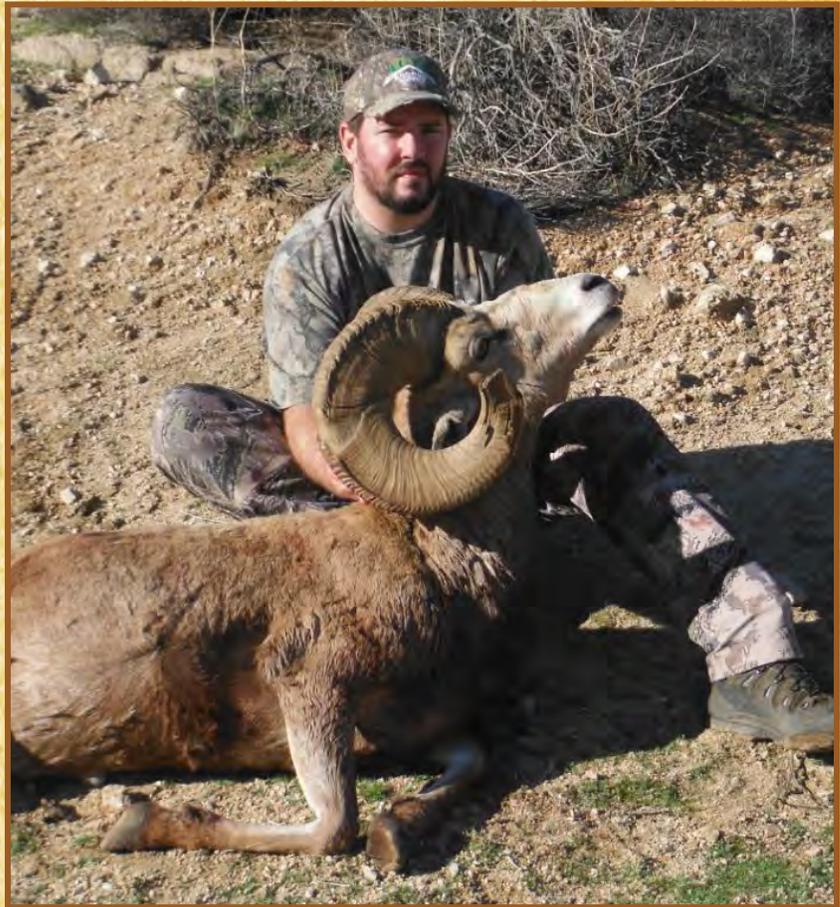




California Wild Sheep

Summer 2017



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Travis Spidle
San Gorgonio Wilderness Mtn
Score 175 6/8 B&C
San Gorgonio Wilderness Outfitters



ULTIMA THULE LODGE

CONTACT: DONALD C. MARTIN 310-766-3921



From the Editor's Desk

I hope you enjoy this issue. It has a LOT of great pictures and information from our Annual Fundraiser — if you missed it, YOU MISSED OUT! Throughout this issue you will find contact information on donors that supported us for this year's fundraiser — please support them and let them know you appreciate it! Please assure you make it next year; add May 5, 2018 to your calendar right now! It also includes your ballot for the annual Director election, fun hunting stories, news about a major initiative that will more than DOUBLE the number of desert bighorn in California (pique your interest?! see page 32), fun humor, more interesting desert insights from Carlos, AND MORE!

Your feedback, ideas, articles & requests are always welcome. Best way to reach me is email: mike.borel@contextnet.com. Due date for input to the 3Q17 issue is August 20.



CA WSF BOARD MEMBER DARRYL WILLIAMS ELECTED TO WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION BOARD

Darryl Williams, a CA Wild Sheep Foundation life member and supporter, was recently elected to the national Wild Sheep Foundation Board of Directors. He was then nominated as Recording Secretary and has accepted the honor of that position.

Darryl first became interested in wild sheep in 2006 and joined CA WSF right away. Since then, he has served on the boards of the Eastern Chapter WSF, The Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep, Co-Chaired the WSF Life Member Breakfast, and served on numerous WSF committees. Darryl is a Summit Life Member and he and his wife, Cassie Shafer, are Chadwick Ram Society Members.

Congratulations to Darryl on this great honor and responsibility in PUTTING AND KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAINS!



Jason Hairston, long time friend of CA Wild Sheep Foundation, has been asked by Donald Trump Jr. to serve as a liaison among himself, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, sportsmen's groups and the White House on conservation and public lands issues.

Jason is a former San Francisco 49ers linebacker and founder of hunting gear company Kuiu, Kuiu is one of the earliest and most frequent donors to the CA WSF annual fundraiser.

Congrats Jason!

CA Wild Sheep Foundation reaches a new milestone with over 1,000 Facebook followers. Join the herd — visit us on [Facebook](#) and press that "Like" button!

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California Wild Sheep is published quarterly.

Please email all articles and photos to
mike.borel@contextnet.com

Photos should be high resolution and in color.
It is recommended that digital photos be sent by email.

Please include photo credits and captions.

Humorous outtakes provided by Tammy Scott
Published by Beverly Valdez, Gaiatec Services

Events

2017

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| June 10 | Ballots out for Board of Directors Election |
| June 22-23 | WSF Chapter & Affiliates Meeting, Kalispell, MT |
| June 30 | Completed Board of Directors Ballots due |
| August TBD | DBH Hunter Orientation in Sacramento (8-12:00) |
| August 20 | Due date for articles for 3Q2017 CAWSF Newsletter |
| September TBD | DBH Hunter Orientation in Ontario (8-12:00) |
| November 20 | Due date for articles for 4Q2017 CAWSF Newsletter |
| December 1 | Sheep Summit XXII in Ontario |

2018

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| January 18-20 | WSF Convention
Reno, Peppermill |
| January 24-27 | GSCO Convention
Las Vegas, Westgate Resort |
| Jan 31 - Feb 3 | SCI Hunters Convention
Las Vegas Convention Center
and MGM Grand Hotel |
| February 8-11 | WHCE – Salt Lake City |
| February 20 | Due date for articles for 1Q2018 CAWSF Newsletter |

President's Letter

Dear CA Wild Sheep Members and Friends:

It is with a great deal of mixed emotions that I write this last newsletter message as President of CA Wild Sheep. The president is limited to two consecutive 2-year terms. My four years of service as president are quickly coming to an end.

Although I have enjoyed leading CA Wild Sheep over these years, I also take great pride that our organization is a true team effort of a number of individuals, supported in turn by all of you. We are much bigger and stronger than a one-person (or a small cadre) operation. Others with fresh ideas, different styles, and their own perspectives are waiting in the wings to take CA Wild Sheep to even greater heights and successes.



CA Wild Sheep recently embarked on an ambitious and bold \$2 million program aimed at doubling California's wild sheep population. Over much of what would be prime desert bighorn sheep habitat in California wild sheep numbers are limited by the absence of one very precious commodity--water. Probably not by coincidence, studies suggest that by doubling the number of water guzzler sources in key areas the population of California's wild sheep could also double.

The project will be a comprehensive cooperative effort including federal agencies (such as the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service), state agencies, the military (military bases and other military property in California include some prime desert bighorn habitat), other conservation groups (including strong support from our national affiliate the Wild Sheep Foundation), private donors and foundations, and—of course—our key core group: YOU. We hope you are moved to do your share to “Give a lamb a drink.”

Thanks to all of you who attended and supported our recent annual fundraiser gala as we kicked off this program. For those of you who were unable to join us, you were missed. And you missed one of the largest, most fun, and most successful CA Wild Sheep events ever!

As you read this letter, elections for the Board of CA Wild Sheep are underway, and soon the new board will be electing new officers. Stay engaged as CA Wild Sheep heads to even greater levels!!

Thank you, and good hunting!!

Paul Brisso
President, CA Wild Sheep Foundation

SAVING THE BEST FOR LAST

by Devin DeValle

Twenty-four years ago my father drew this same tag for Clark/Kington Mountain Range. He (Guy) hunted 31 days in the desert until he finally threw in the towel and got himself a Desert Big Horn Sheep. But don't worry, this story isn't about him, it's about his daughter that drew the same Clark/Kington Mountain Range Desert Big Horn Sheep tag!

Every year I patiently wait for the results to come in but a couple days before the result date my dad called me and told me I drew the tag! I didn't believe him. I called him a liar and almost hung up on him for pulling my leg. For as long as I can remember, I always used to (and still do) stare at his Big Horn Sheep head hanging in his shop wondering when I was going to get my opportunity to harvest one. And it finally came!

I immediately started to prep all of my gear and site in my .270 Savage for farther distances and a very good spotting scope, trust me you're going to need it. I still had to hunt deer season and wait 6 months until the Ram hunt but I was ready! I have never hunted in the desert but how hard can it be?

My dad, our buddy Clem and I packed up the truck & trailer with our gear, plenty of food and shelter and started our trek to the desert. Since my dad hunted this same area 24 years ago we figured we didn't need a guide or any scouting time, again how hard can it be to hunt in the desert?

On the first day, the three of us walked around a mountain that was near our camp, glassing as far as we can see, trying to figure out how these sheep operate. No luck. Day 2 we decided to take an easier hike across to the Mesquite Mountains, again with no luck seeing anything. The three of us glassed hundreds and hundreds of miles, my eyes were hurting by the end of every day. On day 5 or 6 we did see a very small Ram, we only saw him for about 10 seconds before he disappeared into the desert floor. But after 10 long days of hunting this trip was over, three very disappointed hunters had to pack up and make the trek back home.

One month later, my dad, our buddy Sep and I packed up the truck and made the trek back down to the desert. We had a different game plan this time, less walking and more glassing with the spotting scopes. This trip was a complete 180 from the trip before. It rained, it snowed, the wind was over 50 MPH for some time and finally after 14 days of hunting (10 from the trip before) we FINALLY saw 6 rams. My dad spotted them from about 3-4 miles away. I couldn't believe it, we finally found some sheep! I was so excited that I could barely focus on them in my scope because I was shaking. There was one in the group that was



definitely in his own scoring class and the other 5 were pretty decent as well. We tried to sneak up on them but once we got to about 600 yards away we had nowhere else to hide, we were out in the open and they were on the face of "The Grey Rock" looking out towards us. I laid there for 45 minutes with the Monster Ram in my scope, waiting for him to get up and/or descend down the hill possibly towards us, but were hunting in the desert remember? It's not that easy! I did take a crazy 600 yard shot, but after 14 long hard days of hunting and finally seeing one, I had to! Of course I missed, the wind was blowing and it was just way too far. All 6 of them trotted over the hill and we never saw them again. On our way back to camp, an hour before Sunset I spot 4 rams and we immediately came up with a plan to try to sneak up on them but the sun ran out before we could get close enough for a shot.

