



California Wild Sheep

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Joel Brown
Clark-Kingston Mountains
Hunting with Dry Creek Outfitters
January 2024
182 5/8"
Read the story on page 6



ULTIMA THULE LODGE

CONTACT: DONALD C. MARTIN 310-766-3921



From the Editor's Desk

This is the first issue following the 2023-2024 Desert Bighorn Season and the last one before our Annual Banquet and Fundraiser. It includes lots of CA DBH Pictures from the season just completed, great hunting stories from California and elsewhere, more on our 2024 Fundraiser, interesting history on CA DBH hunting, fun humor, AND MORE!

Good luck in the various state tag draws and raffles for 2024. I suggest you have a base plan for the year that doesn't rely on those draws. I also hope you participated in the WSF Sheep Week in Reno – it was incredibly well done and made major money for wild sheep. The GSCO collaboration with SCI also went very well. I so appreciate time with our Sheep Fraternity from around the world!

Feedback, ideas, articles & requests are always welcome. Best way to reach me is email: mike.borel@contextnet.com. Due date for input to the 2Q24 issue is May 20.



BBQ Coleslaw Dumplings

from Tony Gigliotti

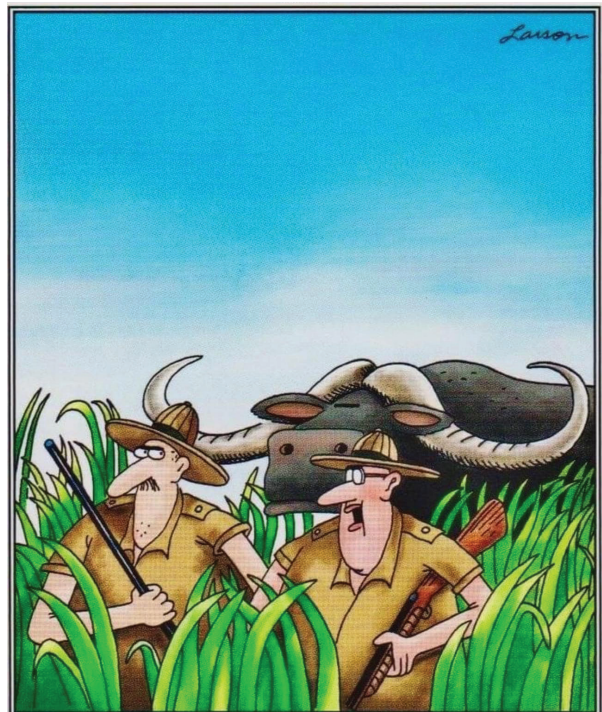
Ingredients:

- Store bought wrappers (Can be found in the cold section)
- 1.5lb Smoked or BBQd meat such as short ribs, tri tip, brisket, or pulled pork
- Coleslaw mix:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1lb cabbage | 1/4 cup honey |
| 3 ounces carrot | 1/4 tsp Worcestershire sauce |
| 1/2 onion | Salt and Pepper |
| 1 ounce (~1/4 cup) Green onion | 1/4 tsp Garlic powder |
| 1/2 cup Apple Cider Vinegar | 1 tsp Celery Seed |
| 1 tbsp Dijon Mustard | |



- 1) Thinly slice the cabbage, carrot, and onions before combining into a bowl
- 2) Combine apple cider vinegar, dijon mustard, honey, Worcestershire sauce, salt, pepper, garlic powder, and celery seed. Whisk to mix
- 3) Slowly add the dressing to the cabbage mix
- 4) Combine meat and coleslaw to desired ratio for the dumpling
- 4) Wet the edge of the wrapper before using spoon to scoop the filling into the wrapper
- 5) Gently fold the wrapper in half and use a fork to seal the edges
- 6) Steam the dumplings for ~10 minutes.



"Buffalo breath? *Buffalo* breath? ... Shall we discuss your incessant little *grunting* noises?"



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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.

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Humorous outtakes provided by Tammy Scott
Published by Beverly Valdez, ORC-KF1 LLC

Events

2024

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 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 13-16 | WSF Chapter and Affiliates Meeting Canmore, AB, Canada |
| 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" |

2025

| | |
|---------------|---|
| January 15-18 | WSF International Sheep Show Reno |
| January 22-25 | SCI International Hunters Convention Nashville, TN |
| January 25-26 | GSCO Convention Nashville, TN |
| February 20 | Due date for articles for 1Q2025 CA WSF Newsletter |

President's Letter

At this writing, I have just returned from the Eastern Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation's annual expo and fundraiser. I have attended this two-day event three times and hosted it twice, including this year. We had a great time, a successful event, and we raised a tremendous amount of money for wild sheep. If you follow me on social media, you already know that they cut my hair. Many of you may not recognize me come April. It's been a long time since my last haircut. You may remember that during the Covid years, we hosted a virtual CA WSF fundraising event and livestreamed my last haircut. And thanks to an effort spearheaded by former CA WSF Director Zack Walton and the hard work and generosity of our members and friends, we were able to raise \$19,000 for GALAD, "Give a Lamb a Drink", with that silly haircut stunt. Well, we may very well have beaten that



previous record. Numbers are still being tallied but it's looking pretty good and GALAD will once again benefit. The Eastern Chapter of WSF will soon be cutting a check for our desert bighorn conservation efforts for up to \$10,000.

Outstanding!

Gray Thornton, CEO of WSF, was our keynote speaker Saturday night at that event. He gave a very compelling speech about the role that we play in conservation. His main bullet points were summed up in the words: Innovation, Transformation, and Legacy. His words led me to think about our own Chapter in these terms.

Innovation. How has CA WSF met the current challenges facing us in our conservation efforts? It's important to note that through the use of "school lands", CA WSF and our affiliate SCBS has been able to bypass the complicated, clumsy, and time-consuming California Environmental Quality Act(CEQA) allowing GALAD to move forward with drinker installation efforts on over 90 public land sites and help all of us reach our goal of doubling the number of desert bighorns in the state of California. In addition, CA WSF exploits the best possible audio/visual talent for our fundraiser and hands down...we put on the best online auction with the highest level of professionalism. Our long-time relationship with Jensen/Hall Creative, now Tudor Road Studios, and with the help of the best auctioneers in our industry... unequivocally... we put on a great show. And with the aid of onlinehuntingauctions.com, we cast a wider net and capture more dollars for CA's sheep and wildlife.

