

California Wild Sheep



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Matt Gallo
Orocopia Mountains
Hunting with Kellogg Trophy Hunts
November 2023



ULTIMA THULE LODGE

CONTACT: DONALD C. MARTIN 310-766-3921

A large banner with a sunset background. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the scene. A small airplane is visible in the sky. The text "ULTIMA THULE LODGE" is written in a stylized font, and the contact information "CONTACT: DONALD C. MARTIN 310-766-3921" is written in red. A circular logo featuring a mountain range and a sun is positioned on the left side of the banner.

From the Editor's Desk

Happy "Transition to Winter"! Hunting season is in all stages – some done, some just starting and some in full swing.

This issue includes some great hunting stories, fun pictures, drinker work, important information you want to know, humor, AND MORE!

Your feedback, ideas, articles, pictures & requests are always welcome. Best way to reach me is email: mike.borel@contextnet.com. Due date for input to the 1Q24 issue is February 20.

Wishing you, wonderful Christmas and New Year Holidays and great start to a new year.

Wishing you renewal and success in your hunting this fall!



Milk-Braised Pork With Lemon and Sage

from epicurious.com / Mike Borel

Braising pork shoulder produces a fall-apart tender roast. And when milk is the braising liquid, what results is a sauce that is reminiscent of flavorfully infused ricotta. Recipe serves 6-8.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil	1 lemon, peeled
1 (2–2 1/2-pound) boneless pork shoulder (Boston butt)	1 1/2 cups whole milk
1 tablespoon kosher salt	1 large bunch Swiss chard, ribs and stems removed, torn into 3-inch pieces
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper	
1 bunch sage	

Step 1

Preheat oven to 250°F.

Step 2

Heat oil in a large Dutch oven or heavy pot over medium-high until shimmering. Season pork all over with salt and pepper and cook, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides, 12–15 minutes. Pour off excess fat from pot. Add sage, lemon peel, and milk. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low. Cover pot and transfer to oven. Roast pork until very tender, 3 1/2–4 hours.

Step 3

Transfer meat to a serving platter. Discard lemon peel, then gently toss Swiss chard in remaining sauce in pot until wilted. Using tongs, transfer Swiss chard to platter alongside pork. Top both with remaining sauce and serve.

Things You Learn if You Live Long Enough!

Nothing spoils a good story more than the arrival of an eyewitness. (Mark Twain)

It only takes one slow-walking person in the grocery store to destroy the illusion that I'm a nice person.

It turns out that when asked who your favorite child is, you're supposed to pick out one of your own. I know that now.

If you dropped something when you were younger, you just picked it up. When you're older and you drop something, you stare at it for just a bit contemplating if you actually need it anymore.

I like to make lists. I also like to leave them lying on the kitchen counter, and then guess what's on the list when I am at the store.

I just read a book about marriage that says treat your wife like you treated her on your first date. So tonight after dinner I'm dropping her off at her parent's house.

I love bacon. Sometimes I eat it twice a day. It takes my mind off the terrible chest pains I keep getting.

As I watch this generation try to rewrite history, one thing I am sure of is that it will be misspelled and have no punctuation.

A guy walks into a lumberyard & asks for some 2x4s. The clerk asks, "How long do you need them?" The guy answers, "A long time. We're gonna build a house."

So my neighbor knocked on my front door at 3 a.m. 3AM!!! Luckily I was already up playing the bagpipes.

Instead of cleaning my house, I just watch an episode of "The Hoarders," and think, "Wow! My house looks great."

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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.

Content editing by Zack Walton
Humorous outtakes provided by Tammy Scott
Published by Beverly Valdez, ORC-KF1 LLC

Events

2024

January 17-20	WSF Sheep Show, Reno
January 31-February 3	SCI Convention, Nashville TN
February 3-4	GSCO Convention, Nashville TN @ SCI National Convention
February 20	Due date for articles for 1Q2024 CA WSF Newsletter
April 26	Sheep Summit XXXIV, "All In Person" Sacramento DoubleTree
April 27	CA WSF Fundraising Banquet Sacramento DoubleTree
May 20	Due date for articles for 2Q2024 CA WSF Newsletter
June 1	Watch for your 2024 Board of Directors Election Ballot
June 14-15	WSF Chapter and Affiliates Meeting Calgary
June 28	Your Election Ballot is due
August 20	Due date for articles for 3Q2024 CA WSF Newsletter
November 20	Due date for articles for 4Q2024 CA WSF Newsletter
December 3	Sheep Summit XXXV, "All Virtual"

President's Letter

For most of us, our hunting season has all but concluded. A few of us will still venture forth to pursue late season deer or elk or other species, but more importantly; even fewer are about to embark on their “once in a lifetime” desert bighorn hunting opportunity here in California.

I had the pleasure to meet nearly all the tag holders at the Desert Bighorn Sheep Orientation meeting in August of this year. For most, this opportunity took years of dedication and applications and...hope. When addressing the tag holders at the meeting, I said, “Wild Sheep are a magical animal. They are the only species on Earth that instantly transforms “hunters” into “conservationists”. You may hunt deer your whole life, but few join the Deer Foundation. Many hunt elk their entire lives and never join the Elk Foundation. But I guarantee, with a high degree of certainty...you hunt wild sheep one time... you'll join the Wild Sheep Foundation.

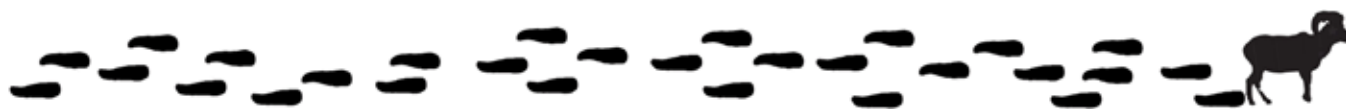


I concluded my remarks with, “Hunting is the by-product of successful conservation. This opportunity is the by-product of decades of hard work of people that have come before us. And the sheer rarity of this opportunity places a disproportionate responsibility upon all of you to protect this resource and opportunity for future generations. It's the only way to protect our culture, our belief system, and ensure this opportunity will always be there for our young people.”

So, on behalf of the CA Wild Sheep Foundation, we wish you lucky few great success and we look forward to seeing all of you and hearing your stories at our Annual Dinner and Fundraiser at the Doubletree by Hilton in Sacramento on April 27, 2024. Save the date and make plans to attend California's greatest wildlife conservation party.

Please read through this issue carefully, we have accomplished a lot recently in conjunction with our conservation partners, SCBS, USMC, and others, and there are new developments regarding the issues facing desert bighorn sheep across the Southern California landscape. Thank you for your dedication and support and have a wonderful holiday season, a very Merry Christmas and a safe and successful New Year.

Donald C. Martin



WORDS OF WISDOM

This is no game for the weak-kneed and faint-hearted. Hunter success is not high, not because there aren't enough sheep but because there aren't enough people with the temperament to become sheep hunters.

—Jack O'Connor, "The Bighorn," March 1960

MY 2023 CALIFORNIA DREAM SHEEP HUNT

By Bob Pagel

After having applied for a California sheep tag for 36 years—and focusing on the White Mountain hunt for the last 20 years—I was in shock, and speechless, when I opened the draw results in June and drew the tag. My odds for this hunt, with maximum points, were 5-percent due to the extreme physicality of the unit. But I had a hunch this was my year!

At 60, my wife and I backpacked the John Muir trail for 222 miles and 50,000 feet vertical climbing. We summited Mt. Whitney on our last day. I knew I could still do the Whites with training. At 65, I started training three months prior to an archery mule deer hunt at 7,000 feet which I knew I would draw. I lost 23 lbs. and worked on cardio. Then I drew the White Mountain sheep tag and I had to step up my workout game.

Before the draw results were posted, I reached out to a few sheep outfitters and came down to two with whom I was comfortable. Ultimately, I chose Dry Creek Outfitters as Matt was always available to answer all my questions about the hunt.

I was fortunate to have had a father who always took his boys on hunts and we all caught the outdoor bug. He passed 16 years ago. He was **a Founder of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (now WSF)**, and completed his grand slam, taking a desert sheep in Baja, Mx. in 1975. He always had his lucky red bandana with him on all of his sheep hunts. I put it in my backpack to bring him on one last sheep adventure and to bring me luck.

I bought a new 6.5 PRC for this hunt, spent countless hours at the range testing loads and having my old Model 70 .270 dialed in as a backup. My backpack, with tent, was stripped down to 34 lbs. For a once-in-a-lifetime tag, I wanted to be in control of everything—gear and body wise.

My son and I met the mule team at a trailhead the morning before opening day. We rode up 6,000 vertical feet to base camp at 12,600 feet. Opening morning in the dark, Nate and Jake told me we would have a four-hour hunt as tropical storm Hilary was bearing right down on us. The mules were coming up to get us off the mountain. Matt made the right call: safety first. The hunt had been suspended.

Within one hour, Jake spotted a nice ram bedded below us one mile away with his BTX spotting scope. By the time we got above him, he was spooked by another hunter and was gone.

Matt called and said I would have a redo in a few weeks. I was packed and ready for his call. On Monday evening, 9/11, Matt



Bob Pagel and his ram with Dad's lucky red bandana

called and asked me to meet Cliff and Casey in the Whites to restart the hunt. I dropped everything and was in camp the next night. The forecast looked great, as the previous two weeks were high winds and storms marching through the Whites constantly.

Cliff, Casey, and I took off in the dark, climbing to 13,000 feet. After glassing for an hour, Casey spotted four rams bedded one mile away with his BTX spotting scope and well below us in a hellish, sheer-vertical canyon. Cliff stayed on the scope and Casey and I started the stalk. Dropping below skyline and looping around, after three hours, we were ready for the final stalk. The wind direction was perfect. We dropped our packs for the final stalk. We then had to traverse a 300-yard, loose granite slide without sending a rock down the slope and blowing up the bedded rams. Each step would be calculated like walking on eggs. Casey made an amazing approach and peaked over a granite ridge. The rams were still bedded, but we had to slide up the ridge 70 yards for a shot. Casey did it perfectly. I had to find a way to lock my body and rifle into granite slabs for a solid rest and a shot straight below me. I kept repeating in my mind, "Solid rest, pick a spot, squeeze." With one shot, the ram never got out of his bed, and the 127-grain copper bullet was lodged in his opposite shoulder with great weight retention.

My dream of taking a California desert sheep had been realized! I wrapped my dad's lucky bandana around the horn and thanked God and him for introducing his boys to hunting. What I wasn't prepared for was three hours of boning the meat and caping out the ram. Three of us loaded our packs and then had a 1300-foot vertical climb up a loose granite slide to the plateau. Casey's pack was at least 120lbs. Cliff's was a load and I took what I could barely handle. We

then loaded up the rest of our gear and started a six-mile hike back to base camp at over 12,000 feet. My traps and quads were a physical mess for a few days. Casey then caped out the skull with a headlamp. We were all too exhausted to eat after our 15-hour adventure.

I can't thank CDFW, Regina, Rick, Danielle and Dry Creek Outfitters enough for making this opportunity possible. Matt, Cliff, Casey, Jake, and Nate are all world-class sheep guides and great guys as well! They have top-notch glass equipment and have hunted every sheep unit in the state for decades. Besides the fact, they are all in amazing physical condition. There is no way I could have done this hunt myself without having true hardcore sheep guides to make it happen. I now realize sheep guides are cut from a different cloth!

I have been blessed over 50 years of being on some amazing bow and gun hunts throughout Canada and the lower 48. This hunt, by far, topped them all. The Whites are beautiful and the steepest, most rugged terrain I have ever hunted. If anyone draws the Whites sheep tag, my advice would be to hire a top-notch sheep guide, be very confident with your rifle and be in the best physical condition possible.



I feel blessed to have drawn this tag, punched it, and had the professionals at Dry Creek Outfitters make it happen. Life is good!




Bob Pagel and his White Mountain ram on one of the steep granite slopes making his post-shot very challenging!



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- Jarrett Deuling, Deuling Stone Outfitters

ALASKA EXTREME

by Matt St Martin, Life Member

“How about Matt St.Martin?” I will never forget those words announced by Donald C. Martin, president of the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation, at the 2021 fundraising banquet in Sacramento. It was a dream come true! I just won an Alaskan Dall Sheep hunt!

My hunt was scheduled for September 2023, so I had plenty of time to prepare. I immediately knew that my son Jonston would be going with me on this once-in-a-lifetime hunt. My contact was Donald C. Martin and I would speak with him periodically about preparations.

