I	II	III	IV	Unk
5	2	1	1				1		
2	1					1			
5			1		1	1		2	
23	13		1		4	3	2		
17	8		3		1	1	3	1	
3	1	1			1				
1								1	
12									12
68	25	2	6	0	7	6	6	4	12



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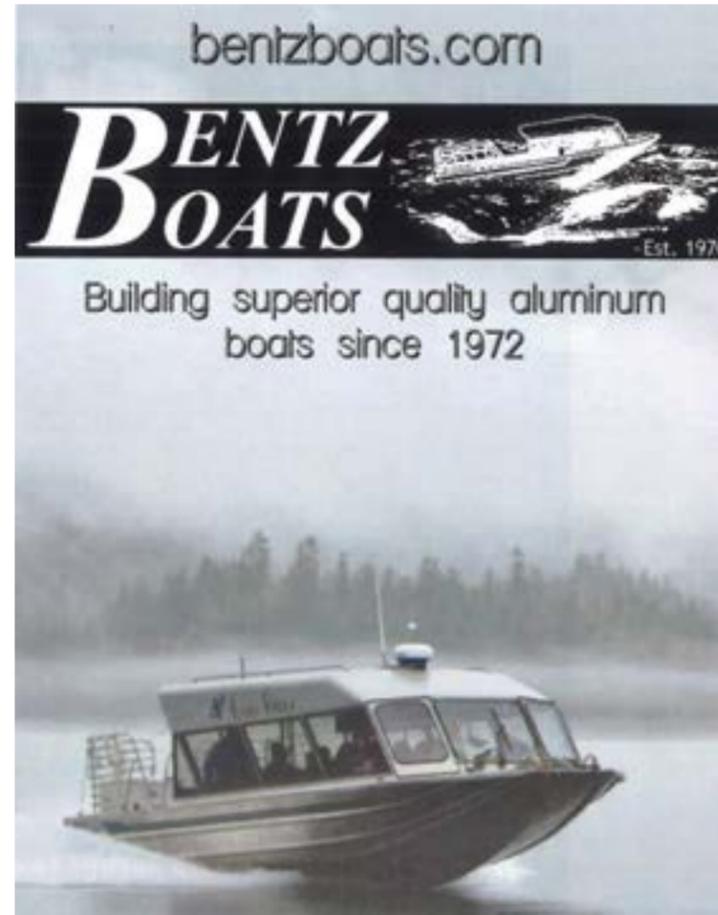




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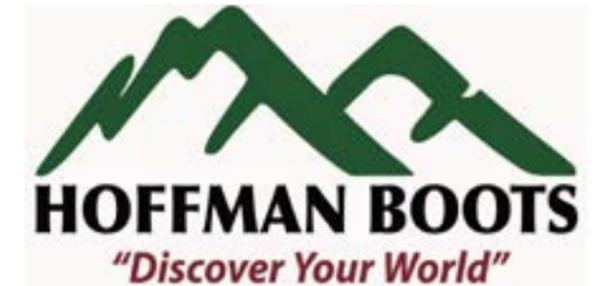


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