Transformation. Give a Lamb A Drink has changed CA WSF forever. This effort, though the brainchild of many, was led by your Vice-President of Operations and Founding Member, Mike Borel. And if you were unable to attend the Wild Sheep Show in Reno this year, let me be the first to inform you, and congratulate, Mike Borel on being awarded the 2024 Wild Sheep Foundation's Gordon Eastman Grassroots Conservation Award for all his efforts on your chapter's behalf. It was an honor that was long overdue, and I was blessed to be a part of the presentation. Thank you, Mike, you truly have transformed the chapter, and we are now poised for greater success because of your hard work and dedication to "putting and keeping sheep on the mountain."

Legacy. Each of us are the sum of our experiences. But once we are gone, what have we left behind? As I approach the age of my father when Cancer ended his life prematurely, I ask, "what am I going to leave behind?" Most of us in the chapter are dedicated to leaving the "resource", the sheep, better than we found it. And whether that is through our philanthropic efforts or moving rocks on a drinker-build that will benefit wildlife long after we're gone, we all have a role to play in taking care of wildlife, of wild sheep, and our community. Never underestimate the positive impact that each one of you can make on our natural resources and our community. We must simply have the will, the drive, and the determination to finish what we start. That shouldn't be a problem, we're sheep hunters.

I look forward to seeing all of you April 27 at our annual fundraiser at the Doubletree by Hilton in Sacramento, CA. Together, we can celebrate our community, give back, and live up to our pledge of "putting and keeping sheep on the mountain." Make plans to attend now! Thank you.

Donald C. Martin

RAMZILLA

By Joel Brown, Member

On Father's Day, June 18, 2023, I was looking over my emails when I noticed an email from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the email said "successful". It turned out to be a successful draw for mule deer in zone X3A. I continued looking over my emails and came upon another email from CDFW and said "successful" for Desert Bighorn Sheep zone Clark and Kingston Mountain ranges.

I immediately logged onto my CDFW website and sure enough, I hit the California lottery for Desert Bighorn Sheep. I have been putting in for this tag for over 30 years. I knew this was a once-in-a-lifetime hunt. My son would join me on this hunt. I was also hopeful my father and wife would also join us. I immediately telephoned my father who is an avid hunter and has harvested all four sheep to collect his North American Sheep slam. My father and I spoke for a while, and he said he would make some phone calls and call me back later. I was so excited about my first sheep hunt; I called all my friends and family. After a short time, my father phoned back and told me to call Stan at Huntin' Fool. My father also mentioned that I should pay for the 10-day hunt, if possible, just in case of life mishaps and/or weather conditions during the hunt. I took my father's advice seriously and immediately phoned Stan at Huntin' Fool and we spoke for a time, and he told me to call Cliff St. Martin at Dry Creek Outfitters. They have a great reputation.

I looked up Dry Creek Outfitters on their website and noticed multiple articles and pictures of Rams harvested by their clients. I knew these must be the right guys to get the job done. I also noticed they have 5-, 7-, and 10-day guided hunts. I called Cliff at Dry Creek Outfitters and he seemed excited and knowledgeable of this zone and the possibility of harvesting a nice ram. We spoke about the details, and I booked a 10-day hunt with Dry Creek Outfitters.

On August 12, 2023, I met Cliff and his son Matt at the mandatory Fish and Wildlife Sheep hunter orientation in Davis, California. We sat and spoke in detail about the preparation for my Desert Bighorn Sheep hunt. After departing the orientation, I immediately went home and began the preparation for my hunt. I bought a weighted vest and hiked countless miles in the foothills in my neighborhood East of Sacramento California. I also purchased a new pair of hunting boots Cliff and my father recommended. I was getting sheep fever and purchased a new rifle and a nice rifle scope. I shot that new rifle almost weekly out to 400 yards. This would be my first rifle that was not a hand me down from family.



Joel Brown, RAMZILLA and the Dry Creek Outfitters team

On Friday, January 5, 2024, my son, and I headed in our truck to the hunting grounds in the Clark /Kingston Mountain range to meet with the Dry Creek Outfitter crew. The drive was approximately 530 miles to the camp location. We arrived in the evening and met with Cliff and Matt, and were shown a comfortable carpeted tent with cots, heater, and all the works. We settled in and had a steak dinner and talked over the plan for the first day of the hunt. Cliff and Matt introduced the other members of the crew, Casey Nick, Johnston St. Martin, Jake Devalle and Caden St. Martin. I did not sleep much that first night as I tossed and turned dreaming about the hunt. We were up at 0500 for breakfast. Cliff stated that Jake and Matt had located a good ram the day before that required a closer look. Cliff said, "We will head there first and locate the ram to see if he is a shooter." Luke and I were thrilled. I explained to Cliff that I have never been on a guided hunt. Cliff smiled and assured me that everything will be managed perfectly on their end, "We have the best guides in the business, and they will work hard for you." After grabbing a sandwich and snacks, Luke and I piled into Cliff's pickup truck and headed to where the ram was last seen. Matt, Jake, and Jonston would head out together while Caden and Casey went to a different location altogether. We stopped several times to glass the mountain before we finally located the ram. He was with 4 ewes and a small ram. They had moved several miles from where they were the night before. We watched them feed for about an hour and suddenly the big ram turned and looked back at the other sheep as if to say goodbye and then headed down the ridge line. The ram walked swiftly about 2 miles down the mountain before he rolled out of our sight. Matt and Jake

had already repositioned and were on the traveling ram. We connected with Jake and watched the ram for several more hours until he finally bedded. Cliff, Luke, and I immediately grabbed our packs and gun and headed up the mountain. We hooked up with Matt on the back side of the ridge. Matt said, "The ram is much better than we thought. He is a really good ram, and you need to kill him." Cliff and I continued to head up the back side of the ridge for another 400 yards while Matt and Luke set up on a higher ridge above us in case the ram gave us the slip. Jake was still in his original position where we had left him about one mile away watching everything unfold. Cliff and I covered some steep rocky terrain and found a great saddle to creep over to locate the ram from above. I dropped my backpack and Cliff set his walking stick down. The wind was perfect as I closely followed Cliff as we crept quietly and slowly over the saddle and began to peer down the steep side of the mountain. Cliff immediately located the ram and said, "Joel, he's right there feeding." I located the ram. I could only see his white rump protruding from behind a rock outcropping and desert bushes. Cliff set his rectangle shaped backpack on to some sharp rocks in front of us and I laid in the prone position to prepare for the shot. I noticed my rifle barrel was not clear of a rock. Cliff helped adjust the backpack and everything appeared to line up perfectly. Cliff said the ram is walking forward and is about to clear the rock outcropping and brush. As the ram walked forward, his head swayed from side to side due to carrying all that weight on his head. Cliff said, "He is 185 yards away." I knew my rifle was zeroed at 200 yards and no adjustments were needed. The ram came into view. I could not believe the size of this ram's horns. He looked massive. The scopes clarity was amazing. I placed the cross hairs on where I thought the vitals were located. My heart was pounding with excitement, and I let out a breath and slowly squeezed the trigger. Boom, the rifle went off. Through the scope I could clearly see the ram hunched over, after the report of the rifle. Cliff said, "You hit him hard. Now chamber another round." The ram kicked with his hind legs and fell backwards onto his back. I carefully placed the spent cartridge into my pocket and loaded another round into the chamber. I stood up and kept an eye on the fallen ram and he did not move an inch. No second shot was needed.