On August 22, 2023, Jonston and I flew to Anchorage. And the next morning, with much anticipation, met up with our guide Jay Stanford and continued the long drive to McCarthy. We were then flown in a Super Cub to the Ultima Thule Lodge. We prepped our gear and planned on leaving later the next morning for the flight to the Wrangell-St. Elias Wilderness, looking for one specific ram. On the 24th, we picked up a group of rams miles from our location, but almost immediately we were shut down due to heavy rains. The next day we made the long trek to where we last saw the rams. After bushwacking to their location and crossing glacier rivers, we were finally able to get a closer look. Unfortunately, they were not what we were looking for and after a long trek we made it back to the landing zone. We were planning to be picked up that evening but due to the weather conditions, we had to wait another day and a half.

After being relocated to a different area, we soon picked up one of the target rams. We hiked to the base of the mountain, prepared for the next day, then made the decision to put him to bed. In the morning, we located him and



Matt St Martin (L) with Alaska Dall Sheep, son Jonston, and Ultima Thule Outfitters' Jay Stanford (R)



Matt St Martin with 2023 Alaska Dall sheep

traversed 2000 vertical feet before he winded us and blew out. This was turning out to be one of the most grueling hunts of my life! It was now day eight of a 10-day hunt, Jonston located a nice moose, which was hard to pass up. After discussion we all agreed to keep our sights on a Dall sheep. As it turned out we located a group of rams, that were miles away and we made the decision to go after them the next morning. We began hiking and about four miles in, when we were hit by a snow blizzard and had to hunker down for a while. We then made the decision to keep moving towards the group of rams. At about 3:00 that afternoon, the storm lifted and there they were—the group of rams. Out of the group there were two good rams, Jay, Jonston and I slid down the hill to get in range. After about five minutes on the gun, Jay gave me the go ahead on the lead ram. Jay said, “as soon as he turns broadside, kill him.” After about 8 seconds, he turned broadside and the gun went off and Jay said, “you got him!” I asked do you want me to put one more in him and Jay said “no I think he is dead.”

Immediately the emotions flowed through me, Jay, and Jonston, we all hugged and high fived and headed down to the ram. After putting our hands on the ram, we realized he was much bigger than we thought. Jay’s commented, “this ram is BIG!” We packed out the ram to our pick up location where we had a quick celebration with dinner. That night we got our first clear skies and were able to see the northern lights for the first time of the trip. Being a sheep guide in California for the past 26 years, this hunt was one of the most extreme hunts that I have been on and having my son there was one of the biggest highlights of my life!

Jay Stanford showed his years of experience, and he now is a friend for life! I cannot thank him and Ultima Thule Outfitters enough for this dream to come true.

MEET YOUR NEW DIRECTOR: JOHN OLDENKAMP

Tell us a little about your family

I was born and raised in Chino; I've lived in California my entire life.

We did a fair amount of hunting on the dairy when I was young (birds, rabbits, squirrels); not much waterfowl. Dad was not a bird hunter but he was a deer hunter and sometimes elk. My Dad took me on my first big game hunt to New Mexico for deer.

My dad, who had been diagnosed with congestive heart failure before we made that trip, had to take it easy. But I did what 10 year olds do — run around trying to do everything possible and gleefully getting into all kinds of things. That trip absolutely ignited a bonfire in me. I give my dad credit for sparking that flame.

I've always wanted to go back to NM for a deer to honor Dad, he passed away 10 years ago. I've gone back several times, including when my daughter drew her deer tag in NM and she was successful on a 4x4. It was so awesome to go back there with her and realize what my dad might have felt as he watched me hunt.

I have three kids and all of them hunt although, at 9, my youngest hasn't hunted big game yet. My wife is a hunting widow — she has watched my obsession for hunting grow over the years and gracefully accepted it.

Tell us about your business

I am the owner, President/CEO of two trucking companies. Dad started the first trucking company in 1993, hauling bulk raw milk from dairies in three counties to the bottling/cheese plants. My brother and I started a second company. A surprising fact to most people: there are more dairy cattle in California than anyplace else in the US! We now operate 109 trucks in the two companies 24/7/365. Not a lot of businesses operate as we have for 30 plus years!

Hunting — what is your favorite type (rifle, archery) and animals, local, international

I'm a tag guy — I'll use anything that gets me a tag! Archery, muzzle, rifle. There is nothing sweeter than an archery hunt but I'm a hunting purist not an archery purist.

Tell us about your most memorable experience

Actually I immediately think of two times that are very special to me.

First, I harvested one animal completely by myself and that one jumps out at me because 99.99% of the time I am hunting with other people — friends, family, anyone!

But the second time is more personal. I had applied dad for an Idaho Shiras moose tag (2014 season). He was the ONLY non-resident to get drawn that year. He acted like he was not excited but he was VERY excited. The season opener was scheduled for August 30.

Just before the season opener, on August 14, dad was out all

day scouting; he passed in his sleep sometime before midnight that night. Needless to say there was a lot of emotion and many things to do but one thing had to be done quickly — turning the moose tag back into IDFG so they could contact / draw a second.

But kudos to IDFG — the tag goes to next of kin. IDFG transferred the tag sometime late August. My brother and I were able to hunt dad's moose.

We had called Huntin' Fool before the hunt and as we were hunting we got a call from someone at HF that said "Ask everyone you see that are there for deer/elk season if they saw a moose."

On day 5 of the hunt we were out and had been asking everyone if they had seen a moose. We saw two guys walking along the road. We asked if they saw a moose. They said "Do you want help? Justin here knows the area better than anyone else." They got into the truck and start calling, a moose stood up, meandering through the meadows! At that point we gave our truck over to the strangers! It was the oddest thing to do but also felt like it was the perfect thing to do!

We took the two shots dad had loaded into his Mark Thompson 3378 Weatherby. I got to pull the trigger on my dad's Idaho Shiras moose hunt. That was a fulfillment of a dream and also provided a type of closure.

My brother and I killed the bull on Sept 30th 2014 with my mom and sister at our cabin in Idaho some four miles away from the harvest location.

What is your bighorn sheep experience?

In early 2000 I saw a Huntin' Fool magazine featuring an Alberta bighorn picture. I thought, at \$36,000, there's no way I'll ever hunt sheep. I was never into sheep because "sheep hunting is a rich man's game" as my dad always said... it was auctions with millionaires buying the tags. But I didn't recognize the value. Now I'm older with some free time, I can look at that animal and see that it is the apex of a lifetime of hunting. I read all the stories and apply everywhere constantly. I have a fascination and desire to hunt sheep — now with 15 points in most areas. Sheep fever started then, 15 years ago.

Conservation came later — my one goal as a board member, is that someone can have a conversation with me about conservation.

As a final thought, if you asked my wife, "What's his passion?" she would say "big game hunting, but bighorn sheep is his infatuation."



FIRST HUNT

By Faith Lehman, CA WSF Sponsored Women Hunt participant

As I sit here wearing my finest Sitka attire in the beginning of a cold winter snap in northern California, I am reflecting back on my time at FTW Ranch in hill country Texas.

I was granted this wonderful opportunity by being sponsored by the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (CA WSF) to the “Women Hunt” program of Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF). And here I sit today in my office at work, in the very same chair where I decided to submit my application to hunt for the very first time. It has been quite a journey!

Growing up in a traditional family from the San Francisco Bay area, hunting was never part of my family values. I was only exposed to hunting over the last year when I became a single parent to two young girls. To explore my independence and to help me feel connected to my environment during a period of uncertainty in my new life, I was constantly trying on new hobbies. I had always enjoyed spending time outdoors, and even worked in the fire service for a brief period during college when exploring my need for an adrenaline rush and my interest in forest conservation. So I began looking for ways to bring this love of the outdoors into my life again.

What started as exposure to early mornings in a duck blind as a frigid bystander quickly turned into a fascination with how I could successfully be part of nature and teach my children the value of conservation for the land and the animals that we live alongside. I investigated various women’s hunting programs and stumbled upon the WSF Women Hunt program opportunity. I spent countless hours studying for my hunter’s safety education class as I knew that was the first step to familiarizing myself with proper equipment usage and the methods of ethical hunting practices. Once I passed this examination, I stumbled into work one morning to find



Practice, practice, practice!



Faith Lehman and her first hunt -- blacktail doe at SAAM/FTW Ranch

the application for the Women Hunt program was due in approximately 10 hours!

I thought it was going to be a simple application, but it turned into a journaling exercise where I was able to express my passion for conservation including hunting and the potential opportunity to be a leader in women’s hunting practices. I remember the day fondly when I received a call from Renee Thornton. There I was standing at a crowded swim meet chasing around two children when the world suddenly stopped, and I received the news that I was selected for the Women Hunt program.

From that moment forward I began the education process as to what exactly it was that I would need to show up prepared to hunt in the Texas Hill country. For myself a backpack, a solid pair of wool socks, and a pair of what I thought to be warm gloves that could handle the elements. When I arrived in Texas, it was quickly very clear that I was unprepared, although comfortable, for the elements that I would encounter at the FTW Ranch. I was not alone... my fellow attendees were also not prepared although I think we had all tried to ‘guess’ at what would be required.

Quickly, as we looked around the room, we discovered that we were in good hands. Not only was the Thornton family welcoming, but the FTW Ranch had already put on two previous Women Hunt courses with new female hunters so had some expectations of what we would need. The team quickly immersed us in a five day training course to prepare us for not only the environmental elements, but ethical hunting practices and bridging field to fork activities.

There were many cold mornings and evenings spent hiking around the ranch, learning how to be patient, calculated, and many of us were successful in harvesting for the first time.



Learning to process wild game

They say you will never forget your first time, and I will never forget the opportunity or the feeling of harvesting my first doe.

Night fall was quickly intruding, and we had spent the afternoon patiently observing a herd of blacktail deer. I had a good shot, and instantly I felt confident, and calm having practiced many hours behind my first rifle scope. As I took the shot, a deeper feeling of calmness came over me. I sat patiently alongside another woman from the program where we sat mountainside and shared a York peppermint patty in anticipation of locating the doe. There she was nearly 10 feet from where I shot her. It was a clean shot, an ethical shot, what we had practiced time and time again in the three days proceeding. I sat there with my doe, looked into her eyes and thanked her for her time on the ranch and for the opportunity to bring home meat to my family.

FTW Ranch in conjunction with Joshua Schwencke of Gastronomy Outdoors taught us the detail and labor of preparing the meat from the harvest, another learning experience I hope to show my children one day and other new women hunters.

In the days following my return from the trip I reflected on the experience. What had I learned? How would I employ



2023 Women Hunt program attendees

my learning moving forward in my hunting endeavors? How can I give back to the community? The program of for new women hunting has given me confidence around a firearm, the ability to assess and participate in ethical hunting practices, and a better idea of the role of harvesting in a conservation management perspective.

Additionally, I have made connections that will last a lifetime, have the support of an incredible foundation, and have laid the groundwork to network and provide opportunities for other women within my family, social circle, and community for hunting/conservation. I am looking forward to getting involved further with CA WSF and networking within the community to encourage other females to get involved with land management and conservation.

Most of all I am looking ahead to exposing my children to the opportunities for female hunters that are only just beginning within our community! Cheers to a successful season of resting the land, building our engines, and encouraging those alongside us to see the beauty in the habitat all around.

May you and yours have a happy, healthy holiday season filled with goal setting and plans for a bountiful harvest after the cold air clears.

Editor's Note: Do you know of a woman who may be interested in learning to hunt and having the great opportunity to attend WSF's Women Hunt program? We will be taking applications in the spring of 2024 so be sure to send the applicants to Beverly (forthesheep@gmail.com)!

BLM PARTNERS WITH NON-PROFITS FOR RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS

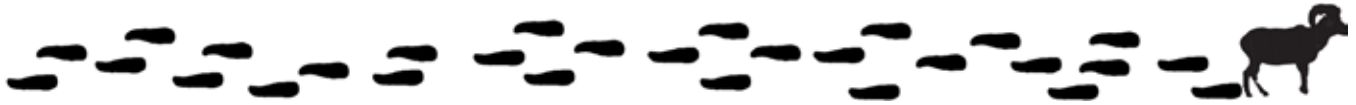
BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning was joined by leaders of the Mule Deer Foundation and Trout Unlimited to make an announcement and share details about how an investment of **\$3.5 million** will help local western communities. This includes funding for potential projects in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

As part of the 'Investing in America' agenda, these partnerships will help BLM implement critical conservation projects in sagebrush, forest, grassland, desert, and aquatic ecosystems through a collaborative approach with Tribes, States, and other partners. The investments will leverage additional funding, connect to local communities, and ensure the long-term success of restoration efforts on public lands.

MDF will partner with BLM through the MDF **Priority Herds and Landscapes Initiative** which will help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and increase habitat functionality for mule deer and other species that rely on sagebrush ecosystems.

WHO'S THE LUCKIEST MEMBER THIS YEAR?