We didn't see any sheep after that until day 20, I was so close to a ram that I could smell him! But of course, the wind is crazy out there and he smelled me before I could get close enough for a good shot. That was the last day of the trip for us, we packed up camp and went back home. At this point I was just mad, upset, discouraged, you name it, I was it.

My dad and I got to talking, "this is a once in a lifetime opportunity" I said, "I can't not get a ram!" So we called Cliff St. Martin, one of the owners of Dry Creek Outfitters, it just so happened that they had just finished their season with the rest of the hunters in the desert and he and his partner, Tim Mercier, were more than happy to come out the last weekend of the season and spot some rams for us. Here we go again, my dad and I packed up the truck and made our third trip down to the desert to get my Big Horn Sheep.

We met up with Cliff and Tim for breakfast the

Friday before the end of the season, we talked about the rams they had both spotted the night before and made our game plan. Cliff and Tim asked me what kind of score of a ram I was looking to get and I told them that I didn't care how big it was, I just wanted to beat my dad's score that he got 24 years ago. After glassing all day we found the Rams the guys had found the night before so Cliff, my dad and I starting hauling butt up the mountain to see if we can get a close enough shot. By the time we got up there the wind was starting to blow pretty hard and the sun was descending faster than we could walk so Cliff made a hard decision to back off the rams before we spooked them out of there and we would be back the next morning.

The next morning we set up our spotting scopes and started to glass the mountains where we saw the rams, we didn't see them but we decided to head up the hill any way to see if they were hiding behind a rock or knoll. I started to smell a musty smell, it was similar to a deer smell but nothing like I have ever smelled before and I knew we were getting close. We all stopped and Cliff told me to take off my pack and there was a rock wall about 50 yards in front of us and I had a feeling the Rams were on the other side

of it. Cliff and I started to crawl towards the rock on our hands and knees which felt like eternity! Cliff poked his head over the rock and I saw him light up, he turned to me and said he's right there, 175 yards out. He moved back enough so I could sit down and rest my gun on the rock, Cliff wasn't kidding, he was RIGHT there broadside, I never thought I was going to get that close to a ram! Cliff told me to take my time and that he didn't know we were there then BOOM! I squeezed the trigger and watched him drop in my scope. I heard my dad from 50 yards behind us jump up and scream "woo hoo!" He didn't see the ram but he heard the "whack" from the bullet and knew he was down. What a rush! Buck Fever times ten! I immediately got up and started making my way to the ram and once he got in my sight I couldn't help but smile from ear to ear. I finally did it! After 22 long days of hunting, I got a Ram! We waited for Tim to hike up the mountain so he could see the "Toad", take pictures and help pack him out. This was a great experience and I will never forget these hunting trips! Literally down to the wire with only one more day left in the season. I couldn't have done this without Cliff & Tim with Dry Creek Outfitters and of course my dad. Yes, my ram is way bigger than his. Ha ha!



PISSURLUA MUSKARMEG CUPIT ILAKLLUKI (HUNTING MUSKOOX WITH THE CUP'IG ESKIMOS)

by Jon Kruger

Out in the Bering Sea, 135 miles west of Bethel Alaska, lies the island of Nunivak. About 200 Eskimos inhabit the village of Mekoryuk with about 550 muskoxen (a *Caprinae!*) and roughly 1500 reindeer. The natives live off the land, as they have for hundreds of years, and have vast access to muskox, reindeer, seal, walrus and seemingly endless fishing. I was lucky enough to be the winning bidder at the 2016 CA WSF banquet for the Nunivak Island Alaska muskox hunt and was able to spend a week this winter with my dad living among the Cup'ig Eskimos.

White out conditions and heavy winds are a normal winter occurrence on the island. When we arrived locals stated that we had come during the coldest and windiest month of the year. When the weather allows it, planes fly in twice a day bringing in food and supplies along with passengers. The day we flew into Mekoryuk from Bethel it was the first time the airport had planes in the air in the last four days. Stranded travelers lined the walls of the airport waiting to make their way home. This hunt is definitely an adventure and requires a little hunter's luck to make it to the island and a little more luck to have the right weather to be able to get out and find a muskox. For the most part, if you can make it out to the island and have decent weather, finding a mature muskox may only take a day or two.

Every muskox tag holder that isn't a resident of the island is required to hire a guide or transporter for this hunt. I opted to go with Ishmael Smith of IV Transporters who is only one of two local Eskimos on the island offering these services. There are other outfits offering guiding/transporting but only two that live on the island year-round. We spent our first hunting day waiting out the high winds and preparing gear for when our chance to head out came. It was good to meet our new friends and we spent the day sharing stories and had meals of reindeer steaks, muskox and even tried seal oil. The weather forecast showed slightly better conditions for the next day and would be our best chance for making it out to find a muskox.

Snow mixed with fog rolled in and out cutting visibility down to mere feet, humbling my navigation skills and making me glad I was out on the island following in tow of resident Eskimos. The spring ice had been thin this year and cracking sounds could occasionally be heard as we drove snowmobiles out over rivers in search for muskox. We were told to stay close and followed suit after being told the story of a villager that had broken through the frozen ice the week prior. He survived but you could imagine these



situations becoming pretty serious if you were to go under the ice and get swept down with the current. As we rode snowmobiles across the tundra we would stop occasionally to glass hoping to pick up the outline of a muskox's dark brown body through the fog and snow. We continued our way to the south side of the island and arrived around noon to a small plywood shelter used by reindeer hunters. We had lunch and spent some time waiting out the weather hoping the fog would lift and snow let up. The area we were in was a hill among tundra and would be a good vantage point if only visibility would improve. Our transporter let us know that we would probably be heading back soon if the weather didn't improve. "Being out on the tundra in low or no visibility is dangerous and not worth the risk" he said. A little while later the snow let up allowing some visibility and a chance to glass the snow covered tundra. The sky was just as white as the snow covered valley and there was no distinction between where one ended and the other started. A little later some dark shapes caught our eyes in the distance. It was too far and foggy to make out exactly what they were at first. We continued glassing and finally revealed that it was muskoxen. Seconds later through a narrow window in the fog I could see that it was a group of three mature bulls. My excitement rose and anticipation instantly set in as this surely meant that we would be going in for a stalk.

My past year was centered on practicing for the chance I might get to take a muskox with a long bow. Every afternoon I practiced in my backyard on 3D targets and every weekend was spent at archery courses preparing for this hunt. As the hunt grew nearer I practiced in all my snow clothes figuring out the best ways to shoot while wearing a fur hood and not having my string hit my forearm with my thick coat on. Now was going to be my chance to put all



my practice to the test. Our transporters Ishmael and Vivian hung back and watched as my father and I made our way around the backside of a rolling hill and about a half mile over the snowcapped tundra to see what we could do to get within longbow range of the three bulls. With a white snowy sky up against white snowy tundra it was hard to make our way out of sight of the muskox and still remember where we last saw them. When we first saw the herd they looked to be about 800 yards away but as we kept walking it seemed closer to a mile. We continued closing the gap and all I can remember was thinking about how this was all going to happen. Would they spot me and run off never be found again? Or would they bunch up with their butts together and heads out ready to charge? Last year, I was up in the arctic hunting caribou and had a run in with a group of muskox ending with a charging muskox nipping at my heels as I ran across the tundra. All these thoughts ran through my head as I now made my way closer and closer to the muskox. They kept their distance between me as I tried to close the gap. Finally, the group stopped and allowed for me to get within 40 yards. With an arrow nocked and a 700-pound bull staring me down, I continued to edge closer and made my way to 20 yards. I didn't take my eyes off him as he stared right back with his head tilted down ready to charge. With my right glove off and tab in my hand gently against the string of the bow the stand down continued. I stood still waiting for him to turn and allow a shot. With a snort and head buck I knew that something was about to happen. He raked his hoof on the ground as if ready to charge. I hadn't forgotten what that meant since last year and knew this warning. I took a step back and waited; he turned to make his getaway. I wasted no time pulling back the arrow just like I had practiced a thousand times before. The mechanics of the shot unfolded just as I had practiced and I can still remember my stance, feel of my hand against my anchor point and view from behind the bow as I released, sending the arrow over the snowcapped tundra. The arrow landed about 30 yards behind the muskox and hadn't even slowed down as it passed

right through both lungs and out the other side. He took two steps forward and by this time I had another arrow pulled back and anchored against my cheek. I released, sending another arrow into the muskox with an entrance hole 3 inches from the first. The 650 grain arrow made its way through and out the other side just like the first arrow landing some 30-40 yards behind the muskox. It wasn't five seconds later that he dropped down to his knees and had his last breath. I was in awe of the rush of staring down a bull yards away and them having a little hunters luck to be able to make a fast and ethical kill.

The transporter had been watching from a couple hills back and was surprised that the muskox had fallen over. Looking through his binoculars he saw me draw back and release my bow only to see arrows skipping across the snow; surely these were misses. He joined up with us shortly after, still amazed that the arrows had passed right through the muskox. It was a true blessing to have this experience and be able to share it with my father and new friends. We took pictures in remembrance of this once in a lifetime moment and then quickly started taking care of the meat in an attempt to beat the fading light on the 30 miles trip back to the village.

We spent the next couple days boning out meat and packaging up 50-pound boxes for the flight back. We ended up with about 200-pounds of meat after boning and trimming down the thick layers of fat. The hide was fleshed out and would be sent to the tannery when we got back to be made into a rug. The skull was trimmed and packed up to get the beetle treatment on return for a euro mount. The process went pretty smooth; we worked out of the transporters shop which allowed us to have a little heat and kept everything from freezing into a solid block until we were complete. We spent the next couple days waiting for a plane and explored the island. We stumbled across reindeer and learned a little about how the Eskimos herd them up and process them on the island for subsistence and sale. One of the most interesting parts of the process is that all the remains of the reindeer get put out in

the center of a frozen lake and stay there till the lake thaws. There must be over a thousand carcasses with big antler racks lining the bottom of the lake from years of this tradition. If I had room in my luggage for antlers I definitely would have brought a couple racks back. My dad and I did manage to chase off a few arctic foxes from a gut pile to cutoff a couple cool palmated antler ends to take back as souvenirs.

Days later the radio in the house let us know that the weather was clearing and a plane would be coming in today. We were packed up and ready when it arrived. We said our goodbyes and watched from the plane as our Eskimo friends headed back to the village. As the plane taxied to the runway the pilot noticed that his lever for controlling the flaps on the wings moved back and forth effortlessly and the linkage was disconnected. A nut was missing and he let us know that we weren't leaving until we found the missing parts to the plane. The lever worked when he was landing so it shouldn't be far. In an effort to get the plane back in the air all 6 passengers started searching. I spent a couple hours going back and forth around the end of the gravel landing strip where the plane had stopped and been unloaded. Others crawled around the cockpit and through the main cabin. We found a couple bolts, nuts and keys in the gravel but not the parts we were looking for. It was about 10 degrees and with the wind blowing the search carried on for hours. About 3 hours into the search my dad found the missing nut, it was stuck down below the floor where the rudder controls came up to the pedals. I thought that we were ready to go when the pilot screwed the linkage together but he let us know that it would need to be inspected before we could take off. Another plane came couple hours later and we switched to that plane and headed off.