Cliff made the comment, "He's done." I grabbed my backpack and raced to where the ram lay. I was in awe at the sheer size of the ram's horns. I placed my hands on his massive horns. I turned him over and began looking him over and noticed some green lichen growing on his horns and his nose was badly scarred. He was a warrior for sure. Cliff, Matt, and Luke showed up shortly. I had watery eyes and emotions flowed through me. My son Luke gave me a huge hug and congratulated me. There is nothing better than spending quality time with your son. That was the highlight of this hunt. It was unfortunate my father and wife could not attend this moment due to unforeseen circumstances. They were both in my heart and thoughts that day.

Cliff and Matt broke out the measuring tape and said this is a huge heavy ram. They roughly measured his horns and said he is easily 180" plus. Matt kept saying, "Just look at the

mass on this ram." We were all smiles. Due to the steep terrain, we elected to move the ram 20 yards to a flatter location for pictures. The other guides showed up shortly after and we took numerous photographs.



Joel and RAMZILLA

The younger crew members skillfully caped the ram and removed all the edible meat. We packed the ram back to the vehicles and headed to camp. Back at camp we had a wonderful dinner. Cliff and Matt skillfully measured the ram's horns to which green scored 182 5/8" and would end up being the largest ram taken in California for the 2023/2024 season and the largest ram ever taken in the Clark/Kingston Mountains since the unit opened 35 years ago. We all whooped and hollered in amazement at the sheer mass of this ram. We stood by a campfire into the wee hours celebrating the harvest of this mountain warrior of a ram.

The next morning, we headed to Kramer junction off 395 to have the California Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist validate the tag and take their needed samples. Luke and I drove from Kramer junction to Reno and dropped off the ram's cape and horns for a shoulder mount at a local taxidermist that was recommended by Stan @ Huntin' Fool.

I would like to thank my family for the support and understanding of my passion for hunting. I would also like to thank Stan at Huntin' Fool and the entire crew at Dry Creek Outfitters (Cliff, Matt, Jonston, Jake, Casey, and Caden) who clearly demonstrated their love and passion of the Desert Bighorn Sheep they pursue for their clients. My son Luke said multiple times, "Dad we would have spent an eternity in the mountains and might never see a legal ram." I completely agree with him. I am so thankful for the Dry Creek Outfitters crew. Between the equipment and time spent in the desert, this outfit is second to none. I was very blessed to harvest such a magnificent animal.

2023 DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP HUNT IN THE MARBLE/CLIPPER MOUNTAINS OF THE MOJAVE DESERT

By Bob Carrell

The first week of June 2023, I anxiously awaited the results of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Bighorn Sheep drawing. Later that week I was disappointed to learn that I was again an unsuccessful applicant in the drawing. I have been applying for sheep hunts in four different States for the past forty years.

On a Saturday after the Idaho results were posted I received a letter from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. I opened the letter and to my surprise it contained a tag for an Idaho Bighorn Sheep hunt. I thought for a minute that a mistake had been made and maybe I was successful after all. My heart began to race. As I began studying the information on the tag, I realized that the envelope was addressed to me, but the tag had someone else's name on it. My heartbeat slowed as disappointment began to settle in. With a little research I found the tags' rightful owner and gave him a telephone call. He told me that this was the first year that he had applied for a bighorn sheep tag. When I told him that I had been trying in several states for almost 40 years he became speechless. I congratulated him and told him that I would mail his tag to him immediately. A few days later I received a telephone call from Idaho Fish and Game apologizing for the mistake.

Then just a few days later I received an email from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). I couldn't believe my eyes. The email advised me that I was a successful applicant in a once-in-a-life-time tag for a Desert Bighorn Sheep hunt in the Marble and Clipper Mountains of California. Could it really be? I couldn't speak. My wife was sitting across the room from me, and I motioned with my hand for her to come over next to me. I pointed at the email and after she had read it, she gave me a big hug and told me how happy she was for me. We both began making plans and talking about how fortunate I was. Wow what a roller coaster ride. That same day I began contacting outfitters. After several telephone calls and emails, I decided that Terry Anderson of San Geronio Wilderness Outfitters (SGWO) had an impressive history guiding sheep hunters and assisting with bighorn sheep management. Terry and I reached an agreement, and the planning began for my 2023 Bighorn Sheep hunt.

I knew immediately what gun I wanted to take on the sheep hunt. My Father, who is now 88 years old, grew up in Utah and always hunted with a 270 Winchester. I've heard him speak highly of the 270 Winchester on many occasions. He told me that the first rifle that he purchased was a 270 Winchester. I too am a fan of 270 Winchester. I own two 270 Winchesters. One is a very heavy Winchester, Model 1885, octagon barreled, single shot and the other is a much lighter



Bob Carrell and the San Geronio Wilderness Outfitters team

Tikka, T3x, Roughtech. The Tikka was the obvious choice for a sheep hunt.

I have been handloading my hunting ammunition for almost 50 years. It's a hobby that I have really enjoyed. I'm always trying to find the most accurate and appropriate load for the animal that I'm hunting. Between July and the end of November, I made approximately 20 trips to the rifle range testing handloads and practicing long shots. The load that gave me the best results was with a 130 grain Barnes Tipped Triple-Shock X bullet on top of Winchester StaBALL 6.5 powder. During this period of testing, I also made a trigger modification and added a Mountain Tactical "Rad" muzzle brake to my rifle. I then added a Leupold Custom Dial System (CDS), elevation turret to my scope. My scope was zeroed for 200 yards and the custom turret was built to match my load.

During August I attended an online Bighorn Sheep Hunter Orientation and was given some valuable information about desert bighorn sheep and their history in California. I spent the summer and fall looking at bighorn sheep photos and studying maps. I couldn't believe this was really happening to me and I felt extremely grateful.