Distinguished Life Member and Board Member Mike Torres harvested a trophy antelope in NM and a Stone Sheep in BC between May and November!! Both were lucky "won" hunts thanks to conservation organizations!
CONGRATS Mike! We will all hope to have such a great year!



2022 ALASKA DALL RAM RIFLE HUNT

by Craig Van Arsdale, Life Member

After a combined 25 days of hunting solo for this ram, 23 of which I did 14 day and 9 day back to back hunts chasing this Ram with my bow and using up the days I had earmarked for this hunt I made the tough call to delay my Alaska Yukon Moose hunt and drive home to get my rifle in a last ditch effort to take this ram home with me! After the round trip drive home and re supply on food, a full day hike put me back at my tent just before dark which I had left in the mountains with some of my heavier gear like spotter/tripod etc. to save weight and time. Not long



Craig Van Arsdale with 2022 Dall ram

after getting to my tent my ram and two five year old rams came out of a basin a mile up the range from camp and fed their way into a basin I had stalked the ram a few times with my bow in weeks prior. The next day was forecasted to be good weather and I went to bed that night optimistic I would be able to locate the ram in the now familiar basin I watched him feed into that night. I located the ram from a safe distance below by 9am and planned a stalk that put me inside 300 yards by noon. I shot at 304 yards an hour later and I had my first NA Wild Sheep! I couldn't be more happy with this ram, at 11 years old, full curl on one side and broomed to his 3rd annuli on the other he's a ram of a lifetime! He also completes my Super Ten which is a goal I've had since 2012 after reading Chuck Adams' books "Life at Full Draw" and "Super Slam!" After which I soon learned of Grand Slam Club Ovis, the Super 10, and Super 25 — new goals!

CALIFORNIA WILD SHEEP SUMMIT XXXIII (33) – DEC 1, 2023

“ALL VIRTUAL”

By Mike J. Borel, Distinguished Life Member

CA WSF hosted Sheep Summit XXXIII as an “all virtual” event. The purpose of these summits is “to accomplish more collectively for Bighorn sheep in CA through sharing and collaboration, than the sum of what each organization can accomplish individually. Following is a summary of Summit XXXIII (yes 33 - WOW!).

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS: CDFW, USFS, USBLM, USNPS, CA WSF, SCBS, Twentynine Palms Marine Base, China Lake Naval Base, Fort Irwin base, WSF, CA mining interests, BHC, key independents, and others). 47 persons participated.

Information reviewed:

1. CDFW Statewide Update, including Personnel additions and changes, Budget and budget outlook, BGMA Grant Plans, Helicopter contracts, etc. CDFW — Chad Dibble and Scott Gardner
2. US BLM - Update on the Big Picture, and the Programmatic EA BLM — Jeremiah Karuzas
3. CDFW Status of the Comprehensive Sheep Plan & Unit Plans CDFW — Jeff Villepique
4. Update, drought-funded contract work; SCBS-CDFW reimbursable and CDFW helicopter guzzler/survey contract CDFW — Jeff Villepique
5. Tracking Metapopulation Dynamics with a 23+ Year Genetic Database, and OSU DBH Work Update Oregon State University — Clint Epps
6. CDFW Desert Bighorn Sheep Update from Region 6, including surveys and captures CDFW — Danielle Glass
7. “Puttin’ on the RITs: Survival mechanisms and consequences of heterothermy in desert bighorn sheep.” Oregon State University — Paige Prentice
8. Sierra Nevada Bighorn Update CDFW — Lacey Greene
9. Observations on Bighorn Sheep and Minerals Independent — Carlos Gallinger
10. “Report on Recent Activities that are of value and interest for CA wild sheep — e.g. WAFWA, Wild Sheep & Goat Council, Desert Bighorn Council, Boone & Crockett Club, WHBAB, etc. Independent — Vern Bleich
11. Update on Brightline and Overpasses for Mitigation with Cal Trans, Chuckwalla NM and Castles NM CA WSF — Don Priest and CDFW — Jeff Villepique
12. State Lands Leases Progress, SCBS Guzzler (BGG) Repairs and New Drinkers (RWWS) Update SCBS — Steve Marschke
13. GALAD (Give a Lamb a Drink) progress, funding CA WSF — Mike Borel
14. I-8 Peninsular Bighorn Sheep Crossing Project BHA — Devin O’Dea
15. Open Q & A Session CA WSF — Mike Borel
16. Suggestions for Next Summit (April 26, 2024 in Sacramento)

Particularly notable sharing:

1. Comprehensive Sheep Plan expected out to the public in first half of 2024, and will include one area plan (that has strong potential for adding two hunt units).
2. CDFW planning two new hunt zones for 2025-26!
3. Hunting opportunity is a priority for CDFW Region 6 (from Danielle Glass).
4. Significantly more personnel in CDFW and some reorganization should result in more work being accomplished.
5. CDFW has noted that hunting tag revenue is down; working to revitalize the population (R3 program)

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.

Summit XXXIV is scheduled for April 26, 2024. It will be an “In-Person Only” format at the DoubleTree in Sacramento.



Are YOU a CA Wild Sheep Foundation Distinguished Life Member? NOW is the time to join or upgrade!

SHOW YOUR TRUE COMMITMENT TO THE WILD SHEEP OF CALIFORNIA AND THE WORLD! JOIN OR UPGRADE YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY.

You will be joining a hard working, and hard hunting, group of CA WSF Distinguished Life members when you join or upgrade.
Meet our Distinguished Life Members:

PEGGY BARNETT LEE
VINCE BLOOM
PEGGY MAY BLOOM
MIKE BOREL
JED BRUSSEAU
ADAM CASAGRANDE
KEVIN CHENG
DAVID COMBS
WILLIAM CULLINS
JIM DISMUKES
NOAH DISMUKES
BRET DISMUKES
DAN EVENSON
SCOTT FINLEY
JIM FITZGERALD
RICK GARZOLI JR
SCOTT GIBSON
ANTHONY GIGLIOTTI
BEN GORDON
TINA GORDON

CORY HIGGINS
TYLER W. HIGGINS
GARY HILL
PATTY HOLLOWAY
ERNEST HOLLOWAY
SHAD HULSE
BRETT JEFFERSON
BOB KEAGY
RANDY LASKOWSKY
JEFF F. MARTIN
DONALD C MARTIN
JOSEPH MASSOLO
ROGER MCCOSKER
RICHARD M. MCDREW
KYLE MEINTZER
NICK METTA
ANDY MOECKEL
PATRICK OILAR
JEREMIAH OLDENKAMP
NATHAN OLDENKAMP

CHRISTOPHER PEATRESS
JEREMY PECHTEL
JEFF PERACCHI
DON PERRIEN
JOHN PESTORICH
DON PRIEST
GLEN PYNE, DVM,
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #5
CONNOR PYNE, DVM,
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #2
CAROLINE PYNE, DVM,
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #1
MADISON PYNE,
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #4
TRAVIS PYNE,
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #3
TOM REA
MASON ROGERS
DAVE ROWAN
PAUL SCHULTHEIS

RICH SELLERS
ALAN SHULTZ
DAN SMITH, III
DAN SMITH, JR.
DANIEL SMITH, JR.
RENEE SNIDER
ADAM STARR
BROOKS STILTZ
BILL TITTLE
MICHAEL TORRES
NATHAN TREADWELL
REUBEN VALLES
ZACK WALTON
JOHN WARE
JIM WARNER
SHAINA WARNER
SIMON WHETZEL
DARRYL WILLIAMS
SHAWN WOOD

Join as a Life Member (\$500)

Make a commitment now to continue PUTTING AND KEEPING WILD SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAINS of California! Join CA WSF as a Life Member or a Junior Life Member and receive ONE chance to WIN the special Life Members hunt in 2023.

Upgrade your CA WSF Life Membership (\$1,000)

Upgrade your CA WSF Life Membership to DISTINGUISHED Life Membership (\$1,000) to receive THREE chances to WIN the special Life Members hunt in 2023.

You may also join at the Distinguished Life Member level for \$1,500.

All Distinguished Life Members receive a PELOTON 240 VEST from Kuiu emblazoned with the CA WSF logo.

2025 STONE SHEEP HUNT Special Drawing



ONLY 600 TICKETS AVAILABLE

\$100 PER TICKET



Name

Address

City State Post Code

Day Phone

Email

Payment Methods

Check

Make check payable to:
CA Wild Sheep Foundation

MasterCard

Visa

Credit Card Number

Expire Date CCV Code

Billing Postal Code

Signature

Sikanni River Outfitters

Hunt Information

14 day 1x1 hunt with Sikanni River
Outfitters

Dates: August 1 - August 14, 2025

Location: Sikanni River Valley, BC,
Canada

Get Tickets by Mail, Fax, or ON LINE

Mail order form to:

CA WSF

1630 Williams Hwy 151
Grants Pass, OR 97527

FAX order form to:

650-409-6005

ONLINE ORDERS:

www.cawsf.org/store

Orders must be received by April 6, 2024. Drawing held April 27, 2024.

Do not need to be present to win.

2024 ANNUAL BANQUET / FUNDRAISER PREVIEW

by Donald C Martin, Banquet/Fundraising Committee Co-Chair

It's never too early to save the date for our 2024 Annual Dinner and Fundraiser on April 27, 2024 at the Doubletree by Hilton in Sacramento. We certainly look forward to seeing all of you again and sharing in a "Conservation Celebration" often referred to as "the best wildlife conservation party in CA. I know our event is a favorite among some of our members travelling to us from other states! We look forward to catching up with all of you as we continue to support and grow this "Wild Sheep Family".

It's still a little early as we wait to hear back from multiple western states on our Governor's Tag Applications, but we are hopeful that once again we will be able to provide more of these exclusive opportunities. However, I'm thrilled to announce **CA WSF has been awarded the Alaska State Governor's tag for mountain goat!** The permit is the SG800 Chugach Mountains Mountain Goat. The winning hunter will have the opportunity to hunt either sex goat, excluding nannies with kids, in one of three zones: 13D, 14A and 14C, all part of the Chugach range. The 8 different draw hunt areas included in this special tag are DG720, DG852-858, and DG889-891, which covers a huge portion of Southcentral Alaska. A registered guide is required by law for AK non-residents for this hunt and we know many qualified guides in these units and would be happy to put you in touch with them for further information.

Our Grand Prize random drawing this year is a **Fully Guided 1x1, 14 day, Stone Sheep Hunt in British Columbia with our friends at Sikanni River Outfitters and Ranch**. Dates for this hunt are scheduled for **August 1-14, 2025**. So, the winner will have one year to prepare. This is a fly-in back-pack hunt with a history of high success rates and quality rams. Tickets are available now for purchase at: www.cawsf.org/store.html and there is a 25-ticket limit per customer. This hunt is not transferable. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE PRESENT TO WIN, so buy your tickets now!**

In addition, we are proud to provide an additional sheep hunting opportunity to our life members. This year's Life Members Only **grand prize is a fully guided 1x1, 10 day, Horseback Dall Sheep Hunt in the Northwest Territories with our friends at Gana River Outfitters in 2025**. So, the winner will have one year to prepare. We thank Harold Grinde and Board member Matt Burke, for helping us to provide this opportunity to our life members. This hunt is not transferable. Youth Life members must be 12 years of age or older at the time of the hunt to be eligible. Youth Life and Life Members are automatically entered one time and Distinguished Life Members are automatically entered three times. Consider upgrading to Distinguished Life Member today! **You must be a life member, at any level, and MUST BE IN THE ROOM to WIN!!!**

You may purchase Stone sheep tickets and a life membership or upgrade your life membership at: www.cawsf.org/store.html Any questions or concerns or to pay by check, please reach out to Beverly Valdez at: fortheshoop@gmail.com

We are currently negotiating our Custom Rifle Package that we will be offering at our dinner this year. My hope is to arrange a far more "custom" rifle by investing in a base model turn-key package including rifle/optic/hard case, and the winner will have the freedom to be able to select L/R hand, caliber, and finish. If the winner wishes to upgrade any of those features/optic/etc. I want to ensure that our partner on this venture can provide the lucky winner those additional options to upgrade at the best possible price. We hope to have this arrangement finalized by Sheep Show 2024 and we will be able to offer tickets for sale starting at that time.

If you have suggestions on firearms for our general raffle, please reach out to me at: don-martin@earthlink.net and I will work with our FFL, Turner's Outdoorsman-Sacramento, to hopefully provide some of those firearms. I'm always interested in what our members have to say and want to continue to provide all of you with new and attractive items. Also, if you have any items you'd like to donate to our general raffle, live auction or silent auction, please reach out to me as well.

Please make plans to attend our event today! If you have a conflict and you absolutely cannot attend, please support your chapter by purchasing tickets for the Stone sheep or make a \$300 donation to GIVE A LAMB A DRINK on our website at: www.cawsf.org/store.html.