Our plan was to stop off in Anchorage for a couple days to visit relatives and see the start of the Iditarod dogsled race before heading back to the lower 48. The "running of the reindeer" was also going on that weekend so we made sure to get there early to get a good spot to see the action. If you have never heard



of this it is similar to the "running of the bulls" that takes place in Pamplona Spain each year but instead of cattle bulls, Alaska uses bull reindeer. I was expecting the reindeer to be pretty tame but got a reality check when two guys holding a bull's reins were pulled off their feet, landing on the snow and drug a little ways down the street. The streets were fenced off and reindeer were released behind the runners after giving the participants about a 3 min head start. The reindeer ran full tilt weaving through the crowds of runners and made it to the finish line in short order; definitely an interesting spectacle to see.

Some of my best memories in life have been of trips to Alaska. It's a land of unparalleled beauty and is just as beautiful in winter as it is in summer. This trip was no exception and months later I still am amazed at the experience. It's not every day that you find yourself traveling by snow machine over snowcapped tundra on a far off island or have the chance to be at full draw on a muskox 20 yards away. I will never forget my time spent on Nunivak Island with the Cup'ig Eskimos and traveling around Alaska with my father.

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CADY MOUNTAINS SPOT AND STALK BIGHORN

by Kenny Ford

“The Hunt Of A Lifetime”. Anyone who has ever hunted understands the importance of those words. As a child growing up, the California desert was my playground. From building forts and tunnels in the sand to hitchhiking into the Sierra Mountains to fish the lakes and streams, I’ve hunted chukar, quail, deer, and Rabbits my whole life. When California opened up the draws for Desert Bighorn Sheep, it became an annual ritual to scour the map trying to decide where I wanted to hunt, fill out the application, and wait for that letter informing me that I had been drawn for this exceptional hunt. Year after year I waited and time took its toll on my knees, back, and heart. Last year I debated about just applying for points, unsure I would be able to complete a hunt due to health conditions. My wife, Rachel, asked me if I thought my health conditions would improve over the next year and of course the answer was no, so at the last minute I went ahead and applied for the Cady Mountains.

One night, my wife was up late playing games on her phone when around midnight an email from California Department of Wildlife popped up saying the draw results were available. She checked her applications to find she had been drawn on the late season X10 deer hunt. Then she checked my applications and saw a letter that said congratulations bighorn sheep recipient. She charged into the bedroom and woke me up to inform me I had indeed been drawn for the sheep hunt. A few minutes later she came back in to tell me I had also been drawn on the December Goodale deer hunt. This was the beginning of my hunt of a lifetime

The next few months were filled with interviewing guide services, sighting in a rifle with a long range scope, updating all my hunting gear, and trying to keep my excitement and anticipation down. With my



knees in such bad shape, I even went to the doctor and had injections to help me walk better. Then, finally, the day of my hunt arrived.

I had chosen Dry Creek Outfitters as my guide service and with a lot of apprehension my wife and I drove out to the camp location. We arrived to find Tim Mercier preparing the evening meal and the rest of the crew out scouting. We were immediately impressed with the camp and friendly atmosphere that greeted us. After a good meal and friendly conversation we settled into our tent for the night. Needless to say, we didn’t sleep all night. Excitement combined with the typical howling desert wind, cold and a nearby pack of yipping coyotes made sleep impossible.

The next morning we were up early to begin the hunt. Cliff drove us around the desert while the rest of the crew scouted. Near noon we received word that Kurt had spotted a nice ram bedded down in a gully. We all converged on his location and viewed the ram through spotting scopes while we discussed a game plan. Then we each went to different locations to begin stalking this ram. My wife went with Tim to help track the ram and I went with Cliff and Ben to begin slowly walking up the mountain toward the ram. The going was slow with numerous stops along the way but eventually we made it near the ram. Ben had eyes on the animal which was now up and





moving with a younger ram and several ewes. Cliff informed me we only had another 15 feet to go across a narrow ledge to be in a shooting position. He took my rifle across and then came back for me. Grabbing the back of my belt to keep me from falling down the ravine, he helped me across the ledge where Ben was waiting. As I positioned myself and sighted in the ram, Cliff was calling out the distance. The ram was walking away from us on the other side of a ravine, 245 yards and then 269 yards. At 269 yards he stopped and looked back, giving me a three quarter view. The shot I took was clean and the ram went down immediately. Ben had filmed the event and the look on my face was pure shock and excitement. I had just completed my hunt of a lifetime, a true spot and stalk hunt that exceeded my imagination.

The rest of the day was filled with celebrations and work as the ram was retrieved from the ravine wall and brought off the mountain. We contacted the biologist to arrange a meeting to have the horn

plugged and found out they were in the area so they came to camp the next morning to measure and plug the horn. I was very impressed with the two young ladies who came and took samples, measured the horns, plugged the horn and logged the information.

In my wildest dreams I could never have envisioned such a wonderful hunting experience. Dry Creek Outfitters gave me a true spot and stalk hunt, catered to my health conditions, included my wife in the experience, and exceeded my expectations in their service. All of the crew were personable and we feel we now have friends for life. The staff at California Department of Wildlife Bighorn Sheep division were professional, friendly and helpful and the work they are doing to preserve the sheep herds is commendable.

I will always remember my hunt of a lifetime.

BARDIN RANCH

Bob Swanson and Donald C. Martin

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THE CLIPPER MOUNTAIN WARRIOR

by Mike Laws



Ben was tucked in a rock pile across the canyon watching everything unfold. Tim and Kirk were down in the flats monitoring the stalk from a different angle. Hunkered down in the malapai boulder field, Cliff and I went to work going over different landmarks. Figuring the old ram was still bedded, we had no idea where or when he would appear. "Ok Mike, you see the ace of clubs right?" "Yes" I replied. "The kidney rock?" "Yes, I have it". "How about Australia?" "Yes I got it, I can see them all". About an hour had passed and Cliff whispered, "Rams up, kidney rock at 502 yards, set your turret for 475". My Gunwerks 7LRM was already steadied on my pack as I made the quick adjustment. Resting on the rock I felt good about the shot. As I put the crosshairs behind his shoulder and just began putting pressure on the trigger then, "CLICK".

Six months earlier my wife called me at work to inform me that I had drawn a tag for the Bass Hill muzzleloader deer hunt. Oh, and by the way you also drew a sheep tag for the Marble/Clippers! I couldn't believe it! I had been putting in for sheep since the beginning of time and I finally drew. I was scheduled for a knee replacement in November but now that would have to wait. This was going to be difficult but there was no way I wasn't going to do this hunt. After making a number of calls to friends and family, I decided for a once in a lifetime tag I needed to hire an outfitter. After speaking with Tim Mercier and Cliff St.Martin of Dry Creek Outfitters I was sold.

During the summer they would stay in close contact letting me know just what they were seeing and sending me pictures to get my blood pumping. My hunt was scheduled for the first part of January and it couldn't come soon enough. I had already met Cliff in Sacramento at the mandatory sheep



orientation but arriving in camp was my first opportunity to meet the rest of the crew. Tim greeted me along with Kirk Stiltz, Ben Mattausch, and Tom Humphreville. We settled in that evening to a delicious pot roast dinner with all the trimmings.

The next day we headed to the Clippers. We saw several nice rams but nothing we were interested in. The next two days was much of the same with the exception of one very nice ram that was constantly on the move. There was a lion in the area and we figured he had things pretty well stirred up. The next morning while Cliff and Ben were watching some rams I caught movement on a distant ridge about three miles away. With the three of us getting a closer look I decided this was the ram I wanted. He was an old ram by himself with deep chunks from both horns, obviously an old warrior. We made our plans and the rest of the crew got in position. It took about three hours to get to the bolder field where I could set up for the shot.



When the firing pin struck and I heard the CLICK sound, I didn't know what to think. I opened the bolt and out ejected a live round. Cliff looked at me in wonder as I chambered another round. "Take your time he's not going anywhere" Cliff replied. I relocated the ram and touched the trigger. This time a crack of the rifle sending the 145 grain LRX to it's target. "He's down" was the response from Cliff. Walking up to the ram took about an hour picking our way through the rocks. The rest of the crew arrived shortly with the congratulation, hugs, and pats on the back. Everyone was admiring this great old warrior and I couldn't have been happier. We didn't get back to the trucks until well after dark and the whole way down the hill all I could think about was how happy I was and all the memories I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Thank you Dry Creek Outfitters for making this experience so special.



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ONX MAPS
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GSC/OVIS
www.wildsheep.org



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Randy Kulina
Old Dad/Kelso Mtn
San Gorgonio Wilderness Outfitters



John Ramos
Old Dad/Kelso
Raffle Tag Winner
San Gorgonio Wilderness Outfitters



Ross Garrett
Orocopia Mtns
score 176
San Gorgonio Wilderness Outfitters



Paul Osmond
San Gorgonio Mtns
score: 173
San Gorgonio Wilderness Outfitters

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Travis Spidle
San Gorgonio Wilderness Mtn
score: 175 6/8 B&C
San Gorgonio Wilderness Outfitters
*Has been applying since he was 16; now 33!
It takes a lifetime!*



Devin DeValle
Clark/Kingston Mountains
Dry Creek Outfitters



Kenny Ford
Cady Mountains
Dry Creek Outfitters



Vern Bleich
Gobbler
*Four weeks following a total knee
replacement I killed a gobbler from 11
meters with my dad's 1926 Ranger .410,
thereby fulfilling a long-term goal*



Mike Laws with Tim Mercier
Clipper Mountains

DFW UPDATE

by Kyle Meintzer

The past few months have been very encouraging for wild sheep conservationists.

For starters, in new Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, sportsmen and hunters likely have the best friend in that position we've had in a very long time.

At the DFW's end, the new DFW Wildlife Branch Chief, T.O. Smith, looks to be an outstanding addition to the department. He's a visionary, but one who seems to know how to get things done and is committed to doing so. We are excited to have the opportunity to work with him on desert bighorn sheep issues.

As you may recall from reading previous issues of California Wild Sheep, last fall's survey in the Newberry, Ord and Rodman mountains produced results far beyond all expectations. To quote DFW Sheep Coordinator Regina Abella, who flew the survey, "Sheep were everywhere we looked!" As a result, Regina told me in early May that she was already working on the paperwork to get those ranges opened as a new hunt zone.