December 1, 2023, finally came. My alarm clock was set for 4:00 am but when I woke up at 2:30 am I looked out the window and saw that it was snowing and there were several inches of new snow on the ground. I had a long drive ahead of me and the snow was going to make the trip challenging. I left my home in Southern Idaho at 4:00 am and drove 35-40 mph for the next four hours. When I finally reached Salt Lake City, Utah, the snow subsided, and I was able to drive at a more reasonable speed.

When I reached Baker, CA, I telephoned Terry to tell him that I was about one hour from camp. Terry told me that Guide Andrew Pontious was on a scouting trip, and he had just located two legal rams. My excitement now reached a new



Bob Carrell with a great warrior

level. I arrived at camp just after sunset. I met Terry, Andrew and Brad Aboltin, another guide, for the first time. I was excited to finally be in my hunt unit.

We discussed the rams that Andrew had located, and I learned that they may be the only two legal rams in the unit. One ram was described as an Old Warrior with severely broomed horns. The other ram was described as a younger ram that was wearing a CDFW tracking collar.

Andrew and Brad helped me unpack and get settled into a comfortable camp. After a very long day of driving, I was ready to get some rest. I went to bed early and during the night Colin Jewett and Ed Kerr arrived at camp. Colin and Ed would help guide for the first two days of the hunt.

4:30 am came early and after a quick breakfast and a brief conversation we were on our way to the Clipper Mountains Wilderness Area. Colin and Ed would scout together and Andrew, Brad and I would go to the area where Andrew had spotted the two rams the previous day. After leaving the truck we entered the Clipper Mountains Wilderness Area on foot.

We spent the morning glassing ridges and canyons. After a few hours I began to worry that the two rams had completely left the area. But later that day we located both rams on a nearly vertical face of a mountain. It appeared that the rams had spotted us as we were moving to a new location. We remained pinned down for a couple of hours as we waited for the rams to move. Eventually the rams did move but we decided there was no longer enough daylight to pursue them. We hiked out of the wilderness area and returned to the truck.

As we traveled back to camp, we talked about the two rams. Then as we ate dinner that evening, I was asked which ram I would shoot if given the opportunity. The old ram was severely broomed and would not score very high, but he was truly old and unique. I thought about the more symmetrical horns of the younger ram, but I really knew that the old ram was the one I would shoot if given that opportunity. I went to bed early and before I knew it, we were starting our second day of hunting in the Clipper Mountains Wilderness Area.

Andrew had a plan for the day. Brad and Ed would go to a vantage point where they would glass for sheep. Andrew,

Colin and I would hike to an area that would give us good access to several canyons and mountains. Late in the morning Brad notified us that he had located the same two rams not far from where we had seen them the previous day. Andrew and Colin began planning a stalk that would hopefully keep us concealed until we were within shooting range. I felt comfortable shooting up to 400 yards but secretly I hoped that we could get even closer.

The stalk started with a steep climb to a rock outcropping that was just below the mountain top. Andrew and Colin led that way up the mountain, stopping several times to let the old guy catch up. At the rock outcropping we caught our breath and made finally preparations. I removed my rifle from my pack and chambered one of my handloaded cartridges. We then began a slow and cautious stalk towards the area where Brad and Ed had seen the two rams. The mountainside was covered with lava rocks and the last thing I wanted to do was slip and fall. We walked cautiously and glassed after every step.

When I felt we were getting close to the rams, I took my pack off and removed the scope caps from my rifle. We walked about 30 more yards and Andrew and Colin dropped to the ground. Colin told me that the old ram was below us on the mountainside. We were all surprised because we expected the rams to be further down the ridge. When I spotted the old ram, he was facing towards us, and it looked like he had already spotted us. Colin reassured me that the ram I was looking at was the old ram that I wanted.

I looked for a rock that I could steady my rifle on. The mountainside was covered with rocks, but wouldn't you know it, none of them were close enough to me without making a lot of movement. Colin handed me a pack to rest my rifle on. I tried to steady my rifle on the top of the pack, but I just couldn't get comfortable. Colin handed me a second pack. I rested my rifle stock on the frame of the pack, and it felt more stable. I located the ram in my scope and turned the power setting to 14. Andrew and Colin ranged the ram and advised me that he was 355 yards away. I adjusted my Leupold elevation dial to 350 yards and rested the crosshairs on the front brisket area of the old ram. I exhaled and then slowly squeezed the trigger.

I lost sight of the ram due to the rifle's recoil but as I chambered another cartridge, I could see both Andrew and Colin trying to give me high fives. Colin reassured me that the ram was down, and I had made a good shot. We walked downhill to where the ram was standing when I shot. We immediately located a blood trail. We didn't have to follow it very far because the old ram had only run 30 yards before falling over. I couldn't believe it! A Desert Bighorn Ram! All those years of applying had paid off. As I admired the old warrior and his battle scars, I couldn't believe what had just happened. Several minutes later Brad and Ed made it to our location to share the experience. They had made it across the canyon and to the top of the mountain in record time.

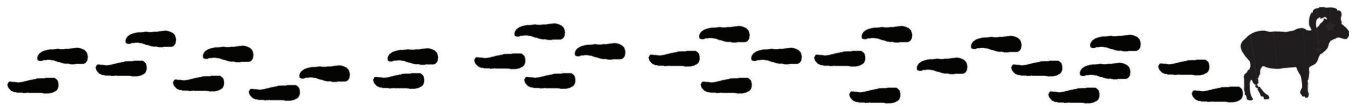
We took photographs and talked about the stalk. The ram was caped out and the meat was carefully secured in our packs. The hike off the mountain and back to the truck was

an incredible experience. That night back at camp we ate lasagna and cheesecake. What more could a guy want.

The next morning before I left, Andrew said: "Thank you for being a good hunter". As I drove off, I thought about those words. What a nice compliment! I then drove to the town of Mojave where I met with CDFW employees. My ram was inspected, biological samples were collected, the horns were measured, and the ram was aged. They told me that the ram was more than 13 ½ years old. What a drive home. I had completed a once-in-a-life-time Desert Bighorn Sheep Hunt. Only a person who has hunted sheep or applied many times for a sheep tag fully understands what that means. Thank you, San Geronimo Wilderness Outfitters: Terry Anderson, Andrew Pontious, Brad Aboltin, Colin Jewett and Ed Kerr.