We appreciate your continued dedication and we are finally making great headway towards our "Drive to 35" hunting permits campaign and our efforts to double the number of desert bighorns in California through water development projects and open new hunting units across the Southern California landscape! All of you fuel that success! I look forward to seeing all of you in Sacramento!

MY STONE SHEEP AND MOUNTAIN GOAT HUNT

By Scott Hulse, Life Member

We were at 5500 feet in a mosquito tent, with the sounds of horses in the meadow wearing bells and a nearby wolf pack howling as the sun went down. So began my Stone sheep hunt in northern British Columbia.

I had flown up to Ft. Nelson and traveled four hours north after landing, in a spectacular sheep area for a 14-day hunt. The terrain featured unforgiving willows, followed by tangled alpine and slippery shale. With me were my guide Shale and wrangler and assistant guide Fern. Shale had an understated depth of experience with the mountains, and Fern covered all things from horses to game. One was from Canada, the other from New Zealand, together it was a great team. This area was thick with bear and moose, with occasional caribou, wolf, sheep, and mountain goat.

We started in Summit camp, which I came to find out was jokingly referred to as Suffer camp, and spotted 12 rams in 6 hunt days, but only one was likely legal. These sheep were experts using the wind, they would travel into a bowl on the back of a valley or stay sided up high in a shelf. On our first pursuit we were winded by the group of 4 and they just disappeared. We spotted several smaller rams on a saltlick at 7000 feet. When we found another potential candidate ram, glassing at 2000 yards over serious overgrowth, we decided to move camps.

One travel day with horses and it was a new hunt. Seriously, a walled cabin, close to water, and views of 14 peaks from the camp. That afternoon we spotted a ram bedded down at 2500 yards and kept eyes on him until dark. He stayed bedded on a seam between two knobs. We decided he had potential as a legal ram, but nothing was certain. We set out at daybreak on a cold and clear morning, riding up the riverbank, through the scrub and alpine to a lone valley at an adjacent mountain. We climbed up to 6600 feet, about a 2200-foot gain, and then sided the mountain to a point where we had observed him. Fortunately, he had remained bedded there all night. We were in position on top of the ridge with the sun behind us, as the ram looked down the mountain, or alternatively into the wind.

It was a timeless moment as he suddenly looked up at us with a "time to go" expression... I checked with Shale, he judged the ram and gave me the green light. We were 110 yards uphill, in the moment, dialed in. The ram was down on the first shot but stood up, so he took a second to the engine room and dropped back down. What an incredible moment! All the planning, hiking, climbing, and thinking of this trip with late season rams, it had come together. We spotted 13 rams over 8 hunt days.

We decided to go for a mountain goat on day 10, and after dropping the sheep off with the plane, we rode 2 hours down

the valley. We spotted 5 goats in an alpine bowl, and a lone big one situated in the rocks on top. No angles here or siding of mountains, we picked a path straight up the face. It was much steeper than planned, and when we got to the shale it didn't let up. We were set up 110 yards below, waiting for the goat to stand, sliding on the gravel with each adjustment. As he stood up, it was over immediately, that goat moved maybe 8 feet. Another surprise, it turned out to be the biggest Nanny we had ever seen. The funny thing is I didn't notice the sound of the rifle or the fact that it was snowing until after we got up there.



Scott with his Stone sheep



Scott with his bonus mountain goat!

I always spend some time reflecting with the downed animal, thinking of what they have given up, and my personal respects. In spending time with this goat and the ram, in the backdrop of countless mountains, I was reminded how special these times are and hope they never end.

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Life Member Craig Van Arsdale
2023 Alaska bear



Life Member Craig Van Arsdale
2023 Alaska Mountain Goat



Life Members Tammy and Brenton Scott
Texas Alligator Gar
2023



Distinguished Life Member Mike Borel
French Mainland Corsican Mouflon
2023

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Life Member Claude Howard
Aoudad Ram
Hunting with Rowdy McBride
Clayton Ranch in Texas, 2023



Life Member Claude Howard
Armenian Ram
Hunting with Rowdy McBride
Clayton Ranch in Texas, 2023



Life Member Claude Howard
Grizzly hunt
2023



Life Member Claude Howard
Caribou
2023



Matt St. Martin
2023 Dall Sheep with Ultima Thule Outfitters
Won at 2021 CA WSF Fundraiser
See article page ##



Faith Lehman
CA WSF sponsored 2023 attendee
Women Hunt
See article page ##

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Life Member Craig Van Arsdale
Alaska Dall Sheep
2023



Life Member Craig Van Arsdale
Alaska Dall Sheep
2022



Jim Davis developing a horizontal well to supply water for
tule elk at East Laws Seep, Inyo Co., California, 1979
See article page ##



Amit Eshel witnessed this tussle between two male Nubian
ibexes in Israel's Zin Desert. The battle lasted about 15
minutes before one surrendered and the pair parted without
serious injury. Eshel's photograph won the Animals in their
Environment category.



Photos "on the hoof" by Rick Halter
SCBS Volunteer
2023

BIGHORN SHEEP CAPTURE IN THE PANAMINT MOUNTAINS

by Scott Gibson, Distinguished Life Member

Richard Ianello, from CDFW, reached out to Rick Halter earlier this year to help find a suitable "base camp" location for a sheep capture in the Panamint Mountains.

Rick Halter is friends with some of the owners and proprietors of Ballarat Ghost Town and the Cerro Gordo Mine. Rick was able to put CDFW in touch with the owners, Elizabeth DeBell and Chuck Stowe, who gave CDFW permission to camp, land helicopter, and use this site on private property for the work that needed done.

Sheep were captured in the Panamints, then transported to Ballarat, where they were processed by CDFW biologists. After being fitted with collars, the sheep were flown back to where they were originally captured and released. Rick also assisted the CDFW crew in attaching collars on bighorn sheep and recording scientific data used by the DFW.

Rick is a regular volunteer with the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep (SCBS) and part of the elite Newberry Water Haul crew. Rick frequently volunteers on other water projects throughout the year.



Logo Gear is here!



CALIFORNIA WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT LOGO GEAR IS BACK!

Ready to shop?

- No minimums required!
- For caps/hats and beanies, go to cawssf.org, click on (website location needs to be added). There you will see the various head gear available with your choice of two California Wild Sheep Foundation logo options.
- For various kinds of merchandise, from shirts and jackets to coolers and even drinkware, go to basspro.com and cabelas.com
- Choose the merchandise that you want to order, color, size, and the California Wild Sheep Foundation logo:
 - » For the chest area of a shirt or jacket – options are a 4” circle California Wild Sheep Foundation logo or a 3” circle California Wild Sheep Foundation logo.
 - » For the sleeve of a shirt or jacket, the 3” circle California Wild Sheep Foundation logo is available.
 - » For a bag (ie: tote bag) the 4” circle California Wild Sheep Foundation logo is available.
 - » Drinkware (ie: tumblers, glassware, etc.) has California Wild Sheep Foundation circle logo
- Complete the Order Worksheet and email it to Laurie Parsons at lp Parsons@basspro.com
- Laurie Parsons or Kathleen Matthews will call you to obtain your credit card information, provide you with shipping options and your order total.
- If you have any questions, or would like to place a phone order, call Laurie Parsons at (417) 873-5818 or (800) 243-6626 option 1.
- Because all gear is personalized, returns will not be allowed.

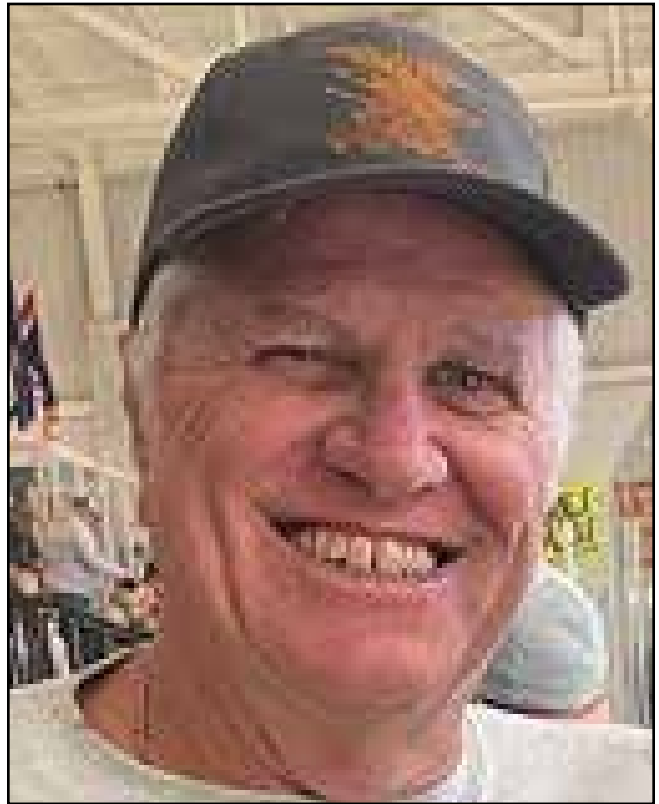
SHOP TODAY at the CA WSF Store where you will find the order form and the various options for hats.

<http://cawssf.org/store.html>

MEMBER RECEIVES THE ALDO LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD

The **Aldo Leopold Conservation Award** was established by the American Society of Mammalogists in 2002 to honor recipients who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation of mammals and mammalian biodiversity. Prominent individuals receiving this prestigious award include Edward O. Wilson, Russell A. Mittermeier, George B. Schaller, Helene Marsh, Herbert Prinz, and Joel Berger.

The 2023 recipient of the Aldo Leopold Conservation Award is Boone and Crockett Club Professional Member **Vernon C. Bleich**, who has spent his career making important and lasting contributions to the conservation of mountain sheep and other large mammals. Vern is a Life Member of the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep, the Wild Sheep Foundation, and the California Wild Sheep Foundation.—*Adapted from the Boone and Crockett Club Member Newsletter 21(8), August 2023*



CALIFORNIA BEGINS FREE HUNTING DAYS!

Plan to be a mentor on the next free hunting day April 13, 2024

California residents interested in trying hunting for the first time can participate in **Free Hunting Days** without the purchase of a hunting license. Free Hunting Day participants are subject to all limitations, restrictions, conditions, statutes, rules and regulations, except the required possession of a valid hunting license, upland game bird hunting validation and state duck hunting validation. This is a great opportunity to introduce hunting to your family members and friends to the wonderful sport that we enjoy. With your mentorship they will learn to appreciate the beauty of California's great outdoors and begin to understand the important role that hunting has in the conservation of all wildlife.

If you're interested in becoming a mentor but not sure where to begin, visit [LearnHunting.org](https://www.learnhunting.org) for resources. The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) covers a variety of educational trainings, research and resources to help you on your mentor journey, while assisting new hunters "learn the ropes in a low-pressure, one-on-one environment."

The person hunting on a Free Hunting Day without a California hunting license must meet all requirements established in Fish and Game Code § 3040, including: 1) Proof of completion of a hunter education course. 2) Possession of a valid Free Hunt Days Registration. 3) Possession of any required tags or report cards, federal entitlements, and entry permits. 4) Must be accompanied by a valid California licensed hunter.

To review all requirements and learn more information, please visit: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Free-Hunting-Days>.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF BIGHORN SHEEP IN CA HUNTS

*Accomplishing a Goal By Shane Dishion
Huntin' Fool November 2023 reprint*

Editor's note: This story was published in Huntin'Fool in November 2023. It is based on Shane Dishion's 2022 Clark Mountain bighorn sheep hunt. Enjoy! Matt St Martin of Dry Creek Outfitters is the Matt referred to in the article.

I had been applying for this tag for over 25 years with only four tags in the zone that I wanted to hunt bighorn sheep. There are only a total of about 30 bighorn sheep tags for the whole state of California, so I couldn't believe it when I checked online in June and saw that I had been drawn. I started counting the months and knew I had a lot to get done before the hunt started in December.

I waited a couple of months to go scout, thinking about it every day. I had worked in this general area many years ago and was vaguely familiar with it. In the meantime, I did my best to get in shape, knowing this could be a very physical hunt. My first scouting trip didn't turn out the way I planned. I realized how big a zone it was. A lot of the roads were washed out, and the wind blew furiously the whole time I was there. Leaving a day early, I was feeling discouraged. When I got home for the next month or two, I looked at maps, talked with a biologist, friends, anyone I thought might help me out. I talked with my good friend, Brian, and he was very helpful and more than happy to help me out on the hunt. I also ran into another friend, Tom, who had actually helped one of his friends out the year prior on a sheep hunt and loved it. He was ready to jump in and help out as well.