On May 4th, the Big Game Advisory Committee met to review and decide on the grant requests which were before us. Not surprisingly, the DFW's separate rating on the CA WSF requests put all of those requests at or near the top of the list in their scoring system. In the end, all were approved by the BGAC as well.

These included a final data analysis, publishing and reporting on the work Oregon State University has been doing the past three years (also funded by DFW grants to CA WSF) on the devastating disease outbreak that occurred in the Mojave in 2013.

Also approved was a fixed-wing sheep drone survey in the Newberry, Rodman, and Ord mountains, to be followed immediately by a traditional helicopter survey in those same ranges. This will allow us to



compare the two methods and therefore choose the best method going forward.

Drone technology has advanced at a very rapid pace and is now likely to provide us with better, more accurate, and better documented results than the 'old' helicopter survey method. To boot, drone surveys come at a lower cost and more importantly, at no risk to human life.

Finally, CA Congressman Paul Cook, (R), (CA - 8), has introduced a bill in Congress which, if passed, would be a huge step forward in allowing CA DFW to access federal lands to manage wildlife! WSF's Legislative Affairs Committee, of which I am Vice-Chair, will be meeting with Congressman Cook in early June during our semi-annual lobbying trip to the nation's capitol. We also plan to meet with Secretary Zinke and/or his staff on the 'access to manage' issue as well as the Risk of Contact issue involving interaction between wild sheep and domestic sheep.

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CA WSF Director Candidate Biographies for the 2017 Election Ballot
Listing is Alphabetical by Last Name



ADAM CASAGRANDE — Danville, CA

Born and raised in California I was taught the importance of family and conservation through hunting and fishing with my father and grandfather. Whether I was sitting on a bucket along a fence line during dove season with my grandfather or in a drift boat casting to rainbows with my father I always felt I learned more about life spending time in the outdoors with those two. My passion for the outdoors took me to Colorado where I attended Colorado State University and earned my degree in Agricultural Business. With college out of the way I felt the time was right to go exploring, which took me to Alaska and Chile where I spent two years guiding fly fishing trips. With an urge to start a family of my own I landed in Texas where I met my wife and started a career with Morgan Stanley. After six years in TX we moved back to CA where I had the opportunity to work with my father in the family insurance business. My wife and I moved to Eagle, ID in 2015. We have three boys who are learning the importance of family and conservation in the outdoors just the way I did. With the desire to conserve wildlife so my boys continue to have the opportunities that I had, I joined CAWSF in 2010 and chaired the Live Auction for the 2011 fundraiser. I have been involved with the annual fundraiser each year since 2011. Current conservation group memberships include WSF, California Waterfowl and RMEF. I have been a Director of CAWSF for 6 years and an Officer for the past 5 years. MEMBERSHIP – Life member



KEN CROTHER — Sutter, CA

I am one of the few that have had the opportunity in California to reap the benefits of CA WSF's hard work and determination to keep these sheep on the mountain as well as fight for our rights to pursue them. In 2008 I was fortunate enough to draw a coveted tag in our state and began a turn in my hunting life. I am interested in continuing on the Board so that I can give back and help do the same for others, including my children. After attending college in San Luis Obispo at California Polytechnic I moved back to Sutter and to begin my family and work career. Waterfowl was my love growing up and upon returning from college I began hunting large game in the Western States. The sheep tag I drew was a bonus that was never planned on and then I drew a tag the following year in Idaho for a Rocky Mountain Bighorn. After drawing the tags, I began meeting people in

many different ways that all seem to start to tie together with the sheep community. Many friends have been made, I have learned a great deal, and have had the good fortune to enjoy the CA WSF dinners with my children in Sacramento. I have been on the Board for the past 4 years and I was chairman of the 2015 and 2016 Fundraiser. The last two years I have performed the duties of secretary as well as playing a role in helping Don Martin take over the banquet in 2017. My current goals on this board is to increase involvement in our state through growing our membership, increasing attendance to a wonderful banquet and intend to pursue setting some longer term goals to insure our board stays consistent with our goals and prosper for the benefit of our wild sheep in California. There is a lot to work still to do in our state to preserve the species but also to protect our rights. MEMBERSHIP – 3 Year



BOB KEAGY, Layfayette, CA

Bob, aged 72, is completing his third term as CA WSF Director. He is an avid hunter, holding the SCI Zenith award. Bob grew up in a non-hunting family, but he avidly read the works of Roy Chapman Andrews, James Corbett, Robert Ruark and Jack O'Connor. His love of the writings of Jack O'Connor led him to his first sheep hunt in British Columbia in 1979, followed by a second Stone ram in 1981, followed by an Alaskan Dall, a Nepalese Blue Sheep, several of the beautiful Asian Argali, and a California Bighorn in 2015. Bob shot a very nice desert bighorn in Sonora, Mexico, in 2017, completing his North American Slam. Bob's love of mountain hunting definitely extends to a wide variety of mountain game. In addition to sheep, he has also shot eight ibex, chamois and the rare Golden Takin. He has also been to Africa many times.

Bob remains very dedicated to the hunting cause, and would like to continue to assist in California Wild Sheep's many efforts. Bob is a Summit Life Member/Chadwick Ram Society Member. MEMBERSHIP – Life Member

CA WSF Director Candidate Biographies for the 2017 Election Ballot
Listing is Alphabetical by Last Name



GEORGE KERR, Simi Valley, CA

Life member of CA WSF and recent honoree of the Eastman Grass Roots Award given by the Wild Sheep Foundation. Life member of Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep – George has been a member for over 35 years. Past President and board member of SCBS. Active with both organizations, as well as Safari Club.

Currently County Fish & Game commissioner, as well as hunter clinic chairman for Fish & Game and SCBS. Landscape contractor by trade – specializing in custom landscape design and architecture. I am dedicated to our new wild sheep management plan by the Department of Fish & Game and have high hopes of implementing this plan with both conservation organizations, Cal Wild Sheep and SCBS.

Dedicated to mentoring the youth in wildlife conservation and proper wise use

agement practices. Was raised in hunting family – father was a premier sportsman/conservationist and one of the leaders of the SCBS in the beginning. Have had the joy of family hunting experiences and look forward to hunting together with family and three new sons-in-law. Have the joys of a growing family with grandchildren, which renews incentive to pass our legacy down. This will be the second term and I again hope to help better interface with other conservation organizations. MEMBERSHIP – Life Member



DONALD C. MARTIN, Elk Grove, CA

A native of Madera, CA, Don grew up hunting and fishing with his family. As a youth, Don became an accomplished bass-fisherman, having competed in over 40 bass tournaments by age 18. While attending Humboldt State University, Don worked construction and pushed cattle at the local stock-yard to pay his way through school. He spent all of his spare time bowhunting, abalone-diving, spear-fishing, and duck hunting. After graduation from HSU, Don apprenticed as a hunting/fishing guide in Alaska, where he is now Registered Guide/Outfitter #1220 and is Director of Hunting Operations for Ultima Thule Outfitters. Don previously guided for over a decade in Sonora, Mexico for mule deer and currently guides hunters in California for tule elk. Having guided over 240 successful hunts for 10 different species of North American big game, Don

gnizes the need for sound wildlife management and habitat conservation and is dedicated to “keeping sheep on the mountain.” In the off-season, Don works as a digital-film producer and fishing guide and resides in Elk Grove with his wife, Katie. Don is a Summit Life Member of WSF and a life member of CA WSF and Idaho WSF. He also maintains memberships in SCI, GSC/OVIS, the Pope & Young club, and the NRA; and has supported CWA, DU, RMEF, MDF, Oregon WSF, OR FNAWS and WAWSF. Don has served as Vice-President since 2011. Don was awarded the CA WSF “Over and Beyond Award” in 2015 for his dedication and contributions to the chapter. Don is standing for reelection to the board of directors and would appreciate your support. MEMBERSHIP – Life Member



Andrew Ohanesian, Sacramento, CA

Andrew Ohanesian is a Sacramento native who began hunting as a young man with friends and family in Northern California’s wetlands for ducks and foothills for deer, pig and turkey. Through the WSF, he was fortunate to take an amazing Stone Sheep in 2010, getting him out of the <1 Club. Andrew is a life member of the WSF and has attended many California and National banquets.

He holds a degree in business administration from UC Berkeley and is a certified public accountant and works in real estate. He and his wife Julie, a veterinarian, make their home in Sacramento, CA and are passionate about their dog Benton, animals (particularly wild sheep) and their family and friends.

If elected, Andrew will do his best to live up to the high standards of the WSF and help open sheep hunting opportunities to future generations. MEMBERSHIP – Life Member

CA WSF Director Candidate Biographies for the 2017 Election Ballot
Listing is Alphabetical by Last Name



GLEN PYNE – Yorba Linda, CA

Glen Pyne was born and raised in Southern California. He received his BS in Animal Science from Cal Poly, Pomona and his DVM degree from Ross University. Although primarily a small animal surgeon today, Glen began his career as a mixed animal practitioner in Ohio and currently donates his services to the Fullerton High School Districts FFA program.

Glen is active in Rotary Club International as a former Vocational Chairperson and Paul Harris Fellow. An avid hunter, Glen has hunted most of the western states as well as Canada, Europe, and Africa. Glen has been a supporter of CA WSF and the Wild Sheep Foundation for many years and hopes to continue his conservation efforts as member of the CA WSF Board of Directors. MEMBERSHIP – Life



TAMMY SCOTT – Littleton, CO

Hunter, fisherman and conservationist.

A founding life member of CA Wild Sheep Foundation, she has previously served as a director and as the Founding Southern California Vice President.

Tammy has hunted in the USA, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand and Africa.

With over 20 years of experience in working with various nonprofit conservation organizations in multiple capacities, Tammy is widely known for being one of the best auction ring-man (spotter) for multiple years with multiple non-profits - California WSF, Mid West WSF, Eastern WSF, Wyoming WSF, Iowa FNAWS, Washington WSF, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society, Safari Club International, Denver Chapter of SCI, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of SCI, Golden Gate Chapter of SCI, Chesapeake Bay

Chapter of SCI, Mule Deer Foundation, Grand Slam Club / Ovis, Ducks Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, International Professional Hunters Association, Professional Hunters Association of South Africa, Colorado National Rifle Association.

Memberships include: CA WSF - Founding Life Member, NRA – Benefactor Life Member, WSF – Member, SCI – Life Member, SCI Master Measurer, SCI PAC - Life Member, SCI Sables - Life Member, SCI Sables Elector-At-Large, WY WSF – Life Member, Iowa FNAWS - Life Member, Grand Slam Club / Ovis – Life Member, Dallas Safari Club – Life Member, Washington WSF – Life Member, African Professional Hunters Association – Honorary Life Member. MEMBERSHIP – Life



CRAIG VAN ARSDALE – Concord, CA

Craig is 31 years old and currently resides in Concord, California. Craig grew up in Southwest Washington and later moved to the East side of the state to attend college. After graduating college he moved to California to start his career. Craig works for a local oil refinery in the East Bay as a major projects planner and has held several leadership roles within the company over the past 10 years. Growing up in Southwest Washington he and his brother Nick were introduced to hunting, Fishing and the outdoors at a young age by their father.