Bob Carrell and a noble elder of the sheep herd



WSF GRASSROOTS AWARD RECOGNIZES CA WSF MEMBER MIKE BOREL

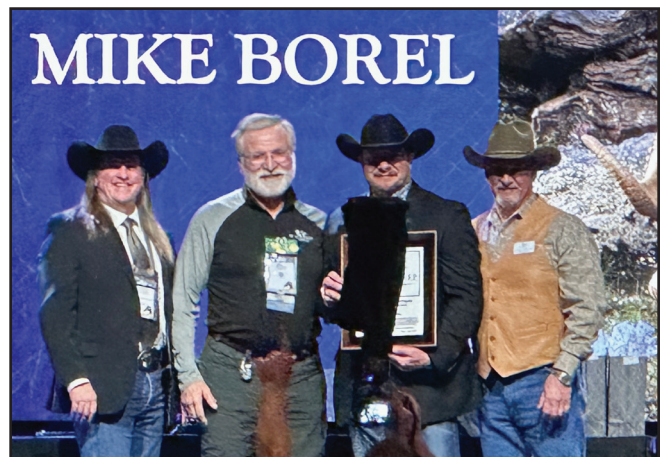
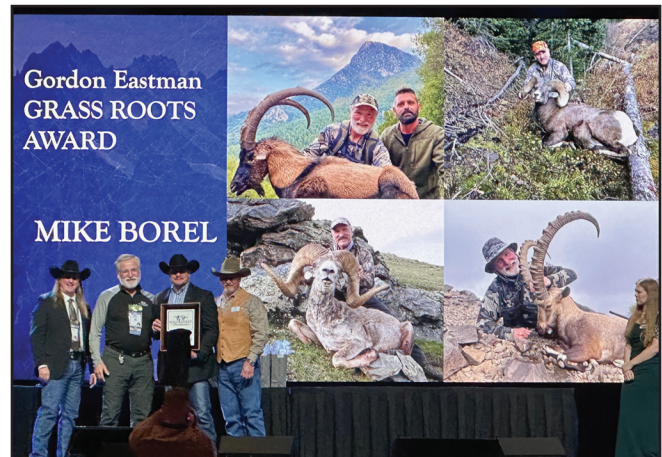
by John Ware, Distinguished Life Member

At the 2024 Wild Sheep Foundation Sheep Show in Reno, Mike Borel was *finally* recognized for his extensive efforts within the conservation community at large and the sheep hunting community in particular.

Mike's history with CA WSF is well known to most of us. As a Founding member, Mike networked his way through many hunters in California to help build the organization. Over the years since 2001 Mike has held almost every position on the CA WSF Board of Directors including President for multiple terms. Currently the VP of Operations, he continues to be the rudder that keeps the CA WSF boat on a steady course.

There are two projects that were Mike's idea and it is his initiative that brought them to life and his energy that keeps them alive. His development of the bi-annual California Wild Sheep Summit, an idea borrowed from another organization and implemented flawlessly by Mike, and the Give a Lamb a Drink program was the impetus for his receiving this award.

Mike, as always, was humble in receiving the award. His first comment at the microphone was to thank the members of CA WSF and others who helped both programs. That is, after he said "I wish I had dressed up!"



MEET YOUR NEW DIRECTOR: MATT ST MARTIN

Tell us a little about your family

I grew up in California where my family has always hunted. I have been married to my wife Katie for 20 years and we have a son (Jonston, 18) and a daughter (Julissa 16). They are all very avid hunters/conservationists.

Katie is the most supportive partner I can imagine, especially given the amount of time that I'm gone each year for our guiding business.

We travel as much as possible; we go to Alaska every year for halibut / salmon fishing and to New Mexico for deer and elk.

Family, community, and God are most important in my life.

Tell us about your business

The family business is Dry Creek Outfitters -- one of the sheep hunting outfitters in California. We do outfit and guide for other species but our specialty is sheep hunting. I have always been in the family business and have been guiding for about 28 years. As probably everyone knows, my father turned over the reins of Dry Creek Outfitters to me about 7 years ago. He is still involved and helps tremendously -- he is my #1 partner. My son and daughter are also involved, Jonston has been helping around camp and guiding for a few years now along with my nephew Caden. My mother home cooks all of the meals and gets them "camp ready" so that we don't spend too much time but still eat 5-star meals! The Crew are all people that we have hunted with for many years and each of them now feels like they are family.

Our business is very emotional -- we meet clients that draw or buy tags that become lifelong friends. They put their faith and trust into us to take them on a lifetime journey. That's what makes the business what it is today. It softens my heart to think about friends and the times we have on the mountains with these individuals.

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

I can bow hunt and sometimes like to do that but my main hunting is with a rifle. Unlike many outfitters, I get to do a lot of hunting. (Just not for sheep!) We don't eat beef, only elk or venison. I am fortunate enough to have friends who I've met through guiding that allows me to hunt blacktail, or fishing in AK, and elk in NM. We can harvest enough meat to last the year. Overall my hunting is mainly for the experience and the harvest rather than trophies but I am not going to turn a trophy hunt down!

Tell us about your most memorable experience

That is hard to narrow down to just one -- after 28 years of hunting there are so many. But I would have to say I have four that really stand out.

#1 Harvesting my first buck with Dad — and still being able to hunt with him every year.

#2 Seeing my son harvest his first buck (12) also a elk — and then my Dall sheep hunt where he came with me was also awesome.



Seeing my daughter harvest first buck at 12 and her first elk this year at 16.

#4 Seeing Katie harvest any time she hunts. She was a new hunter our first year together, now she harvests an elk and deer routinely.

Most importantly she holds the entire family together. She is the backbone to bring the family together.

What is your bighorn sheep experience?

I have guided and been involved with hundreds of sheep hunts over the years! But so far I have had a great opportunity to hunt a Dall sheep with Don Martin and Ultima Thule Outfitters. Yes, I'm "one of those guys" who was incredibly lucky and won my hunt! As with most of us, I am still waiting to get drawn in California.

Why do you believe in conservation groups such as CA WSF?

I'm very passionate about this. The driving force for me is that in the last 27-28 years in conservation, there are ups and downs to everything. And right now may be one of those down periods when hunting is not held to be the extraordinary and compelling activity it is.

With my knowledge as an outfitter I can see many things that need to be done. But most importantly we need younger people getting involved all the time. While things are changing so fast we need more and more people and I can't emphasize enough that younger people need to become involved..

If we want to continue hunting with our children we need to have groups such as CA WSF. If we want to continue hunting with our parents we need such groups. But we need to be the ones to take action!

Every hunter should be a part of some type of organization / committee. The more people are involved, the better the outcome will be.

For me, a true conservationist / true hunter is someone that eats the meat, makes the most of every opportunity, and gives back to the community.