Brian, Tom, and I drove to Clark Mountains three days before the hunt opened and were extremely excited and ready to get a ram. We glassed for two full days but did not see a sheep. Feeling very discouraged, Tom told me this might be a good time to call Matt. He was with the guide service Tom's friend had used the year prior. Tom and Matt had become friends hunting in a different zone the year before. I got Matt on the phone and decided to bring him the next day. He came in and started looking at the Clark Mountains with a different perspective. He pulled out a spotting scope and started looking at the Cacti Mountain from almost two miles away. On the first full day we hunted with Matt, at about dusk, he said "There's a ram!" I couldn't believe what he said, and that's when I had a strange feeling knowing I might actually get to take a ram. I had taken a dozen deer and three antelope in my life, but to think I could take an animal like this was incredible. We put the ram to bed and went back to camp and made a plan.

The next morning, we returned to the last place we saw the ram. Within an hour, Matt spotted the ram. We watched him by himself for a couple of hours until he bedded. After this long, I had quite a case of "sheep fever." Matt and I grabbed our packs and gun and headed up the hill. Halfway up the mountain, I started thinking how joining the gym a couple



Shane Dishion and his 2022 Clark Mountain Ram

months ago would have been a good idea. I started running a lot when I first learned I had drawn a sheep tag, but back in Bishop, it started getting cold and I lost interest. Matt gave me some time and we eventually made it up the mountain. When we made it to the top, Matt found the sheep across a canyon 315 yards away and still bedded. When the ram looked away, Matt told me to get on the rock right in front of us to use for a rest. The rock was a little higher than what I wanted, but when the ram finally stood up and gave me a shot, I pulled the trigger and it felt like a really good shot. The shot went right in front of the ram, and he ran off. Feeling a little down, we walked back to the truck. Despite the missed shot, I headed down the mountain more optimistic than one should feel after missing, knowing I was one of the few who even had the opportunity to take that shot at one of these animals. We decided to go home for a couple of days and come back fresh.

We made plans to meet again the day after Christmas. We hunted hard for about five days, and all we found were ewes and a few small rams. We decided to take a break again and come back in late January. I couldn't decide if a two-month season was a good thing. We hunted for four or five days, and I had to run back to Bishop for a quick work meeting. That evening, Matt called and told me he had found a nice ram and wanted to start hiking to it at first light. I drove late and got into camp at 2 a.m. Matt found the ram at first light, and we started walking in, with me only having about three hours of sleep. We trailed the ram in, sneaking and not being able to get close enough for a shot. We posted atop a small canyon to where we thought he would cross in front of us. We waited about four hours, but he was never seen. We made the long trip back to the truck.

Again, we decided to take a break and come back in about a week. I knew the guide service cost and was pushing my maximum limit, but I told myself I would use them for a couple more days. If we didn't fill my ram tag, I was going to stay with Brian and Tom or even by myself using every

daylight hour up to the closing day. I knew this was going to be my only chance for a ram in California and possibly anywhere.

We all went out to where we last saw the ram. We looked and looked, but nothing. The next day after finding nothing again, we stopped at a spot in the Mesquite Mountains where we had seen two smaller rams a couple of weeks earlier. Matt found the two rams again, but now they had a bigger ram in the group with the original rams. This ram was a definite shooter. We watched them until dark and made a plan to be there at first light.

We were back at the spot where we put them to bed and looked hard across two miles of flat cactus-covered desert where the mountain started up. After looking for a short period, Matt said, "There they are." One of the rams in the group of three was white and made them easier to spot. We made our plan, loaded our packs, and started the long trek into the wilderness. Matt stayed down below us and watched the three rams. We came up to the last place we saw them, but they could not be found again. Matt told us they moved a ridge to the north. We changed our direction and went that way. Then another ridge, then another, and another. I thought we would never be able to sneak up to them. Finally

in the afternoon, Matt told us they had bedded down. We set up on the ridge to the south of the rams and waited. If the rams came up on the ridge closest to us, the shot would be about 200 yards. If they went to the far ridge, another long shot at 350 yards. I had been shooting a lot at the range and felt confident at 350 yards, but I was hoping for that 200-yard shot. We patiently waited, my 7mm mag on a tripod in the prone position, waiting for what seemed like forever.

At about one hour left of shooting time, the rams were still bedded. We decided we needed to do something before we ran out of light. We picked up everything and started to move to get a better angle. We walked down the ridge about 50 yards, and Matt called and told us the rams were up. I quickly found a shooting spot where I could lay down in the cactus and got ready again. Then, there they were on the far ridge at 350 yards. From my tripod with my new trigger, I squeezed and watched the ram drop like a rock. I made an excellent shot. I yelled and couldn't believe after 22 days of hunting I was going home with a nice ram. As I talked over the ram, I called my wife and told her I got my ram. I called my whole family and they sounded as excited as me. They knew how much I wanted to accomplish this goal.



NO-SUGAR PEPPER JERKY

Recipe from Tony Gigliotti

Ingredients

- 2lbs of top of round or similar low fat meat (if using wild game increase measurements except salt and quick cure by by 50%)
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 2 T of Worcestershire sauce
- 2.25 t of salt
- 1.5 t pepper
- 1 t quick tender
- 1 t garlic powder
- 1 t onion powder
- 1 t paprika
- 4 jalapeños
- 3 cloves of garlic

Steps

1. For chewy jerky slice meat into about 1/2" thick strips which are about 1/4" wide and about 4 inches long. For a more traditional jerky go with 1/8" thick sides that are 2" wide and 6" long (you can ask a butcher to slice the meat as "thick cut bacon")
2. Cut the jalapeños into 1/4" rounds
3. Smash the garlic (no need to chop)



4. Mix remaining marinade ingredients
5. Combine garlic and jalapeños with the marinade in a container that can be refrigerated and sealed
6. Place the cut meat into the container, put the lid on and shake vigorously
7. Allow meat to marinate overnight
8. Place meat with plenty of space around each piece on dehydrator sheets or cooling racks if you don't have a dehydrator. In a dehydrator set the temperature to 165 degrees. If using an oven use the lowest setting. Check after about 4 hours. Remove at your desired texture. For a softer more traditional jerky that will be when the meat just starts to break when bent after it's cooled for around 5 minutes. For a thicker and chewier texture continue to dehydrate another 2 hours or so.

LAST CAMPFIRE

JAMES H. DAVIS (1946–2023)

Jim Davis, former wildlife biologist with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), passed away in Grangeville, Idaho, on 16 August 2023, at the age of 77. Jim, a Marine Corps veteran, retired in 2005 after working nearly 40 years for the Department. Following retirement, he and his wife Mary moved to Kooskia, Idaho to farm, ranch, and enjoy a less hectic (but probably more demanding) lifestyle. During his tenure with the Department, Jim played an extremely important role in the evaluation of the big game guzzlers developed specifically to benefit desert bighorn sheep. In 1978 Jim transferred from northern California to southern California and joined what was referred to as the Habitat Crew. As a member of Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project W-26-D (Wildlife Habitat Development), Jim participated in the construction of numerous big game guzzlers and other wildlife water developments, and was instrumental in developing time-lapse photography as a method of assessing their efficacy. He also created plumbing diagrams and route maps for the big game guzzlers existing at the time, and played an important role getting all of the units repaired and operational after the very cold winter of 1977. After several years with Project W-26-D, Jim promoted and became the Unit Manager (i.e., Area Biologist) for Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, and later promoted to Associate Wildlife Biologist and became the southern California coordinator for implementation of the Hill Bill, working primarily on mule deer. Jim moved to the San Bernardino Mountains, and spent the remainder of his career working throughout southern California.

He played an important and meaningful role in the conservation of bighorn sheep, mule deer, and many other species of wildlife, but he had a special interest in the conservation of bighorn sheep and mule deer occupying Cushenbury Canyon on the northern slope of the San Bernardino Mountains. During his career, I had the privilege of working with him on four professional papers and one popular article (reprinted in this issue). Jim was one of only five CDFG personnel experienced in the use of horizontal wells to enhance water availability for bighorn sheep, mule deer, and tule elk, and he enjoyed the complexities associated with operating the drilling equipment. May his many contributions to wildlife conservation not be forgotten, especially by those with an interest in the future of California's desert bighorn sheep.

—Vernon C. Bleich



TIME-LAPSE PHOTOGRAPHY: A NEW FOCUS ON WILDLIFE

REPRINT FROM THE EARLY DAYS

By James H. Davis and Vernon C. Bleich

"I think the hysteresis is too low."

"Yes. We probably don't need it any wider. However, we can shift it up and that will allow somewhat greater sensitivity in low light situations."

"True. If we broaden it, however, we could only gain in either the off or on sequence."

Listening to this kind of talk, the young Fish and Gamer, who had brought his cameras in for a simple adjustment, was flabbergasted. What, he wondered, had he gotten himself into? The scene was a small photographic research and development shop in Burbank crammed full of wires, batteries, powerpacks, oscilloscopes and all the other paraphernalia needed to create new systems and techniques for a technologically sophisticated world. In this case, the young technician with the thick accent, who ran the shop, and the older engineer with the foot-long cigar, were devoting their expertise to the refinement of new technology for the benefit of wildlife of southern California.

The project started in early summer 1979 when the Department of Fish and Game's three-man habitat development crew in southern California's Region 5 received four time-lapse cameras to help them evaluate that region's 28 big-game guzzlers in desert areas. Since budgetary constraints within the department prevented the direct purchase of these units, they were paid for with fine monies allocated by the Fish and Game Commissions of Inyo, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial counties. Twenty-seven of the 28 big game guzzlers are [at this time] located in these four counties, and in several cases the guzzlers were financed by those counties.

The county commissioners were interested in evaluating their investments in wildlife water developments and they readily saw the advantages of using time-lapse photography to do it. After purchase, the cameras were sent to a photographic development laboratory, where modifications were made that allowed cameras to shut themselves off at night and turn back on in the morning. This was accomplished by incorporating a photoelectric cell into the circuitry. These modifications have produced a super-8mm movie camera that has time-lapse capabilities as well as film saving on-off capabilities. By turning a dial, it is possible to set the camera to take a picture on a sliding scale of anywhere from one frame per second to one frame every 90 seconds. The camera also has an automatic exposure meter (as most do now) that allows it to adjust automatically to various light levels throughout the day.

What we have then is a camera that needs only a minimum of human help to run. It turns itself on and off, takes a picture over a wide range of frequencies, and adjusts to the light available—all on its own. It takes 50 feet of color or 100 feet of black and white film, which translates into seven to 15 days of filming, respectively. The zoom and focus adjustments are simple and quick, and all electronics run off of two six-volt lantern batteries that are easily attached to a six-foot "extension cord" wired directly in the camera's circuitry. The camera is contained in a 7.5x5.0x4.5-inch weatherproof

plastic box, further evidence that good things still come in small packages.

Since setup on site and pickup after a week or two are the only assistance it needs, this camera is the perfect tool for observing a stationary situation over an extended period of time without having to invest a lot of effort in doing so. Table 1 illustrates the savings, both in man-days and dollars, when a time-lapse camera is used to observe a site for 3.5, 5, 7 and 14 days, respectively. Clearly, time-lapse photography is an economically advantageous technique.

Camera Runs For (Days)	Man-Days To Install and Remove Camera	Savings Man- Days	Savings (Dollars)*
3.5	4	3	300
7	4	10	1,000
14	4	24	2,400

* Computed at an average expenditure of \$100/man-day.

With the shift in emphasis late in 1978 from development of big game guzzlers to an evaluation of the use these systems were receiving, came the need to find techniques that would provide accurate results but not require large investments of time. It was known that most of the 28 big game guzzlers were being used to some extent by deer, mountain sheep, and various game birds. Exactly how much use, at what times of the year, and the degree of nongame use the systems were receiving could only be surmised.

Region 5's Habitat Crew, which has been developing these systems throughout the region since the early 1970s, was responsible for their evaluation. The Crew decided that the methods that could be most economical time-wise and best for evaluation would be a series of permanent pellet transects combined with time-lapse photography. Several permanent pellet transects established at each big game guzzler site would allow us to determine seasonal use in selected areas in the vicinity of the drinker, while a time-lapse camera would record actual use of the drinker. The combination of these techniques would yield essentially the same results as having an observer present on site.

It was with great anticipation that the first camera was set up on 15 July 1979 at the Cady Mountain big game guzzler. The set was typical of those at most big game guzzler sites throughout the region. A rocky canyon wash high in the Cady Mountains had been dammed, and rainwater captured by the dam flowed through a two-inch pipe to a storage tank that in turn fed a metal drinker by means of a three-quarter inch pipeline. This system had been in operation since 1971, and it was suspected from observations and pellet groups in the area that sheep were using it. The camera was set up on a rocky ledge about 30 yards from the drinker.