“Serving as a Board Director to CAWSF for the past two years has truly been a pleasure. I have learned a great deal about the Desert Bighorn Sheep in California, the challenges they face and the success of our organization in putting and keeping these beautiful

animals on the mountain! I have enjoyed the friendships I have made and really look forward to continuing to devote my time and make a difference in preserving these animals for generations to come.”

Craig is a current member of WSF, CAWSF, RMGA, MDF, CBH, RMEF, SCI, NRA, P&Y Club, GSCO and Back Country Hunters & Anglers. He also serves as the California Chapter of Back Country Hunters & Anglers Secretary.

MEMBERSHIP – 3 Year

CA WSF Director Candidate Biographies for the 2017 Election Ballot
Listing is Random
Vote for no more than eight (8)

**2017 CALIFORNIA WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS BALLOT**

Vote no more than ONCE for each candidate (no cumulative voting).

Vote for up to EIGHT.

Vote must be received no later than 5 p.m. on June 30, 2017.

CANDIDATES (Listed randomly)

_____ Donald C. Martin

_____ Adam Casagrande

_____ Bob Keagy

_____ Glen Pyne

_____ Craig Van Arsdale

_____ Ken Crother

_____ Tammy Scott

_____ Andrew Ohanesian

_____ George Kerr

_____ Your Write-in Candidate

Your Name: _____ optional

Email or Phone: _____ required

Mail ballot to: Ca Wild Sheep Foundation, 423 Broadway #617, Millbrae, CA 94030

Fax ballot to: 650-472-3889

Email ballot to: forthesheep@gmail.com

2017 ANNUAL FUNDRAISER AND BANQUET RECAP

by Donald C. Martin



Record attendance!

First off, I want to thank everyone that attended and helped to contribute to what is appearing to be a record event for our chapter. Once again, CA WSF has proven that ours is the wildlife conservation dinner not to be missed. What a great party!

Our event started with a presentation by Wild Sheep Foundation President and CEO, Gray Thornton. It was “standing room only” for the Q&A session with WSF’s top exec and though I was not able to attend as I was working the event in the Grand Ballroom, the feedback I got from those that attended was excellent. CA WSF sincerely thanks Gray for attending and informing our members of issues facing wild sheep at the national level.

Turnout was better than ever and the preliminary count would suggest a record turnout, youth attendance was double our normal rate and that does not include our 12 youth volunteers from Wood Creek High School trap shooting team. They were a great help to the event and everyone can agree how important it is to get young people involved in the shooting sports and the outdoors. Thanks to the generosity of the crowd in the room, we were able to raise \$850 to help the shooting team attend local trap and skeet tournaments.

Once our main event was underway, ticket sales for the general raffle were phenomenal. I think we were near a record on the general raffle this year with gross ticket sales exceeding \$22,000. Thanks to the hard

work of Chapter President Paul Brisso, we once again had a diverse line up of raffle items that would appeal to men and ladies alike with a special emphasis on high quality firearms. Haley and Mandi couldn’t sell tickets fast enough! Thank you ladies!

Director Craig Van Arsdale headed up the silent auction again this year and thanks to contributions from the entire Board of Directors, this year’s silent auction hit a new high not only in quality but also in quantity. We had 54 items in the silent auction and the quality was better than ever. Directors from other state WSF chapters in attendance mentioned to me after the event that the quality of items at our fundraiser was unparalleled.

This year’s cake auction started with a bang and the enthusiasm carried through out. Director Roger McCosker and Beverly Valdez provided the desserts for this year’s auction and the profit margin was through the roof. It helped that one lucky bidder was going to win a Smith and Wesson MP9. And the lucky winner was Scott Finley who had purchased the last cake! Keep that in mind next year! Don’t be afraid to purchase that last cake, you have to be in it to win it! And, to top it off, the cakes were delicious!

Mike Borel started the fundraiser portion of our event with an outline of drinker costs and a call to “give a lamb a drink”. We had tremendous support from our group this year and I’m proud to announce that with the \$25,000 pledge from Gray Thornton

All photos by Chip Hollister. Copies or prints may be requested by contacting Chip (chollister3@yahoo.com)

and WSF National, we were able to raise \$35,000 for drinker projects in about 15 minutes. Thank you everyone for contributing.

Don Priest was live auction chair again this year and I want to thank him for all his hard work in putting together a stellar line up of items in the live auction. All the Directors contributed to this year's live auction and we had a diverse line up of 36 items including hunts, vacations, art, exclusive permits and more. The spotlight items of the evening, the two special Alaska Permits raised \$10,000 and the CA Open Zone Deer Permit sold for \$15,000 to end our live auction event. I want to personally thank auctioneer John Bair of Utah for coming out and helping make our event a huge success.

We changed the live auction format a bit this year and held a special card raffle at about the 1/3 and 2/3's mark. I want to thank Director Shawn Wood, Steve Walters of "The Spot Archery" (Fresno, CA), Mathews Archery (Sparta, WI), member Zack Walton, Spot Hogg (Harrisburg, OR), and Mike Hernandez for putting together a turn-key archery package built around the new Mathews Halon 32. What a spectacular bow set-up worth over \$2000 and Brett Dismukes was able to win it for \$20! Congratulations Brett! Also, our final

card raffle of the evening was the "Party Package" which included a Yeti Cooler, 60+ lbs of prime beef tri-tip and 4 cases of beer, courtesy of Cargill Meats (Fresno, CA), Matt Pectorich, and Donald C. Martin. A party waiting to happen and this \$750 prize package went to the very lucky Peter Reece, once again for only a \$20 investment in wild sheep.

Special raffles went very well for the chapter this year, ticket sales were brisk for all, but once again the Ultima Thule Outfitters' Dall sheep hunt sold out about an hour into the evening. Ticket sales for the Alaska special permit bison hunt (also supported by Ultima Thule Outfitters) and the Gunwerks rifle were also strong. Brad Manderich was the lucky winner of the Gunwerks 1000 yard shooting system and congratulations to our very own Beverly Valdez who was the lucky winner of the Alaskan Bison hunt. She definitely beat the odds as the bison hunt was open to anyone nationwide. The Dall sheep hunt however required that you must be in the room to win it. And this year's winner has been "in the room" for many years. Congratulations to dedicated CA WSF supporter Andrew Ohanesian who finally, after many years of supporting our chapter and specifically this drawing, was able to win the Dall sheep hunt of a



Cakes with a bang!



Don Martin on the job.



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lifetime. I look forward to guiding him next fall! Thanks to everyone all over the world that purchased tickets and helped us raise \$28,000+ on our special raffles alone. All of our winners were “in the room” this year. Don’t miss out next year!!!

I want to take a moment and personally thank our Sponsors for this year’s event. A very special thanks to David and Sona Combs, our Desert Bighorn Sheep Sponsors. I would also like to recognize the generous support of: Stan and Pamela Atwood, Mike Borel, Don Callahan, Bob Keagy, Roger McCosker, Donald C. Martin, Richard Pierce, Dan Smith III, Renee Snider, Craig Van Arsdale, and John C. Ware. And I can’t stop without one very special THANKS to Ken Crother, who helped me guide the ship. Ken, you were there when I was out in the field — I couldn’t have done it without you!

I had a great time hosting the event and am tentatively scheduled to host it again next year. DON’T MISS OUT! The CA WSF dinner is “THE EVENT” of the season. Plan ahead now! Feedback was excellent regarding our new venue at the Doubletree by Hilton off Arden Way in Sacramento. We will be hosting the event at the same location next year on May 5 and you should make every effort to attend. Nobody likes missing the big party of the season, so plan ahead and don’t miss out next year! I look forward to seeing you there.



Wood Creek Trap Team



Tammy Scott gets the bid up



Mike Borel - Give a lamb a drink

All photos by Chip Hollister. Copies or prints may be requested by contacting Chip (chollister3@yahoo.com)



Mandi and Haley.



All photos by Chip Hollister. Copies or prints may be requested by contacting Chip (chollister3@yahoo.com)

2017 Special Awards



OLDEST DESERT BIGHORN 2016/17

Michelle Corder
Age 11 1/2 Yrs (174")
Unit: Marble/Clippers

Award accepted by Michelle Corder (center) with Don Martin (L) and Cliff St. Martin (R)



LARGEST DESERT BIGHORN 2016/17

Dan Smith III
Score 181 6/8"
Unit: Orocopias

Award accepted by outfitter Cliff St. Martin (R) with Don Martin (L)



Bleich-Weaver

SERVICE ABOVE SELF AWARD

Presented to

Steven G. Torres

Program Manager

Wildlife Investigations Laboratory
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
For Decades of Meaningful Contributions

Award presented by Vern Bleich (R) with Don Martin (L) to Steve Torres (Center)



All photos by Chip Hollister. Copies or prints may be requested by contacting Chip (chollister3@yahoo.com)

DO WILDLIFE WATER DEVELOPMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO INTERSPECIFIC COMPETITION?

by *Vernon C. Bleich, Ph.D.*

This is the fourth in a series that summarizes an earlier review paper addressing what is and is not known about the influences of wildlife water developments on target and non-target species of wildlife. That paper, written with Nova Simpson and Kelley Stewart, was prepared and published following a request from personnel at Mojave National Preserve (MNP) and as part of the research proposal they asked us to prepare on the responses of mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) to the availability of surface water, either natural or developed. After eight years of work on that project and tremendous financial support from Safari Club International, the California Deer Association, Nevada Division of Wildlife, the Boone and Crockett Club (with some earlier support from MNP and the California Department of Fish and Game [CDFG], and others), personnel from MNP and CDFG elected to not fund the final two years of the project, reportedly because "...any results would not alter NPS policy." Thus, the project was terminated and the final experimental phase of the project that involved the manipulation of water sources (i.e., making available those sources that previously had not been available to mule deer) could not be completed. Ironically, the responsible individuals from MNP and CDFG each blamed the other for failing to support the project. At the time the research was terminated, two MS theses had been completed, two professional papers describing preliminary results and baseline information had been published, and two other papers were being reviewed for publication in professional journals. For shame!

Previous articles summarizing the various aspects of the review paper that have appeared in *California Wild Sheep* addressed (1) the quality of water in wildlife water developments; (2) whether wildlife water developments cause increased mortality because of entrapment of wildlife; and (3) whether large mammals such as bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) are more apt to die of predation because wildlife water developments have been constructed for the benefit of those ungulates. In this, the final installment, I summarize what is known about interspecific competition in the context of the presence of wildlife water developments.