2023 ALASKA MOUNTAIN GOAT HUNT

by Craig Van Arsdale, Life Member

My 2023 Alaska Mountain Goat hunt actually started as a Moose hunt... I had a couple ideas in mind for Moose, both of them I knew were going to be very logistically challenging, as most moose hunts are in Alaska. My sheep hunt had gone longer than planned and had already eaten into about four days of what I had planned for moose. Then my plan A area received several inches of rainfall in just a few short days adding onto what was already a very wet fall in Alaska making the river section I had intended to float too dangerous for me to want to take on as a solo trip.

Naturally I was a little bummed out as I had spent all winter and spring planning how I would get into this area! With that being said I was also very prepared to switch to plan B, or even plan C if needed. Do enough hunting in Alaska and the Great Land will have your expectations of her reigned in to a sober reality soon enough.

Plan B had me hiking into an area I had scouted and seen some nice bulls earlier in the year. After five days of hunting this area, I had only seen one legal bull and too many bears to count. Bulls were still mostly solitary and overall moose activity seemed low. During the hunt my buddy Zach, who was also out moose hunting in a different part of the state, and I kept each other up-to-date on how our hunts were unfolding via InReach messages. Zach had also got weathered out for the beginning of his hunt as was regrouping when I suggested "Screw this moose hunting, let's go Goat hunting instead!"

So, there we were 72 hours later loading our gear into a Beaver headed into goat country! One of the main reasons we decided to go goat hunting instead was the incredible weather window for the next 10 days in this area. We had



Craig Van Arsdale with 2023 Alaska Mountain Goat

both been sheep hunting and getting beaten up by weather for 3 weeks and some nice weather in the alpine sounded like a much more enjoyable time than slogging around in the willows looking for moose!

After landing on the lake we set up a base camp and loaded up our packs to spike out for a few days. Just as we were getting ready to leave, we spotted some goats right above camp. One of them looked like a billy so we decided to head up to the top and get a closer look and see if it's a goat we wanted to hunt the next day. After an hour or so of climbing, we peaked over the ridgetop and there he was bedded below us at just 50 yards! We got some great video of him and decided to scratch a couple flat spots into the mountainside for our tents for the night hopeful he would be around the next morning to hunt.

As luck would have it the billy was nowhere to be found the next morning, so we packed up and headed for the next range to the NW where we had glassed a group of goats that morning. Four miles later we got to a nice saddle protected from the wind with a small stream in it and dropped camp there for the next few days. We made a mad dash after setting up camp to climb up top and take a look before dark and got to see a couple groups of goats that night and formulate a plan for the following day.

On day three, we woke up to a light rain and zero-visibility fog. The rain would stop after an hour, but the fog persisted all day so we used the time to rest up in the tents.

Day 4 we had a little lingering fog in the morning, but hiked up top as soon as it lifted with the sunrise. We spotted goats immediately once we got to the ridgeline and moved up to the next finger ridge to get the spotter on them. Below us just a few hundred yards, was a nice billy and across the



valley on the next finger was another group with a couple billies in that group. I thought the billies on the far finger ridge had better terrain for me to stalk with my bow, so we made the plan that I would sneak around and go for the goats on the finger ridge and Zach would stay there and watch the billy below our position. The goal was to let me get out to my goat then Zach could kill his billy without spooking the group I was after. I grabbed my pack and dropped off the back side of the ridge, out of view of the goats, and made my way to where the ridgeline intercepted the finger ridge the goats were on. There I dropped my main pack, threw some food and water in my stalking pack and took off down the finger ridge. After about an hour of navigating the back side of the finger ridge, and running into three groups of nannies and kids that slowed my stalk down, I got to where I expected the billies to be. The terrain in this area was pretty broken so I was able to slowly work my way through it and eventually locate one billy.

He was right below me at 30 yards and was feeding in my direction. I quickly nocked an arrow and prepared to take a shot if he came up to me. After a couple minutes, the billy didn't appear so I crawled forward a few yards only for him to come over the rock in front of me at the same time! I drew my bow as soon as I saw his back appear behind the rock, there was no need for a rangefinder on this shot as he was less than 20 yards! He took a couple more steps and came into full view where I was able to verify it was the right goat before he gave me a perfect broadside shot. The pin slowed as I aimed and the shot broke clean driving the arrow exactly where I had aimed. The goat leaped forward at the shot and disappeared out of sight.

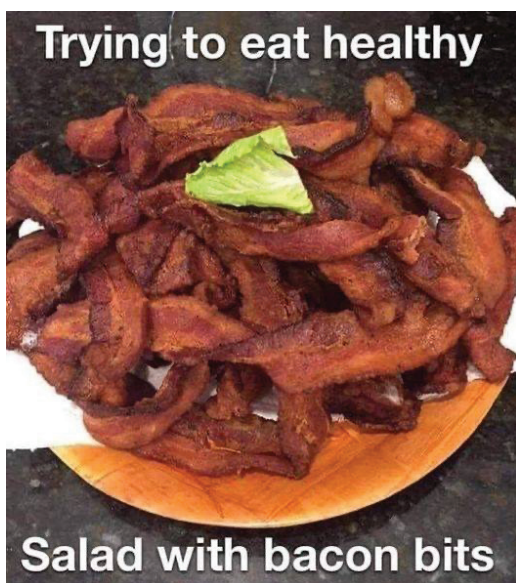
After giving the goat 30 minutes, I went and retrieved my arrow and took up the blood trail. I followed pretty good blood the first 40 yards until it soon disappeared! I knew the shot was good and the blood vanished right as I got to the cliff edge...

After walking the top of the cliff back and forth searching below for any sign of my goat, I finally spotted him piled up in the bottom of an avalanche chute! The goat had taken quite the fall and was about 600' below me. With only 3 hours of daylight left, I had to make a decision if I was going to go back and get my pack and hopefully be able to get back out of the cliffs before dark or go down now with only my pocket knife and butcher the goat, stash the meat in the rocks and make it up out of the cliffs and back to my pack before dark. The terrain was so bad below me that I worried if I didn't make it up and out in the daylight it would be too dangerous to navigate safely and I'd end up spending the night down there.

It was a tough call but I decided the safest bet was to head down now, get photos and butcher the goat. Right as I started heading down towards my goat, I heard the report of Zach's rifle and the "thud" of a good hit! Zach and I had just doubled up on billies! It was going to be a long night!

Butchering my goat went better than expected and I was able to stash the meat in a small cave I found in the rocks, and make it back to my backpack just as it was getting dark. With an empty pack I made my way back to where Zach was and could see his headlamp shining in the basin below. I dropped in to help Zach finish butchering his goat and we split the goat between our packs and made the push back to our spike camp.