As was to be found later, because of the rocky terrain, the most difficult part of this or any other set turned out to be leveling the camera so that the drinker was centered within

the viewer. After trying what seemed to be a small truckload of various sized small rocks, the right combination was found, and the camera was firmly in place. It was then focused, the zoom lens adjusted, and it was connected to the power pack. A quick test showed the camera was clicking away at its previously set speed of one frame every 90 seconds. The cover was then placed over the camera, and it was camouflaged by placing large rocks and vegetation over it. Total setup time was about 30 minutes.

Although it didn't take long to set up the camera, it was clear that patience would be required before results could be seen on the silver screen. Since color film was being used, it would be several days before the film would be completely exposed, and another three or four days before it could be processed. Meanwhile, the remaining cameras were set up at other sites throughout the region.

Finally, the big day rolled around, and the film was ready to be viewed. The results were amazing. The Cady Mountain drinker was used by a group of 4 to 6 large rams on five of the seven days the camera operated. The sheep came to drink early in the morning and stayed an average of 32 minutes with a range of 14 to 58 minutes. Additionally, hundreds of quail and chukar darted in and out in the early morning hours, usually before sunup. Clearly, this guzzler system was serving its intended purpose.

A second week's worth of film showed use on seven out of seven days by apparently the same group of big rams. Included was a sequence with two of the animals caught in a head-to-head combat scene. This was truly a lucky piece of photography, considering that the camera was taking only one shot every 90 seconds.

The results from the first set were so spectacular that as the results from the other cameras came in, it was almost a letdown. Even though the cameras were put out during the hottest summer months, use at most other sites was not as high as at the Cady Mountains site.

This is by no means an indication of the number of sheep or other animals in a mountain range. It is only a record of use at one specific site in the range at a specific time and, therefore, it should not be considered discouraging or encouraging, but only informative. By far the majority of the sites where cameras have been placed have received use by mountain sheep (Table 2), and use by other game or nongame birds and mammals has occurred at all of the sites.

TABLE 2
Summary of use by mountain sheep at six Big Game Guzzlers

Site	Use	Type*	Camera-Days	Average Sheep Use/Day
Cady	Yes	R	28	5
Kelso	No		8	—
Red Cave	Yes	R,E	7	3
Clipper	Yes	R	7	2
Nepah	Yes	R,E,L	29	5
Last Chance	Yes	R,E,L	28	1

* R = Ram; E = Ewe; L = Lamb

The CDFG has learned a great deal about what type of animals are using the big game guzzler systems, and when that use occurs. The CDFG also learned a lot about using a new tool that has potential application elsewhere in the department. By experimenting with black and white film, it was learned that although one may get twice as much film time (two weeks instead of one), so much resolution is lost

that it becomes difficult to distinguish what sex a sheep is, and sometimes even what kind of animal is visiting the drinker. Photos verified that use is much higher during the hot summer than in the cooler winter months.

Also, it is clear that some sites receive greater use than others, and by comparing these sites it was possible to find out why. For example, the majority of the big game guzzlers were installed to guarantee water at sites that were becoming critically low in terms of water production. Others were installed in an effort to extend the range of mountain sheep into areas where use was low or nonexistent because of the lack of water.

Thus far, use at guzzlers installed at historical watering sites appears to be quite high, but the CDFG has not yet had the opportunity to examine those installations designed to extend the summer range of mountain sheep. By studying in detail the amount of use the different types of guzzlers receive, and by comparing the physical attributes of the terrain in which they are located, the we may be able to build systems in the future at sites that may be used to a greater extent than some of our existing systems. Time-lapse photography will play an important role in this determination.

The CDFG is not the first to use time-lapse photography as a wildlife management tool. This technique has been used in the past by various other investigators to survey big game populations, to assess the use of various habitats by different species, and to record wildlife behavioral patterns. It has even been used to a limited extent by other Department of Fish and Game personnel. We feel, however, that the potential benefits of this technique have been largely overlooked, and we believe that this method has a wide range of potential applications within the Department of Fish and Game and elsewhere. It may be possible to replace hair snares, make upland game bird brood counts, investigate depredation problems, or even check out an enforcement problem with a time-lapse system.

The cameras can be used to monitor instrument readings over extended periods of time, or to record life history phenomena of various species under laboratory conditions. In short, any long-term observations at a specific site could be considered for this type of monitoring, and with a tremendous savings in manpower as a result. We now have a new tool with a wide variety of potential uses. It is an exciting tool that not only saves time and money, but also shows results in black and white, or in color!

—This article first appeared in *Outdoor California* 41(4):7-9, in July 1980. At the time, James H. Davis was a Fish and Wildlife Assistant assigned to California Department of Fish and Game Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project W-26-D, Wildlife Habitat Improvement, and Vernon C. Bleich was the Project Leader for Federal Aid Project W-26-D, the unit responsible for the construction, maintenance, and evaluation of bighorn sheep water developments. It is reprinted here in recognition of Jim's substantial role in California's big game guzzler program, and his important contributions toward evaluating the efficacy of those water developments. It is essential that such historical events are not forgotten, especially given the proliferation of what has been termed 'generational amnesia' and the increasing tendency to ignore history.

GOVERNMENT ISSUES UPDATE

by Don Priest, Distinguished Life Member, Board Member

BRIGHTLINE WEST HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE WILDLIFE OVERCROSSINGS

During the past three-plus years, the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (CA WSF) has been working with a diverse group concerned with the impact to wildlife connectivity from the Brightline West High-Speed Rail line Project (Project). After this long adventure, the many meetings, coalition letters and pressure on various government agencies, State and Federal, a resolution via state law has been reached. In 2022 the Project proponent, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the California Department of Wildlife (CDFW) laid out via an Agreement to cooperate in the construction overcrossings at three biologist-determined locations. However, the language of the Agreement appeared vague in its mandatory requirement that these overcrossings would be built. As such, our coalition, though very pleased with the Agreement, continued to press to make via law, by Agency regulation or through Federal NEPA re-review process to have these overcrossings a mandatory part of the Project.

Late this summer, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law Senate Bill 145, Environmental mitigation: Department of Transportation. Section 8 of this law makes mandatory the following:

Section 8.(b).(1): If an intercity passenger rail project is constructed within the segment of the Interstate 15 right-of-way at the segment described in Recital B of the State-Rail agreement, the department shall ensure the construction of three wildlife crossings and appurtenances at three priority locations.

This is a big victory for wildlife, and in particular for Desert Bighorn Sheep. CA WSF thanks the multitude of our partners in working to find this mandatory overcrossing mitigation. We would especially want to thank Neal Desai at the National Park Conservation Association and Greg Schildwachter at Water Shed Results. Neal took the lead in Sacramento in working with the California Legislature and Executive personnel and agencies, and Greg in Washington DC with the Federal Railroad Administration and the Department of Interior.

CA WSF will continue to monitor the building of this Projects' crossings and provide updates. But with this momentum, we and others are looking toward other locations in California to build overcrossings. These other highway locations are where sheep are known to attempt to cross, with some being animals being killed in vehicle collisions. These include Interstate Highway 8 in the Jacumba Mountains and on Interstate Highway 40 along the mountain ranges within the Mojave National Preserve.

Funding in the amount of \$5.8M for the preliminary engineering of the I-8 crossing has already been provided by



the California Wildlife Conservation Board. Stay tuned as we bring you more on these new wildlife crossing efforts.

PROPOSED CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT

On September 21, 2023, Representative Raul Ruiz (CA-25) introduced in the House of Representatives (House) HR 5660, the Chuckwalla National Monument Establishment and Joshua Tree National Park Expansion Act of 2023 (HR 5660). Though the bill has been introduced late in this first year of this 118th Congress, given current politics along with other bills and issues taking precedence, CA WSF along with our partners at Watershed Results in Washington DC does not anticipate that this bill will move much further than its assignment to the House Natural Resources Committee.

However, as the bill establishes a National Monument, this part of the bill could be acted upon by President Joe Biden via the Antiquities Act of 1906 (Act). This Act allows for the Proclamation of National Monuments by the President, with Theodore Roosevelt being the first, creating Devil's Tower National Monument in late 1906. This Act has been recently utilized thrice in California by President Barack Obama to proclaim the Castle Mountains, Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow National Monuments in 2016.

CA WSF will continue to monitor the bill. Should it proceed, we will work to be certain that language within the bill or Proclamation allows for: the uninterrupted availability of these lands to sportsman as is currently available; access to lands for the development and management of existing and new water guzzlers; and, continuing with CDFW as the jurisdictional agency for wildlife management.

CALIFORNIA'S WILD HORSE AND BURROS

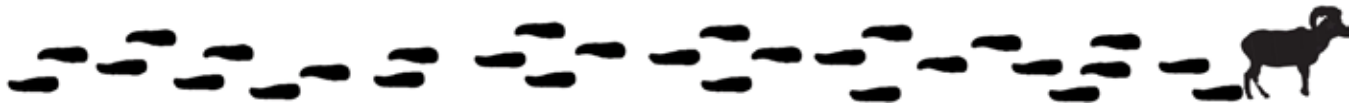
In 2022, CA WSF worked with a coalition jointly sending letters to the California State Director of the Bureau of Land Management and to the Chair and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Committee on Appropriations thanking them for

their support of Wild Horse and Burro Management and for the continued appropriations towards these efforts.

Unfortunately, with these horses and burros' ability to reproduce at rates of 15-20% annually, the populations of these feral, non-native species can double every five or so years. These vast, unmanaged and increasing numbers have a detrimental effect on our wildlands' habitat and riparian areas, threatening the health of these animals and our native

wildlife, including Desert Bighorn Sheep, Mule Deer, Sage Grouse, and more.

CA WSF will continue to press for mitigation efforts with these Federal agencies. We and our coalition partners will soon be reaching out to additional Departments for both specific project relief via captures and translocations, along with general efforts for Federal appropriations to our state to meet these specific needs and demands.



WATER WORKS!

In the last newsletter, there was an article published about the Vermin Water Haul. Dr. Christina Aiello (Oregon State University) is sharing the below photos of bighorn drinking from the Vermin guzzler after we filled it with water.

This is a testament to the important support the CA WSF and SCBS bring to the National Park Service and CDFW.



CALIFORNIA FISH AND WILDLIFE UPDATE AND WHITE MOUNTAIN SURVEY

by Danielle Glass, CDFW
Desert Bighorn Biologist Region 6

The past few months have been especially busy for CDFW's desert bighorn crew. After Hurricane Hillary effectively ended the seasonal concern of limited water for wildlife across much of the Mojave, the crew started retrieving the ~100 cameras placed at water sources last spring. Cameras were placed in hunt zones to maintain population estimates. We also placed cameras in Death Valley to follow up on bighorn captured in 2022 and produce population estimates and demographic data on sheep in those ranges. After an extraordinarily wet year, all ranges where we have collected cameras are showing signs of good recruitment!

We also conducted helicopter surveys covering the Mesquite, Clark, North Bristol, Granite, and Little San Bernardino Mountains over 7 days. These mountains were chosen for helicopter surveys because their surface water availability, topography, and size make it exceedingly difficult to meaningfully estimate the population size using a ground or trail camera survey. In total we observed ~200 bighorn sheep - the exact number will be determined after we finish reviewing our photographs. We will generate population estimates using a simultaneous double-count method that incorporates the sightability of sheep from the helicopter. Findings from the survey help determine recommendations for hunt tags in Zone 3, allow us to evaluate the populations in the North Bristol and Granite Mountains, and allow us to gain a preliminary understanding of the bighorn population size in the Little San Bernardino Mountains.

Additionally, we captured bighorn in the White, Deep Springs, Last Chance, Inyo, Hunter, Argus, western Panamint (see related story on page xx), Cottonwood, Tin, northern Grapevine, and San Gorgonio Mountains over 11 days. Captures in the White Mountains were planned to replace older GPS collars and allow for continued mark-resight population estimates. The White Mountain capture will also help answer questions related to whether this year's low hunter success rate was caused by a decrease in population or simply unusual habitat use related to atypically abundant summer rains (answers will come after we conduct ground and helicopter surveys of the hunt zone in the spring). Captures in the San Gorgonio Mountains were similarly conducted to generate a mark-resight population estimate as we track the recovery of that population from the 2018-2019 respiratory disease die-off.

Our captures represent CDFW's most substantive effort to gather data about the northern Mojave populations spanning from Bishop to the northern section of Death Valley. The data collected will provide us with important information about each herd's size, habitat use, and condition, as well as the



Danielle Glass

connectivity and disease structure of this northern section of the metapopulation. In total, this fall we captured 71 sheep across the 11 mountain ranges (Table 1).