Availability of surface water may increase the potential for competition between some native ungulates and non-native species such as feral asses (*Equus assinus*), feral horses (*Equus caballus*), and cattle because native ungulates generally are subordinate to larger species. Further, the physical

presence of livestock can influence the behavior of native ungulates. For example, desert bighorn sheep and feral horses occur together in many arid regions of western North America. The presence of feral horses at water sources reduced use by bighorn sheep, and caused bighorn sheep to abandon other water sources that were used by feral horses. In addition, the presence of cattle can reduce the use of water sources by a variety of wildlife, suggesting livestock and human activities related to water sources had a negative effect on the distribution of wildlife. It has been noted that wildlife water developments available to livestock could result in detrimental impacts to wildlife if such developments increased livestock use in a particular area, and that such impacts would be manifested primarily through competition for forage.

Although competition for forage between wildlife and exotic species or livestock around water developments has been a concern, few investigators have considered the potential for competition between native ungulates to be enhanced by such developments. Some investigators noted, however, that if wildlife water developments attracted mule deer to areas used by bighorn sheep a potential consequence would be an increase in use of available forage, with possible detrimental impacts to bighorn sheep. The same investigators urged caution when placing wildlife water developments for bighorn sheep to avoid the potential for competition and use of range resources by other ungulates. Access to wildlife water developments by feral ungulates or domestic livestock can be effectively eliminated through the construction of carefully designed fences, but fences that allow passage of either mule deer or bighorn sheep, while excluding the other, have not been perfected. Finally, some investigators have cautioned that managers should consider the potential for wildlife to perceive an increased risk of predation associated with fenced developments, but recent research has not demonstrated any such link.

Life forms other than vertebrates could also be competitors for water. Use of water by honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) is frequently encountered and commonplace among natural and anthropogenic water sources in desert environments. Investigators have reported that



honey bees were widespread in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona, and occurred at all 54 wildlife water developments they sampled. Similarly, the presence of feral honey bees has been reported at several wildlife water developments in the Sonoran Desert of California. Honey bees have the potential to decrease the effectiveness of wildlife water developments by directly competing for water intended to benefit other species, including bighorn sheep.

There is evidence that the presence of honey bees also has indirect consequences for use of water by ungulates. For example, it has been noted that bighorn sheep spent more time at wildlife water developments when their visits were interrupted by feral honey bees than when such visits were not interrupted and, as a result, bighorn sheep demonstrated behavioral responses (violent head shaking, rapid withdrawal from the water source, and temporary refusal to drink); such responses could have implications for energy expenditure and predation risk, and could alter patterns of visitation. Thus, honey bees have the potential to compete directly and indirectly (through interference) for an important resource, the availability of which wildlife water developments are intended to enhance. The extent to which such competition could affect availability of water to other species has not been investigated in detail, although no evidence of interference was noted during >38,000 hours of video surveillance in Arizona.

Bees collected from water developments in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona or California commonly exhibited African mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), indicating they were hybrids (*A. m. scutellata* × *A. m. ssp.*), but bees collected at two wildlife water developments in the Mojave Desert of California did not possess African mtDNA. Africanized honey bees are extremely aggressive, and could present a threat to any approaching animal, but investigators speculated that free-ranging bighorn sheep would have no difficulty escaping to a safe distance from a disturbed colony. Presumably, other ungulates also would have that advantage.

In summary, after considering water quality, the potential for entrapment, the potential for increased predation, and competition, we were unable to locate documentation of any impacts of wildlife water developments to bighorn sheep or other wildlife in North America. To truly understand the effects of water developments, further work is needed to examine the relationships between water developments and population growth, expansion of species ranges, survival, reproduction, and health,

as well as predator-prey relationships, precisely the objectives of the long-term investigation that was defunded. The results of our review are consistent with the conclusions of other investigators, and confirm that the professional literature yet fails to substantiate claims that water developments are detrimental to the wildlife populations they are intended to benefit. Nevertheless, future studies should investigate the water requirements of species in arid environments to determine if access to free-standing water meets intended goals of increased distribution, productivity, recruitment, or survival of those species that were intended beneficiaries. Effects of provision of water on performance of populations, particularly the link to fitness through increased productivity and recruitment, has not yet been documented. Further, if there is an increase in distribution, productivity, or recruitment, how those changes influence the health of individuals and overall populations is of interest to wildlife managers.

Long-term studies over multiple years — including those with drought or higher than average precipitation — and with strong experimental designs (control, replication, and treatments) are needed to fully understand the influences of water developments on population performance. Investigations of links between fitness of populations and access to free-standing water can be difficult to implement and complete because of environmental stochasticity, length of time, and the large amount of funding required; however, those data are needed to understand the effects of water developments on populations. Managers must implement repeatable, experimental manipulations to further elucidate the benefits or detriments of water developments for wildlife. Unfortunately, a well-designed and long-term experiment to investigate behavioral and population-level responses of mule deer to the provision of water was cut short for inexplicable and illogical reasons, leaving those questions unanswered.

—Dr. Vern Bleich is an independent wildlife biologist who worked for the California Department of Fish and Game for 34 years. He currently resides in Bismarck, ND but remains active in the conservation and management of bighorn sheep and other large mammals inhabiting arid landscapes throughout the western United States. The original review paper from which this and the previous three installments were synthesized is available at <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=46488&inline=1>. Alternatively, interested readers can obtain a copy by contacting Vern directly (vcbleich@gmail.com).

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MITSUBISHI MINE DRINKER

One of the latest Raincatcher Wildlife Water Systems (drinkers) was installed in April at the Mitsubishi Mine close to Lucerne Valley south of Barstow. Nearby known sheep habitats are the San Gabriel Mountains, the San Gorgonio Mountain and 29 Palms.

The drinker was funded by a donation to CA Wild Sheep Foundation from life member John Brelsford. The site location was identified by Society for Conservation of Bighorn Sheep (SCBS). A weekend installation included help from Boy Scout Troop 169 (Barstow), Explorer Crew 169 (Barstow), Boy Scout Troop 464 (High Desert District) and Girl Scout Troop 116 (Barstow).

The groups met at a close by campsite where they would spend one or two nights. During the day they were busy surveying, digging, and installing the Raincatcher Wildlife Water System. Once installed these drinkers meld into the environment and become a source of much needed water for bighorn sheep and other desert denizens.

Thanks to SCBS, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and other volunteers who made the work go smoothly. And especially thanks to life member John Brelsford — without your donation none of this could have happened!



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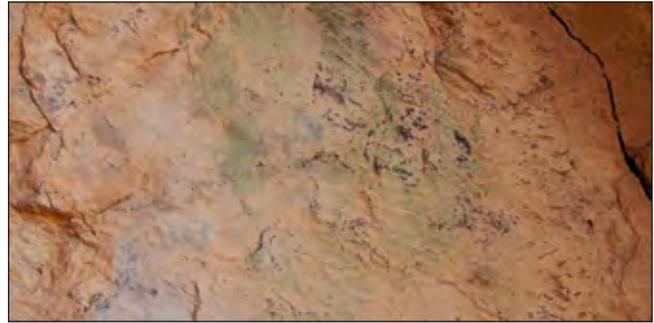
THE WAY OF THINGS

by Carlos Gallinger, www.thewayofthings.org

Newberry cave was not a tomb or burial site. What was there, was the physical remains of a human- bighorn sheep relationship that was uniquely specific to time and culture. This relationship, as it is revealed in the Newberry cave, was a predator- prey relationship steeped in technology, art, and hunting magic.

One of the first things we need to understand about this site is how the forces of erosion played out on a geological timescale. The Newberry cave is situated on the east side of a waterfall measuring perhaps 50 feet or more. The cave itself is above any possible water level and yet below where the water spills over the top. This area below the waterfall I refer to as the arena it is in shade much of the day and parts of it are in perpetual shade. This aspect is crucial to understand this site. The primary structural component of this site is a wall of very hard rock that resists erosion. The rock beyond this point has eroded away faster so we have a drop or waterfall. Of course this is not a unique structure in the desert. Once this process started, large rocks would pour over the top of the waterfall during flash floods and impact the ground below thus pounding out a depression. Then the water and smaller rocks with far less energy would flow from there down the rest of the canyon. Sometimes small amounts of water would collect in this depression and then freeze and break the rock below the waterline, carving out this place even more. This process does not happen just beyond the depression because there is little or no water being held there to freeze. So, between the pounding rocks and cycles of freezing and thawing this depression erodes relatively fast, making it the center for the eroding force for the entire canyon. Presently this depression, or what is often called a tinaja, does not hold water, but this condition changes throughout the centuries as does the force and the intensity of erosion. One must also take into account the natural qualities of the rock at the bottom of this waterfall. If it is flawless without cracks it will tend to hold water better. But if it is cracked and is porous the water just seeps into the ground, sometimes within minutes. However when conditions are right these cracks and flaws get clogged by small organic debris such as decomposed plant matter and clay. With conditions like this these depressions or tinajas can hold water for one or two months. This may be with clear cold water due to the fact it rarely if ever received any direct radiant energy from the sun, thus reducing evaporation and the growth of algae and moss.

Now with this basic knowledge of tinajas we can speculate on the condition of the one next to the Newberry cave through time and apply our knowledge of climate and the artifacts in the cave. While this idea



Visually there is not much here but when you think about it, this is the handprint of a person that was at the Newberry caves at the time of this ancient bighorn sheep hunting cult was in its prime.

is speculative I think it's not only plausible but the most likely scenario. We can start with the fact that this tinaja existed for ages, long before the first human set foot on the continent. Another important fact in understanding this particular tinaja is understanding the ground above it. For the most part it is composed largely of broken rocks that decomposes to a relatively poor soil for growing plants. I believe this poor soil is crucial to understanding this tinaja and the activities of the desert bighorn sheep and thereby the artifacts in the cave as well. Prior to the little pluvial age there was a relatively steady flow of rocks and gravel grinding out this tinaja. At the onset of the little pluvial the increase rains would have increased the flow of rocks and gravel grinding out this tinaja for some time. Then as time went on due to the increase in rain, grass and other plant life took root on the slope above the tinaja and slowed the flow of rock and gravel over the waterfall and into the tinaja. At the same time there would've been an increase in the flow of decomposing leaves and grasses and other fine particles. This would clog the cracks and other imperfections in this tinaja to the point where it was watertight. This water then focuses the activity of the desert bighorn sheep and the human beings that hunted them to this place, especially in the summer time. Then when the little pluvial age ended this process reversed itself. So from a human perspective, long before the bow and arrow was invented, this tinaja no longer held water. While the lack of water in this tinaja had little effect on the overall population of desert bighorn sheep in the Newberry Mountains, the end of the little pluvial did. This is most evident in the numerous abandoned and weathering game trails throughout the Newberry Mountains.