It took 2 more days of shuttling meat and camp (Zach also killed a nice buck on our way back the following day to retrieve my goat meat from the cliffs) back to our base camp at the lake and the following afternoon we made it out just as a new weather system was closing in on us. I guess being a bad moose hunter has its benefits!





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 MAY BLOOM
VINCE BLOOM
MIKE BOREL
JED BRUSSEAU
ADAM CASAGRANDE
KEVIN CHENG
DAVID COMBS
WILLIAM CULLINS
BRET DISMUKES
JIM DISMUKES
NOAH 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
ERNEST HOLLOWAY
PATTY HOLLOWAY
SHAD HULSE
BRETT JEFFERSON
BOB KEAGY
RANDY LASKOWSKY
PEGGY BARNETT LEE
DONALD C MARTIN
JEFF F. 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
CAROLINE PYNE, DVM,
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #1
CONNOR PYNE, DVM,
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #2
GLEN PYNE, DVM,
DISTINGUISHED LIFE #5
MADISON PYNE, **DISTINGUISHED LIFE #4**
TRAVIS PYNE, **DISTINGUISHED LIFE #3**
TOM REA
MASON ROGERS
DAVE ROWAN
PAUL SCHULTHEIS

RICH SELLERS
ALAN SHULTZ
DAN SMITH, JR.
DAN SMITH, III
DANIEL SMITH, IV
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.

2024 ANNUAL BANQUET / FUNDRAISER PREVIEW

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

SAVE THE DATE! April 27 is our one and only annual fundraiser and we don't want you to miss it. This is the one time that we can all get together and share in the celebration of all that is good about our community, our culture, and our family. As we gather and break bread together, we are afforded the opportunity to catch up with old friends, make new friends, and celebrate the lucky few that have had an opportunity to "climb the mountain" this year.

It is with great regret and my sincerest apologies that I must inform all of you, that Sikanni River Outfitters has been sold and the new owners of their Canadian big game hunting outfitting concession have **cancelled all big game hunts for the next two years**. As a result, all random drawing ticket buyers will be refunded their purchases as quickly as possible. Be aware, this process is problematic for an event of this unprecedented magnitude in CA WSF history. Please be patient as refunds may take 4-6 weeks. For those of you who made cash purchases at the Wild Sheep Foundation's National Convention or purchased tickets by mail, we will be reaching out to you to ensure that each and every one of you will receive your refund. We love and appreciate your support and I can only tell you that we are already working hard to provide an incredible hunting opportunity for one lucky winner in 2025. Please stay tuned to your quarterly newsletter and your email for new opportunities.

However, we are very proud to provide a 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. You must be a life member, at any level, in the room to be automatically entered at no additional cost. **MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND TODAY!**

We also have a two big Governor's tag permits this year. We are very happy to have the Alaska State Governor's tag for mountain goat! This 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. If you need a mountain goat, don't miss out on this rare opportunity.

Our spotlight item in our live auction this year, once again is the CA Governor's Tag for Desert Bighorn for the Cady Mountains. Historically, this has been a spectacular hunting opportunity for our members and supporters with many of them successfully harvesting Boone and Crockett Caliber rams. If you need a desert bighorn, this may be the opportunity of a lifetime, please make plans to attend and bid!

In addition, your Board of Directors are working hard to provide another great evening of opportunity and success as we gather together to celebrate wild sheep and raise money to "put and keep sheep on the mountain." Make plans to attend today, April 27 at the Doubletree by Hilton in Sacramento. Watch your email for additional announcements and I look forward to seeing all of you soon!

Get your dinner tickets today! Scan the QR code.



Get your hotel room today! Scan the QR code.



THE SHEEP SHOW 2024 RECAP ANSWERS THE QUESTION WHY OR WHY NOT

By John Ware, Distinguished Life Member

Neither high winds nor snowy, rainy weather could stop sheep enthusiasts from going to the Wild Sheep Convention in Reno this past January. If you didn't go, why not? If you already attend the yearly national convention (i.e., Sheep Show), you can probably skip this article, but if you've thought about it and never really seen the point, or didn't think it would be worth the time, this article is for you.

There are a lot of reasons to go to the Sheep Show. Mix and match what makes sense for you. Add it up and it might be worth a trip. It certainly always is for us!

You can learn about, and take advantage of, additional opportunities to win a sheep hunt. There are hunt drawings for life members, show floor raffles that are available for everyone, fundraiser drawings for various chapters throughout the country many of which do not require you to be present to win and of course, the famous <1 Club and <1i Club drawings. Many opportunities are available that have better odds than the state tag drawings, and most include outfitting, guiding, and other perks.

You can learn a lot about the operation of the Wild Sheep Foundation on a National level, perhaps preparing you to take a leadership role. For instance we learned this year that almost exactly half of the total membership are Life Members, and of the life membership, 1 in 6 are Summit Life Members. You can see how revenue has changed over the years, and how funds have been divided up to best satisfy the various programs all designed to contribute to the over-arching mission.

You can meet most if not all of the national board members, directors and officers. If you keep your eyes open and read name badges, and know who you are



Members Mike Borel, Darryl Williams (C) and Glen Pyne (L)

looking for, you can meet almost anyone in the sheep hunting community.

You can attend seminars, run by world class experts, including many hunting celebrities. These are great opportunities, which are usually fairly up close and personal giving you an opportunity to ask questions and have discussions with people who have "been there, done that" no matter what 'that' is.

There are many banquets, social hours, and other events that include live entertainment and can be great fun for non-hunting friends and family. This can be a great way to get them more interested and engaged in your passion.

You can meet people from all walks of life, and instantly have a common bond in your interest which can lead to learning from them, and sometimes forming new lifetime friendships. You can volunteer to be at the CA WSF booth for a couple of hours and meet many members including CA WSF Board members.

You can be inspired by interacting with hunters that have achievements similar to yours, or have done more than





Board Member Mike Torres and wife Lee

you could ever imagine. More importantly, you can be inspired by individuals who give very generously to the numerous fundraising activities throughout the event. No matter your level of hunting achievement you can always



Member Zack Walton and wife Anne

find someone who will spark a new interest for you. For instance, one hunter was introduced who has set a goal to shoot an entire FNAWs (Four North American Wild Sheep) after his 80th birthday! And someone bid \$1 million for a Marco Polo Society membership special #100. Bidding on that one was definitely one of the highlights of evening auctions!

You can see a lot of really beautiful taxidermy and get up

close and personal with it, perhaps planning how you would want to mount a future trophy. A lot of mounts are brought in by the show sponsors and the Wild Sheep Foundation and many more by guides and outfitters who want to show the kind of animals they help their clients achieve. There are usually even some interior designer / trophy room designers to help you build your dream room.