Mountain Range	Number of Ewes	Number of Rams	Total Number
White	14	12	26
Deep Springs	3	1	4
Last Chance	3	2	5
Inyo	3	2	5
Hunter	0	2	2
Argus	0	0	0
Panamint	3	2	5
Cottonwood	1	1	2
Tin	2	2	4
Grapevine	2	4	6
San Gorgonio	7	5	12
		Grand Total	71

The next few months for the desert bighorn crew will consist of copious data processing, analysis, and writing. We aim to produce a report documenting the results of our helicopter survey, as well as work on recommendation for tags, potential new hunt zones, and water management. We will also continue collecting cameras across Death Valley, follow up on recently collared sheep, and attempt a winter population survey in the White Mountains. We look forward to seeing you all at the Sheep Summit and Sheep Show!



CDFW's desert bighorn crew in front of their trusty steed. A special thanks to Air Shasta Rotor & Wing.



A bighorn group as seen from the helicopter.



3 bighorn sheep are brought to basecamp at Deep Springs College. A special thanks to Leading Edge Aviation.



Desert Bighorn at a spring in the Funeral Mountains in Death Valley National Park.



Sad Loss of a Ram and Saved Tortoise

Near the Orange Blossom mine, an explorer/pro prospector and his daughter found this 10 ft deep pit on a hillside which seemed to collect water. Looking in they found quite a sight.

The intact tortoise was able to be saved. It was quite starved and weighed only a few pounds. It was placed by a creosote with a burrow under it along with half an apple. On returning to check on it the explorer found that both the tortoise and the apple were gone. The assumption is that it crawled into the burrow.

To the explorer, it seemed obvious that the bighorn had climbed down for water and was unable to get back out. It was probably standing in water and the hooves were wet. The right horn was decomposed on the tip as if it had been partially submerged.

It's a shame to lose any animal like this! Reported to CDFW.



KINGSTON RANGE AND CLARK MOUNTAIN: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA'S THIRD BIGHORN SHEEP HUNT ZONE (PART II OF II)

by Vernon C. Bleich, Ph.D.

This is the conclusion of a brief history of the Kingston-Clark bighorn sheep hunt zone, the third such area established in California, and that opened in 1992. Part I appeared in the Fall 2023 issue of California Wild Sheep earlier this year. As described therein, the recommendations proffered more than 50 years ago by employees of the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) included the construction of water developments to enhance availability of summer habitat, continued maintenance of the few existing natural springs, modification of grazing permits, and the removal of feral donkeys [1, 2]. Collectively, these actions were intended to have a positive effect on bighorn sheep inhabiting the Kingston Range, Clark Mountain Range, and Mesquite Mountains by enhancing habitat quality and decreasing competition for resources. In part, these resulted in more bighorn sheep in what eventually became the Kingston-Clark Hunt Zone and nearby mountain ranges, as evidenced by the latest available size categories to which these populations have been assigned. Here, in Part II, I describe a brief demographic history of bighorn sheep in this area, and how that information influenced efforts to establish the third bighorn sheep hunt zone in California.

In the late 1980s CDFG personnel captured, obtained serological samples from, and collared and then released 2 bighorn sheep in the Clark Mountain Range [3]. In 1990 and 1991 each of those animals was recaptured along with an additional 9 animals in the same range, and 8 total animals were radio-collared [4]. In 1991, 17 female and 12 male bighorn sheep were captured, sampled, collared, and released in the Kingston Range and Mesquite Mountains, both of which are located along the Nevada border north of the Clark Mountain Range; all but 1 male and 1 female were radio-collared during that effort [4]. Collectively, those animals formed a marked cohort that facilitated a detailed demographic analysis and, based on movements confirmed by aerial telemetry, indicated that bighorn sheep occupying these three areas were part of a more expansive metapopulation [4]. An estimated 58 females (95% CI=43–88) occupied the Clark Mountain Range during 1992, and an estimate of 78 females (95% CI=61–109) collectively occupied the Kingston and Mesquite ranges, and 130 males (95% CI = 85–269) were estimated to occupy the entire study area [4]. The estimated number of males was, however, of low precision and likely the result of sexual segregation between mature rams and females during much of the year, concentration of the investigation in those areas most apt to be occupied by female bighorn sheep, and the likelihood that

younger males tend to remain with females. These factors probably resulted in a bias against the number of collared males seen by investigators [4, 5]. Nonetheless, the point estimate of the total male and female bighorn sheep inhabiting the study area was 266 animals, and paved the way for the

preparation of bighorn sheep management plans for the Clark Mountain Range and the Kingston Range, both of which were necessary precursors to a third hunt zone in California.

In 1990, personnel from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Needles Resource Area completed and released a management plan for the Kingston Range Area of Critical Environmental Concern, which is inhabited by desert bighorn sheep [3]. The same year, the California Legislature acted to delete the 'sunset clause' included in the initial legislation authorizing bighorn sheep hunting in the state. The new legislation also provided that bighorn sheep hunting will remain legal in California in the open areas unless special legislation were to be enacted to eliminate the authority of CDFG to authorize such hunts. For the time being, it also meant that hunting would remain limited to the two zones (Old Dad and Kelso Mountains, and the Marble Mountains) that were at the time the only open areas.

Subsequently, legislation sponsored by Assemblyman Bill Mountjoy (AB 977) was signed into law, and authorized additional harvest opportunities for bighorn sheep in units for which CDFG management plans had been prepared (pursuant to section 4901 of the California Fish and Game Code), thereby allowing the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC) to authorize sport hunting of male desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) in additional areas [3]. As a result, CDFG personnel completed the management plans for the Clark Mountain Management Unit and the Kingston Mountains Management Unit [6, 7].

During the 1980s and early 1990s, personnel representing CDFG, the BLM, and the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep (SCBS) collectively pursued an aggressive program to enhance habitat and to reestablish desert bighorn sheep in suitable areas in the Mojave Desert [8]. These cooperative efforts garnered strong support from the public, and it was clear that the agencies and others were working diligently on behalf of conservation. These activities, combined with the updated and detailed information



on the demographics and movements of bighorn sheep inhabiting the Kingston and Clark Mountain ranges, the passage of AB 977 that provided CDFG with additional management authority, and completion of plans for a total of 20 bighorn sheep management units [9] all boded well for conservation. The convergence of these accomplishments was not serendipitous but, instead, reflected the hard work, cooperative attitudes, and enthusiasm for conservation that was widespread among the agencies and the public. Sadly, that enthusiasm was, in part, motivated by the tragic loss of two men that had played major roles in conserving bighorn sheep. Don Landells and Jim Bicket both worked long and hard to ensure the conservation program would be successful, and also to restore bighorn sheep to several historical mountain ranges. As some of us vividly recall—but also ~~is~~ something that too many others are unaware of—Don and Jim died in a helicopter crash on 6 October 1986 while conducting an aerial survey in the Clark Mountain Range. Their contributions to bighorn sheep conservation were memorialized in 1987, when personnel representing CDFG, BLM, and SCBS, along with many other appreciative individuals gathered to construct the Bicket-Landells Wildlife Water Development.

In combination, the aforementioned legislative, research, management, and bureaucratic accomplishments provided CDFG with the opportunity to propose a new hunt zone in California, and bighorn sheep inhabiting the Kingston Range and Clark Mountain Range were combined in a single management unit. The new hunt zone was approved by the FGC in 1992, and the first general season hunt therein began later that year, coincident with the opening dates for the Marble Mountains and the Old Dad-Kelso Mountains zones [9]. Hunts for bighorn sheep in that newly established unit have been approved by the FGC each year since then, and Zone 3 has produced some of the largest rams taken in California.

Bighorn sheep occupying the Kingston Range, the Clark Mountain Range, and the Mesquite Mountains also figure prominently in the conservation of bighorn sheep in eastern California and southern Nevada, where they are part of a larger metapopulation that includes bighorn sheep inhabiting several additional mountain ranges [4, 10, 11, 12]. Because of the high elevations in those areas, habitat therein has the potential to play an important role in the event of climatological change [13, 14]. The Kingston Range, the Mesquite Mountains, and the Clark Mountain Range, in combination with the Nopah Range in California and several additional mountain ranges in Nevada, which are part of the metapopulation referred to above, also are locations in which “white” desert bighorn sheep occur at a very low rate, but that also are seen on a regular basis [12].

Despite the successes outlined above, challenges to the conservation of bighorn sheep in California’s third hunt zone persist. Chief among these is the potential for disease(s) to affect the population, either from pathogen spillover associated with domestic livestock, or by apparently healthy, but infected, bighorn sheep that may move among the subpopulations that comprise the metapopulation. Additionally, drought has the potential to affect the

population in Hunt Zone 3, and habitat changes associated with a warming climate could occur. Further, the continued presence of feral donkeys remains a challenge in the form of competition for water and forage. It is necessary here to point out that donkeys occupying Hunt Zone 3 are outside of any herd management area designated by the federal government; it is essential that the agencies responsible for removing those feral equids do so [15, 16]. Moreover, development of solar generating facilities has the potential to further affect intermountain movements by bighorn sheep, and thereby disrupt metapopulation function.

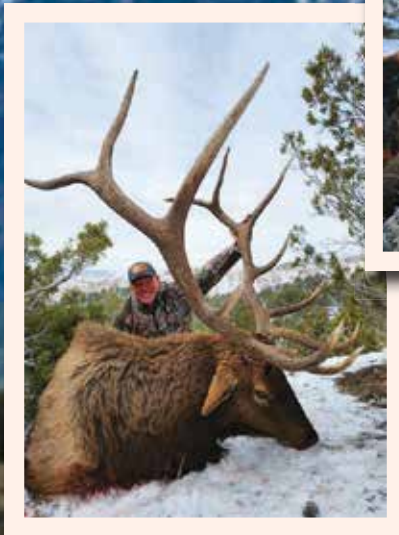
In addition, the persistent absence of any program within the California Department of wildlife (CDFw) dedicated to ensuring that existing water developments receive the maintenance needed and that natural sources continue to provide reliable surface water, remains a major shortcoming in the CDFw bighorn sheep management program and it is essential that this shortcoming be rectified. It is ironic that there now exists a nutria management program, a beaver reintroduction program, whole cadres—perhaps ‘teams’ is the most politically correct term—of “human-wildlife conflict ‘specialists’, drought mitigation ‘specialists’, and connectivity biologists, yet no program specifically to tend to habitat maintenance issues, issues upon which desert bighorn sheep are dependent. Finally, meddling, mischief, and political expediency will continue to remain primary challenges to the continued successful management and conservation of desert bighorn sheep throughout their distribution in southwestern North America, but especially in California (17, 18). I wish, though, that I could be more optimistic.

This article is part of a series by Dr. Vern Bleich, who increasingly is concerned that many aspects of the history and management of bighorn sheep in California are being forgotten due to the loss of ‘corporate memory’, or what has been termed by others as ‘generational amnesia’. That history is long and complex, and at times has been misinterpreted, or even wrongly conveyed to others, by those not having a direct connection to prior events. Vern was employed by the California Department of Fish and Game for 34 years and worked extensively with large mammals occupying the Great Basin, Mojave, and Sonoran deserts of California and, in particular, desert bighorn sheep. He was fortunate to have joined the Department shortly after the status of bighorn sheep in California had been determined, and has remained active in the conservation and management of that species since 1973. He currently is Research Professor at the University of Nevada Reno, serves on the Advisory Board of the Texas Bighorn Society, is Science Advisor for the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep, and serves on two committees of the California Wild Sheep Foundation. He is a member of the Wild Sheep Foundation’s Professional Resource Advisory Board, and represented wildlife conservation and management issues as a member of the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board from 2019 to 2022. To save space, the citations upon which information in this essay is based have not been included, but are numbered in the text. Complete citations are available from Vern, who can be contacted directly regarding this article (vbleich@gmail.com).

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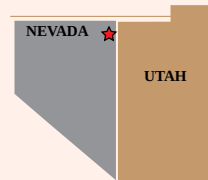
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THE POLITICS OF CONSERVATION

KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN AND YOU IN THE FIELD

By Bill Gaines, Gaines and Associates

2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP-UP WHAT LIES AHEAD IN 2024?

Shortly before midnight on Thursday, September 14th, the 2023 California State Legislative Session gaveled to a close. With lawmakers finally done with their share of the legislative load for the first year of the two-year 2023/2024 Session, all eyes quickly turned to Governor Newsom who had until October 14th to act on those bills that had made it to his desk.

Below is a summary and update on just a few of the many important bills the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (CA WSF) actively worked at our State Capitol in 2023, along with what we can expect in 2024 – the second year of the two-year 2023/2024 Legislative Session.

Legislators will return to the State Capitol from their “Interim Study Recess” on Wednesday, January 3rd, to begin the 2024 State Legislative Session.