When we tried to understand the Newberry cave and its adjacent tinaja in a similar manner as with the

other springs and water sources. We find that these other water sources did not have a cave to preserve the physical remnants of this environment or its human artifacts. With these two attributes so close together we find that the Newberry cave and tinaja were a uniquely powerful focus point in the environment for both desert bighorn sheep and people alike. The power of this environmental focus point infuses the these artifacts and environmental material found in this cave with a greater importance than if they were found elsewhere. A great deal of the purpose of this article is meant to illuminate this fact.

One of the often overlooked components of this record is ancient trails around this site that are both human and bighorn sheep in origin. These trails represent the activities and psychology of desert bighorn sheep and people through time, and so they are important clues as to what went on here. Part of understanding them is understanding the forces of time and erosion on them. The only one that has any current use is a bighorn sheep trail on the north side of the two large rocks by the cave entrance going up the talus slope to the east. Over the years I have seen some use on this trail and no doubt it is sheep coming into the deep shade to either cool off or take advantage of the leafy green plants that sometimes grow there. When one takes this trail to the east you quickly find yourself at one of these volcanic ash deposits that is a mineral source for the bighorn sheep. It seems to me that it has been used so intensely in the past that it's affected the pattern of erosion in that particular area. This of course is no longer ongoing by the relatively small population today, but the residual effects continue. There are two other deposits close to this on the other side of the canyon that also look as though in the past the bighorn sheep use them to the point where it affected the way they were eroding. There are also numerous yet faint game trails on some of the talus slopes above and around the Newberry cave that are testimony to a much larger population of desert bighorn sheep in the past. There are other mountain ranges where you can see an active game trail system from a large and vibrant population of desert bighorn sheep, in particular the Marble Mountains, which has many environmental similarities to the New berry Mountains. While not precise it does give you some idea of the population density through time.

There is a remnant of what is most likely a human trail, though making this determination is less science and more art. The remnant of this human trail starts on the west side about half way up the alluvial. Where there is a small gap in a natural rock wall. You really can't tell where the trail goes on the lower side of this wall but I suspect that one time it went down to the village site. That is at the small hill that sticks out into the ancient oasis in the flatlands. This hill has a few bedrock mortars that would seem to indicate the presence of women as well as a small glyph site near

the top of this hill that would've made an excellent observation point. Going up from the gap in the rock wall it is easy to see the trail, from there it drops down toward the wash. At this point there are various parallel trails going up the west side. Then where the canyon narrows, the trail begins on the other side of the canyon Southside. If you know where it is, it's easier to walk there, however most people today walk in the middle of the canyon. I know of no artifacts or glyphs along this trail system but perhaps they were there at one time. Sometimes these ancient human trails had a ceremonial component to them. There seems to be no corresponding trail system on the east side of the wash. But due to time and erosion if it were there it may have been washed away a long time ago.

Another interesting and valuable part of this ancient record are the pictographs around the cave entrance. While there are bigger more elaborate pictograph sites in the desert this art form is rarely preserved and then only where there has been some sort of permanent shelter. What is unique about these pictographs is the large volume of painted perishable artifacts associated with them. While we will never know for sure I believe that the arena that is the area below the cave and around the tinaja was probably covered with pictographs at one time. These other pictographs would've been exposed to the weather and have since been washed away. There is a tinaja that has some structural similarities in the Rodman Mountains called Deep Tank. It is full of petroglyphs and many of them show signs of having been painted*. Judging from the many painted perishable artifacts in the cave these people used paints extensively. So it's reasonable to conclude that there one were more pictographs at this site. If the arena was painted extensively with numerous color pictographs it would add to the drama and emotional power of this place. In many ways this arena could also be considered as an altar where the drama of life and death was played out and a man's self-worth was defined. Among the beautiful and elaborate symbolism of their culture and religion. For instance many Native American cultures have their genesis for both people and animals emerging from the ground or caves and of course water in almost all religions throughout the world are related to renewal cleansing and rebirth. One should also consider the mineral sources here. As there are still Native Americans that retain some traditions related to salt trails and salt songs. So here the Newberry caves we have a convergence of these three major elements or to the physical and spiritual culture of these ancient people. One can only imagine the psychological and spiritual impact of the young hunter emerging from the earth and casting a spear to make a kill bighorn sheep at a site with water and minerals. All this close enough to a major village that everybody he knew could partake of his kill.

Give a Lamb a Drink, and a LIFE

CA WSF to raise more than \$2M to install 105 wildlife watering systems

**THANKS
FOR THE DRINK!**



Throughout the years from the inception of CA WSF, there has been a dedication to improving habitat, specifically by providing water, for wild sheep. It's no surprise then that **over \$200,000** by CA WSF in the last six years has been spent on installing 'drinkers' on the mountains for sheep and other wildlife. **But that's not enough**, as CA WSF VP of Operations Mike Borel shared with us at the recent annual banquet and fundraiser.

Water is the number one issue limiting our wild sheep populations and our sheep hunting tags. The two go hand-in-hand as the CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, as in all states, determines the sustainable harvest/tags available based on the total population.

"Today's numbers are well below what is possible," explained Mr. Borel. There is currently an estimated 4,800 desert bighorn in California with 103 drinkers in place which support an average of 45 sheep per drinker. "We want to add another 90 drinkers, in ideally placed locations. Ninety new drinkers (in an improved style) would support an additional 6,750 desert bighorns," Mr. Borel continued. "That will more than double our total numbers in the state and put us on a level with the state that currently has

the most bighorn sheep, Nevada!"

There is a price tag, and it's a big one.

New, more efficient and natural looking, the Raincatcher Wildlife Water System (RWWS), cost \$23,015 each for a total of about \$2,000,000. In addition, 488 man hours are required to site and install each RWWS. "Our sister/partner organization, SCBS, has an eager and experienced group of volunteers for these installations but the funding must come from us, the caretakers of bighorn sheep." Mr. Borel continued "The need is certainly big – but **the impact will be HUGE!**"

This effort will require raising \$250,000 per year – double CA WSF's current fundraising. "We plan to pursue all options for funding – donations, matching grants, gofundme.com and more," said Borel. "**\$300 will give a lamb a drink and a LIFE.**"

You can help get more sheep on the mountains by donating today using the form below.

Give a Lamb a Drink Today!

Yes, I want to donate \$300 to give a lamb a drink.



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Exp Date ____ / ____ CVC# _____ Billing Zip Code _____

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Make checks payable to CA Wild Sheep Foundation

Mail to: 1314 B Center Drive #267, Medford, OR 97501

Fax this form to: 650-472-3889

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CALIFORNIA WILD SHEEP SUMMIT XXI

May 5, 2017 Sacramento, CA
by Mike J. Borel

CA WSF hosted Sheep Summit XXI the day before our annual Banquet and Fundraiser on May 5. This has proven to be a valuable interactive seminar and Summit XXII is scheduled for December 1, 2017. The purpose of these summits is “to accomplish more collectively for the Desert Bighorn in CA through sharing and collaboration, than the sum of what each organization can accomplish individually. Following is a summary of Session XXI.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS: CDFW, USFS, USBLM, CAWSF, SCBS. 29 persons in all. CA WSF was represented by Mike Borel, Don Martin, Darryl Williams, Don Priest, Glen Pyne, Jake Franklin, Kyle Meintzer and George Kerr.

New information reviewed:

- Comprehensive Overarching Bighorn Sheep Plan - Status and Overview of Key Recommendations; Herd Unit Management Plans - Status and Overview of Key Recommendations; Discussion on implementation. *Abella*
- Status and Results from Aerial and Ground Surveys (Since Fall Summit); Populations and Range Analysis. *Prentice*
- 2016/17 Hunting Results. *Abella*
- Desert Bighorn Sheep Activities and plans in Region 6. *Prentice*
- Status of water development collaboration – volunteers (e.g. SCBS, CAWSF), CDFW, BLM, NPS *Prentice*
- DBH Disease Monitoring Update and Actions; also Lambing Report and Fall Summit Follow-up *Epps/Dekelaita*
- Report on Recent Activities in WAFWA, Wild Sheep & Goat Council, Desert Bighorn Council, Boone & Crockett Club, etc. that are of value and interest for CA wild sheep *Bleich*

- Local BLM to give update on programmatic EA for captures, landings while surveying, wildlife drinker work *Karuzas/Karp*
- Progress at 29 Palms Water systems *Marschke*
- Drone America demonstration *Mike Richards/Kyle Meintzer*
- US FS Framework for Water Developments *Shroer*
- State Lands status, progress *Marschke*
- Resolution of the domestic sheep grazing issue in Mono County that posed a big threat to the success of the Sierra Nevada herd restoration effort. *Paige Prentice & Jake Franklin*
- Relationship with MNP *Marschke/Bleich*
- Status of MOU need with MNP and BLM. Currently CDFW has them with the 2 land agencies. Is that best? . . . *All*
- Open Q & A Session *Borel*

Our previously committed COLLECTIVE VISION FOR WILD SHEEP IN CALIFORNIA:

- Ensure the persistence and restoration of healthy and sustainable metapopulations of bighorn sheep throughout their historical distribution in California.
- Develop and use science as the basis for conservation and management.
- Provide for recreational uses of bighorn sheep wherever appropriate.

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Last Campfire

Ralph Winkler

September 30, 1944 ~ October 24, 2016

Ralph was a Vietnam Veteran earning a Bronze Star, the National Defense Service Medal, The Vietnam Service Medal, The Vietnam Campaign Medal and a Sharp Shooter Medal for the M-14 Rifle before being honorably discharged from the Army in 1967. He was a family man going into his family business, Winkler Bros. Transportation, after returning from Vietnam. He is the father of two and also has a stepson as well as 6 grandkids.

To say that Ralph was an avid hunter, fisherman and outdoorsman is an understatement. Ralph and his wife of almost 24 yrs, Charlene we're a hunting duo traveling from Alaska to Canada to New Zealand and all over the United States for trophies of the species being hunted. He harvested his Stone Sheep in British Columbia and two Dall Sheep in the Yukon along with many other North American animals.

He was a very involved member and supporter of the Wild Sheep Foundation and the USA Shooting team. Ralph was also a big supporter of Charlene's quest for her FNAWS. He was planning to travel to Mexico in January with Charlene to witness her completing her "Four North American Wild Sheep" quest. She knows now that he was there watching every step of her success.



A TALE OF TWO SUBSPECIES AND A HYBRID

DNA analysis is rewriting the story of thinhorn sheep (Dall, Stone, and Fannin). If you are confused about the Fannin sheep (is it a funny color Dall? a strange Stone?) this latest study will make it clear.

At the second Thinhorn Sheep Summit, held April 18th in Anchorage, Alaska, the main dinner speaker was Zijian Sim who presented the latest evidence suggesting that the dark brown Stone's sheep likely weathered the last ice age in a smaller ice-free area south of Beringia.

The Thinhorn Sheep Summits (I and II) are sponsored and hosted by Wild Sheep Foundation, where more than 110 Dall's sheep and Stone's sheep wildlife managers and veterinarians, First Nations representatives, federal land and resource management experts, geneticists, resident hunters, guide/outfitter representatives, interested sportsmen and women, and other stakeholders are focused on evaluating challenges and opportunities for enhancing management of Dall's and Stone's sheep in Alaska, northern British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon Territory.

As Sim explained, evolutionary biologists studying the lineages of thinhorn sheep have found evidence suggesting that the species diverged hundreds of thousands of years earlier than previously thought.

During the last ice age, most of North America was covered by inhospitable glaciers, forcing plants and animals to seek refuge in ice-free regions known as refugia. In some cases, individuals from the same species were separated in different refugia where they accumulated variances between populations over time, sometimes resulting in the formation of new species.

An iconic symbol of the mountains of western North America, the ancestors of the two dominant varieties of thinhorn sheep were believed to have weathered the last ice age together in the Beringian refugium, which today spans Alaska and the northern Yukon. After the glaciers melted some 10,000 years ago, this theory posits, the species diverged into the white Dall's sheep and the dark Stone's sheep that we know today.

In order to better understand the varieties of thinhorn sheep, scientists have turned to genetics, conducting a phylogenetic study—the study of lineages—into both subspecies of sheep. Looking at samples of modern animals, they found that, based on

how the lineages were split, the division between the light-coloured Dall's sheep and the dark Stone's sheep is deeper than would be expected if they had both survived in the same refugium. The findings support the idea that there was likely a second smaller refugium located south of Beringia that sheltered one of the two thinhorn groups through the glacial advance.

"We used to think they were all in one place. Now we think they were in two places, and based this study, we can show that it is this survival in different refugia that gave rise to the two different subspecies that we see today," says Zijian. "So that gives us the confidence to say that one subspecies, in this case the Stone's sheep, probably survived in that smaller ice-free refugium."

There is a third, somewhat more nebulous thinhorn sheep group known as Fannin's sheep, which can vary dramatically in color from mostly light to mostly dark.

"We've always known that the Fannin's sheep were there, but we didn't really know what they were," says Zijian. "Are they just a type of Stone's sheep? Are they just a type of Dall's sheep? Why are there so many color variations in this one area?"

The answer, it turns out, is none of the above. Fannin's sheep are a hybrid of Dall's and Stone's sheep—a product of the two subspecies reuniting following their separation over the last ice age.

Though this may seem like a relatively small takeaway, Zijian emphasizes the importance of maintaining an accurate picture of subspecies distribution. "In today's management framework, the ability to define groups and what these groups are truly made of is very important," he explains, adding that having clearly defined groups is critical when establishing conservation frameworks.

The study, "Genome-wide set of SNPs reveals evidence for two glacial refugia and admixture from postglacial recolonization in an alpine ungulate," was published in *Molecular Ecology* and is available here for your reading. Samples for the study were provided in part by hunters and hunting outfitters. The study was supported by the Yukon Department of Environment, the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, the Wild Sheep Foundation, the Wild Sheep Society, and the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation of BC.



LEGISLATIVE NEWS UPDATE

by Bill Gaines

AB 521 (FRAZIER) – ELK TAGS: FEES FOR RESIDENTS

As amended April 24th, AB 521 – legislation authored by Assembly Member Jim Frazier (D/11-Oakley) – would reduce the fee for a California resident elk tag from over \$400 to \$67, and allow it to be adjusted pursuant to an analysis of what the appropriate fee should be and a recommendation to the Legislature or the Fish and Game Commission that the fee be adjusted. The bill does not specify which entity would be tasked with performing the analysis and making that recommendation, or when the analysis would have to be completed. AB 521 *was heard in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee on April 4th, passing out on a 12 to 1 vote. The bill was then heard in Assembly Appropriations Committee on May 3rd, passing out on a 13 to 1 vote. The bill is now headed to the Assembly Floor where it must be voted off by June 2nd to remain viable in 2017.*

AB 1544 (DAHLE/MATHIS) – HUNTING/DEPREDATION: NONLEAD AMMUNITION RELIEF

AB 1544, legislation co-authored by Assembly Members Brian Dahle (R/01-Bieber) and Devon Mathis (R/26/Visalia), would ensure that hunters can stay in the field and farmers and ranchers can continue to protect their property and livestock as California works to fully phase-in the requirement to use nonlead ammunition when hunting and managing wildlife statewide. AB 1544 is co-sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, California Deer Association, California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation and the California Houndsmen for Conservation with the assistance of Gaines & Associates. AB 1544 will be first heard in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee in January 2018.

AB 1617 (BLOOM) – DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE:

FUNDING The Department of Fish and Wildlife is currently suffering from a funding shortfall due to, among other things, increasing responsibilities and associated staff costs, combined with declining fishing and hunting license, stamp and tag sale revenues. Historically, the recreational and hunting and sport fishing communities, and to some extent the commercial fishing industry and the General Fund, have funded most of DFW's fisheries and wildlife management activities. Recognizing that the "consumptive" hunting and fishing community already pay far more than their fair share for DFW's management and research efforts for game and nongame species, this bill will largely target identifying ways to bring in new annual funding streams from "non-consumptive" users and the general public. AB 1617 was heard in the Assembly

Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee on April 4th, passing out on a 10 to 4 vote. *AB 1617 must be heard in Assembly Appropriations Committee by May 26th to remain viable in 2017.*

AB 1337 (PATTERSON/COOLEY) – FISH & GAME COMMISSION: MEETINGS AND HEARINGS/LIVE BROADCAST

As introduced, AB 1337 – legislation co-authored by Assembly Members Jim Patterson (R/23-Fresno) and Ken Cooley (D/08-Rancho Cordova) – would require the Fish and Game Commission to provide a live internet video broadcast of every Commission meeting or hearing that is open to the public, as well as every subcommittee meeting of the Marine Resources Committee, Wildlife Resources Committee, or Tribal Committee that is open to the public. *The bill is now in the Senate, where it will first be heard in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, but has yet to be scheduled.*

AB 573 (BIGELOW) – DEPREDATION: WILD PIGS

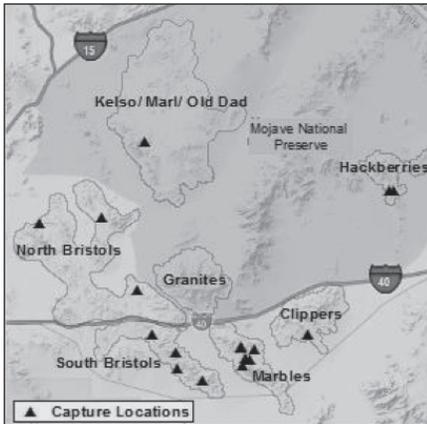
As amended on March 23rd, AB 573 – legislation by Assembly Member Frank Bigelow (R/05-O'Neals) – remains a "spot bill" introduced to provide a vehicle for language currently being developed by the Fish and Game Commission, in concert with DFW and interested stakeholders. The overall intent of the bill is to make it easier for landowners and the state to control wild exotic pigs and the extensive damage they do to public and private lands. AB 573 must first be heard in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee, but has yet to be scheduled. With the legislative deadline for policy committees to hear fiscal bills introduced in their house already passed, and the substantive language of the bill still being developed, AB 573 is now a "two-year bill" and will not be heard until early 2018.

AB 8 (BLOOM) – DEPREDATION PERMITS: MOUNTAIN LIONS

Proposition 117, approved by the California public on June 1990 ballot, enacted "The California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990", which established that the mountain lion as a specially protected species. Although the Act made it illegal to hunt mountain lions, it did authorize a person whose livestock or property is being damaged to have CDFW remove it.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE, REGION 6
SPRING 2017 DESERT BIGHORN CAPTURE

by Ashley Evans



Capture locations of desert bighorn rams in and around the Mojave National Preserve.



Ashley Evans, CDFW scientific aide, keeping a ram sternal during processing.



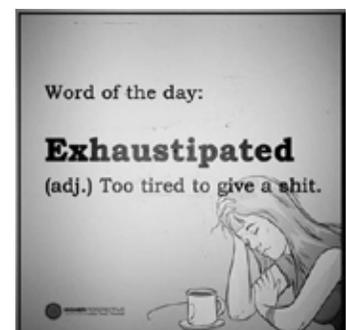
A ram post-capture enjoying the bountiful spring forage!

After the cancellation of desert bighorn sheep captures in the fall of 2016, a team of California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) employees, local volunteers, personnel from BLM and NPS, Oregon State University students, and the helicopter capture crew from Leading Edge Aviation were able to conduct a successful recapture of desert bighorn rams in March. CDFW generally captures more ewes than rams in order to monitor ewe and lamb survival, analyze home ranges, and track overall herd health. However, this capture took place during the lambing season and only rams were captured to minimize the stress on young lambs and very pregnant ewes.

This past winter, fewer than half of the collared desert rams had functioning GPS collars providing us with accurate data on ram movements. These collars are meant to provide us with updated locations of the animal six times per day, allowing us to record notable or long distance movements over interstate highways and across herd unit boundaries which may indicate gene flow between herds. The collars also quickly alert us to mortality events, allowing us to investigate the cause of death in a timely manner. Thanks to the GPS collars, we were able to confirm mountain lion predation as the cause of mortality of two adult rams in the Granite Mountains this spring. Furthermore, above average rainfalls this winter produced abundant, high-quality forage, and we witnessed improving body conditions of desert bighorn, leading to general concern about GPS and VHF collar fit on newly fattened ram necks. As a result, 20 collared rams in seven different herd units were targeted for recapture and collar refitting.

The experienced capture crew of Leading Edge Aviation was able to track down target rams with radio telemetry and identify them using the unique color combinations of the rams' ear tags before capturing them with a net gun. Rams were then brought to basecamp for processing. Each ram was given a new set of collars and a variety of measurements and samples were taken, including samples used to test the animals for disease.

Over the four days of captures, we succeeded in capturing and processing 18 collared rams along with one "naked" ram in the Hackberry Mountains. Every ram was in very good body condition, with one ram weighing in at nearly 260 pounds. The only injury requiring treatment was an abscess and ear infection in one ram, likely caused by a cactus spine. Two months after capture, the rams are doing well and their new GPS collars are providing us with up-to-date locations and valuable data.





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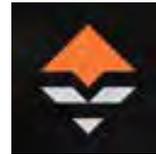
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