2023 State Legislative Session

AB 28 (GABRIEL) – FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION: EXCISE TAX - SIGNED

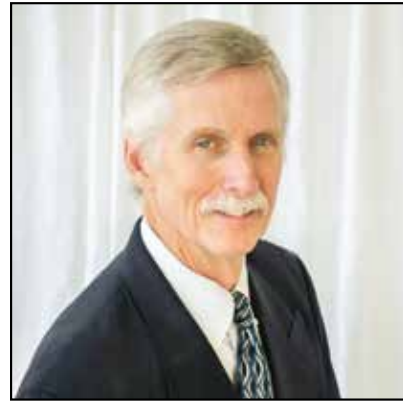
In the past several issues of California Wild Sheep, we have covered three separate bills CA WSF had actively fought which proposed to place an excise tax on the sale of firearms, firearm parts, and ammunition.

Throughout the 2021 Legislative Session, CA WSF battled AB 1223 by Assembly Member Marc Levine (D-San Rafael) – finally defeating the “two-year” bill in late January 2022. Four short months later, in May 2022, Assembly Member Levine punched back by gutting the original language out of his AB 1227 and replacing it with the language of AB 1223. For the entire remainder of the 2022 Session, CA WSF fought AB 1227, killing the proposal literally just moments before the stroke of midnight on the final day of Session.

With 2022 being Levine’s last Session in the Legislature, we thought we were sure to get a break from efforts to tax law-abiding citizens out of buying guns and ammo. Not a chance. On December 5, 2022 – four weeks before the Legislature convened for the 2023 Session – Assembly Member Jesse Gabriel (D-Woodland Hills) introduced AB 28, legislation which proposed to impose an 11% excise tax on the sale of all firearms, firearm parts, and ammunition.

Like AB 1223 and AB 1227, AB 28 would require the revenues collected be deposited in the “Gun Violence Prevention, Healing, and Recovery Fund” and be used to fund various gun violence prevention, education, research, response, and investigation programs.

Despite the active opposition of CA WSF and our partners,



AB 28 easily passed through three Assembly committees by mid-May and to the Assembly Floor. Exactly one week later, the bill passed off the Assembly Floor and over to the Senate – narrowly gathering the 2/3rds majority the bill required as a “tax”.

AB 28 maintained its momentum on the Senate side – quickly passing through three committees by mid-August and on to the Senate Floor, where it would again require a 2/3rds majority. Knowing the bill could be brought up for a Floor vote at any time, CA WSF kept a close eye on the daily Floor action while we vigorously worked with our partners to secure the necessary 14 Senate Floor votes to kill the bill.

It was a long, stressful wait. On September 7th, AB 28 was finally brought up for a vote on the Senate Floor. Following a lengthy Floor debate, the Speaker called the roll and – after several tense moments – the bill passed off the Senate Floor with the bare minimum of the necessary 27 of the 40 Senate votes. Following a quick trip back to the Assembly Floor for their concurrence in amendments taken in the Senate, AB 28 was on its way to the Governor’s desk.

Knowing the Governor had until October 14th to act on the measure, CA WSF helped launch a massive campaign urging the Governor to veto AB 28. On September 22nd, CA WSF also met directly with the Governor’s office to discuss AB 28 and our reasons why he should veto the bill.

Regardless of our extensive efforts, Governor Newsom signed AB 28 into law on September 26th.

AB 28 will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

AB 574 (JONES-SAWYER) – FIREARMS: DEALER RECORDS OF SALE - SIGNED

Current law requires any sale, loan, or transfer of a gun be conducted through a licensed firearm dealer. Further, law requires that the dealer maintain a record of each transaction which includes information about the purchaser, the firearm, and the eligibility of the purchaser or transferee to own or possess a firearm.

As reported in previous issues of California Wild Sheep, AB

574 by Assembly Member Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer (D-Los Angeles) would additionally require the dealer record to include the acknowledgment by the purchaser or transferee that they have, within the past 30 days, confirmed possession of every firearm that they own or possess. AB 574 would also require the record of transfer to include substantial additional information including, but not limited to, purchaser's place of birth, telephone number, occupation, gender, physical description, and much more.

AB 574 passed quickly through the Assembly and off the Assembly Floor before the end of May. The bill also had smooth sailing on the Senate side, easily passing through two Senate committees and to the Senate Floor by early September.

On September 13th, AB 574 passed the Senate Floor by a 27-9 vote. Following a snappy trip back to the Assembly for concurrence of amendments taken on the Senate side, AB 574 was on its way to the Governor's desk.

Governor Newsom signed AB 574 into law on September 26th.

AB 574 will go into effect on March 1, 2025.

AB 1587 (TING) – FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS: MERCHANT CATEGORY CODE - SIGNED

A late Session "gut and amend", AB 1587 by Assembly Member Philip Ting (D-San Francisco) would require banks and credit card companies to establish a new merchant category code (MCC) to apply to "firearms merchants" – which the bill defines as "businesses licensed in California as a firearms dealer or ammunition vendor for which the highest sales value is, or is expected to be, from the combined sale in California of firearms, firearm accessories, or ammunition". Currently, firearm sellers and manufacturers are typically categorized as either "sporting goods" or "other."

Proponents claimed that the intent of AB 1587 was to create a tool that would allow financial institutions to help identify patterns that are suggestive of illegal firearm trafficking. However, since AB 1587 would categorize all transactions at "sporting goods" businesses as "firearms-related", CA WSF argued that it would simply dilute and confuse data already being gathered on firearms purchases via other existing means. Making matters worse, by blurring current data collection, AB 1587 would only steer enforcement off the path of real criminals and instead place many law-abiding citizens in unjustified jeopardy.

Following being "gutted and amended" on the Senate side in June, the bill quickly passed through two Senate committees and to the Senate Floor. On September 11th, AB 1587 passed the Senate Floor on a party-line vote and was sent back to Assembly for their review of the new language placed in the bill in the Senate. On September 13th, the Assembly concurred in the substantial amendments placed in AB 1587 in the Senate and passed the bill off the Assembly Floor and to the Governor's desk by a 60-15 vote.

Governor Newsom signed AB 1587 into law on September 26th.

AB 1587 requires banks and credit card companies to establish

a separate new MCC by July 1, 2024, and the new MCC to be in use beginning May 1, 2025.

What Can We Expect in 2024?

While some bills of interest to CA WSF perished in 2023 and some were signed into law, others were tabled for possible further consideration in the 2024 Session. In addition to monitoring the introduction of any new legislation of concern during the upcoming 2024 Session, CA WSF will be closely tracking any activity on the "two-year" bills listed below.

The bill defines an eligible "Gold Star Family" member as a resident of California who is eligible to receive a gold star lapel button pursuant to §1126 of Title 10 of the United States Code, which reads as follows:

10 U.S. Code §1126. Gold star lapel button: eligibility and distribution

a) A lapel button, to be known as the gold star lapel button, shall be designed, as approved by the Secretary of Defense, to identify next of kin of members of the armed forces-

(1) who lost their lives during World War I, World War II, or during any subsequent period of armed hostilities in which the United States was engaged before July 1, 1958;

(2) who lost or lose their lives after June 30, 1958-

(A) while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;

(B) while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or

(C) while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict in which the United States is not a belligerent party against an opposing armed force; or

(3) who lost or lose their lives after March 28, 1973, as a result of -

(A) an international terrorist attack against the United States or a foreign nation friendly to the United States, recognized as such an attack by the Secretary of Defense; or

(B) military operations while serving outside the United States (including the commonwealths, territories, and possessions of the United States) as part of a peacekeeping force

AB 293 passed out of Assembly policy committee in March but was held in Assembly fiscal committee.

AB 293 must be heard and passed out of fiscal committee and to the Assembly Floor by January 19, 2024 to meet legislative deadline. Passing out of Assembly fiscal committee may not be easy, however, given that the loss of revenue to the state resulting from providing no cost lifetime hunting and fishing licenses to all those who qualify could be substantial.

AB 1507 (GALLAGHER) – FIREARMS: STATE PROPERTY

As a result of the passing of SB 915 into law in 2022, the sale of firearms, firearm parts, and/or ammunition has been prohibited on any state or county property since January 1, 2023. AB 1507 by Assembly Member James Gallagher (R-Yuba

City) would exempt events hosted by a youth sport shooting organization, a youth hunting organization, or a nonprofit conservation organization from the prohibitions put in place by SB 915.

AB 1507 was set to be heard in Assembly policy in early April. However, after discussion with the committee, AB 1507 was made a “two-year” bill to allow time to build more bipartisan support for the proposal.

The possibility of AB 1507 going anywhere in 2024 is slim, as the bill must be heard and passed out of both Assembly policy and Assembly fiscal committee by January 19, 2024 to meet legislative deadline.

SB 8 (BLAKESPEAR/SKINNER) – CIVIL LAW: FIREARMS LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

SB 8, co-authored by Senator Catherine Blakespear (D-Laguna Hills) and Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Oakland), would require gun owners to obtain and maintain a gun liability insurance policy which specifically would cover losses or damages resulting from any negligent or accidental use of that firearm, including death, injury, or property damage. The bill would also require written evidence of coverage in the place where a firearm is stored. SB 8 would require the Insurance Commissioner to set the minimum coverage for a policy required by the bill and to develop a standardized form of evidence of liability coverage.

SB 8 was heard in the Senate policy committee in late April with testimony taken from CA WSF and others. However, no vote was held, and the bill was held in committee.

SB 8 must be heard and passed out of Senate fiscal committee and to the Senate Floor by January 19, 2024 to meet legislative deadline.

Given the positive results the Legislature witnessed on AB 28, AB 1587, and several other gun control bills in 2023, we fully expect to have our hands full with SB 8 during the 2024 Session.

SB 637 (MIN) – FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS DOING BUSINESS WITH FIREARMS MANUFACTURERS: BAN ON DOING BUSINESS WITH THE STATE

SB 637 by Senator Dave Min (D-Irvine) would prohibit a state agency from entering into a contract with, depositing state funds with, or receiving a loan from a financial institution that invests in or makes loans to a company that manufactures firearms or ammunition.

SB 637 was double-referred to two Senate policy committees but was never heard. Unless amended, or the bill’s referrals changed for other reasons, SB 637 must be heard and passed out of both Senate policy committees and Senate fiscal committee by January 19, 2024 to meet legislative deadline.

Even given the Legislature’s love for gun control bills, unless amended in some way to shorten its path, the outlook for SB 637 in 2024 is difficult.

SB 772 (DAHLE) – JUNIOR HUNTING LICENSES: AGE OF ELIGIBILITY

California law currently requires that residents be 15 years of age and under to be eligible for a junior hunting license. SB 772 by Senator Brian Dahle (R-Redding) would extend the

age eligibility for a California junior hunting license from 15 and under to 17 and under.

The price of a 2023 resident adult hunting license is set at \$55.58, while the cost of a 2023 junior hunting license is set at only \$15.38. Additionally, junior license holders are exempt from purchasing an upland game bird validation, a state duck stamp, and wildlife area hunting passes. The significant difference in the cost of an adult hunting license and associated permits relative to a youth hunting license and any necessary permits has proven to be a notable barrier to many who would otherwise take part in the hunting opportunity California has to offer.

There has been a 65% decrease in the number of hunting licenses purchased in California since 1970. SB 772 would mark a big step forward towards reversing this decline by allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to continue to have access to high quality special youth hunting activities at an affordable price, and increasing the likelihood that they will become life-long hunters and conservationists.

SB 772 was heard in the Senate policy committee in April and passed out on a unanimous vote but was held in Senate fiscal committee.

SB 772 must be heard and passed out of Senate fiscal committee and to the Senate Floor by January 19, 2024 to meet legislative deadline.

If history holds, SB 772 will face a steep uphill climb in 2024. During the 2021/2022 Session, CA WSF sponsored SB 865, similar legislation which also proposed to extend the age eligibility to purchase a California junior hunting license to 17 years of age and under.

SB 865 passed through the Senate and out of Assembly policy committee but died in Assembly fiscal committee late in the 2022 Session.

In addition to working the above “two-year” bills and other legislation of concern that will surely surface in the 2024 Legislative Session, we will also continue to educate urban Legislators of the importance of science-based wildlife management and the critical role of hunting in wildlife conservation. To that end, we will continue to work to build the size and breadth of the California Legislature Outdoor Sporting Caucus – a bipartisan, bicameral assemblage of State Legislators who support policy decisions which embrace and promote California’s outdoor traditions. In close coordination with our partner wildlife organizations, CA WSF will again work with Caucus leadership to hold events and forums which educate, focus and coordinate the State Legislature’s support of California’s wildlife and fishery resources, and the outdoor-related activities that depend upon them.

Regardless of the challenges we will all face in the coming year, CA WSF is up to the task and committed to keeping sheep on the mountain and you in the field.



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