You could even find the right outfitter, meet them face-to-face, shake hands and book a hunt. If you know what you want, you could skip weeks on end of emails and telephone tag and replace it with seeing several outfitters

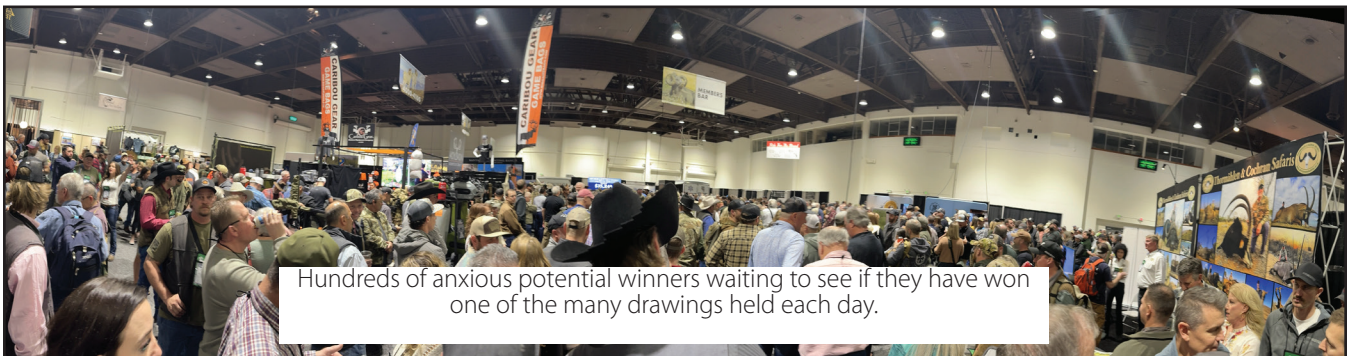


Member Vern Bleich

who offer the hunt you are looking for and compare and decide which one you would want to hunt with.

You can see new cutting edge gear that might not be available in your local sporting goods store now or ever . You can pick it up and interact with it and often talk with the designer or developer if it's a smaller niche product. Is that tripod that weighs 7 ounces less still sturdy enough to be a go-to piece of gear? At the Sheep Show you can find out.

With so much information available, so many people to meet, and the plethora of hunting options to consider, it is no wonder than many people call the Sheep Show "the one event I would not miss every year!" Be sure to put it on the calendar for next year, January 15-18, 2025 in Reno as always!



Hundreds of anxious potential winners waiting to see if they have won one of the many drawings held each day.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CA WSF

2024

GALAD Focus continues with greater efforts

2023

School Sites Approved opening almost 100 new water sites



2019

New Hunt Unit: Newberry/Rodman/Ords

2018

GALAD initiated to add water sources to double sheep numbers



2015

Disease Research

2011

New Hunt Unit: Cady Mtns



2007

First Sheep Summit



2001

CA WSF Created

2005

New Hunt Unit: White Mtns



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Member Trevor Crowley
Dry Creek Outfitters
2023-24 Clark-Kingston Ram



Dave Schulgen
Hunted with son Josh Schulgen of
Sierra Crest Outfitters
2023-24 Old Dads/Kelso Peak



Member Nathan Wynn
2023-24 Clark-Kingston ram
Dry Creek Outfitters



Life Member Alan Fortune
2024 Cady Mountains ram
Kellogg Trophy Hunts

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Member Riley Iden
2023-24 Cady Mountains ram
Dry Creek Outfitters



Member Tim Mercier
2023-24 Cady Mountains ram
Dry Creek Outfitters
"It's about time!"



Member Keith Finstad
2023-24 Marble/Clippers ram
Dry Creek Outfitters
WSF Fundraising Tag Winning Bidder



Member Craig Cooper
2023-24 Newberry Mountains ram
Dry Creek Outfitters

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Jim Zubilaga
2023-24 Cady Mountains ram
Dry Creek Outfitters
CA WSF Fundraiser Tag Winning Bidder



Hal Stauff
2023-24 Newberry/Rodman/Ords
Dry Creek Outfitters



Member Brent Mason
2023-24 Newberry Mountains ram
Dry Creek Outfitters



Distinguished Member Mike Borel
2023 Chihuahua Mexico ram

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Vince Bloom
2023 Stone Sheep, BC, Canada



A sampling of North Dakota sheep
sent to us by Vern Bleich



A sampling of North Dakota sheep
sent to us by Vern Bleich



A sampling of North Dakota sheep
sent to us by Vern Bleich



Dave Young
2023-24 Season with Kika Worldwide

LEGEND.

A ram that completely embodies the desert. This is the oldest desert sheep we have had the pleasure of hunting. "Gramps" has wandered the desert and been spotted hundreds of times over the years. We knew him. This year when guide @landinom spotted him, he was weak and frail. He was close to water, which isn't normal this time of year. It was his time.

An incredibly special ram to all of us. A huge congrats to hunter, Dave Young; now "gramps" is forever stamped in our memories. Desert sheep are incredible animals and it's not hard to get lost in thought with the life this ram lived. Dave is a happy man. #desertsheep #lifetimehunt #kikaworldwide @kuiu_official @yeti @civilware @outdoorsmans



Thank You to the Wild Sheep Foundation for their contributions to wild sheep in California!

CALIFORNIA

GIA PROVIDED = \$424,534
PERMIT PROCEEDS = \$3,478,250
TOTAL = \$3,902,784

TOTAL WSF
CONSERVATION FUNDING
1983-2023

WILD SHEEP
Foundation

TIM GLENNER

GSCO CONVENTION RECAP

by Mike Borel, Distinguished Life Member

For the first time, the GSC/O Convention was added onto SCI's Convention. There was a blended last day with SCI and a GSC/O-only additional day. There was a good crowd, so I suspect it went well financially. As always,

- 1) the award program was very well done and efficiently presented,
- 2) the meals were excellent and
- 3) the camaraderie fun.

CA WSF Director, Ben Gordon, achieved his Super Slam and Pinnacle Awards. Congratulations, Ben!

The agreement with SCI is for 5 years.



Are *your* Feet Ready?

L&S Mountain Hunter

LATHROP & SONS
PROFESSIONAL BOOTS...
PROFESSIONAL FIT!

Don't trust your fit to the *rookies.*

Call Today! Lathropandsons.com
618-544-8782

The advertisement features a large image of a green and black L&S Mountain Hunter boot on the left. In the center, there is a photo of a person's legs in brown pants and black boots stepping on a rocky trail. Below this, there are two smaller images: one showing the red and black sole of the boot, and another showing the Lathrop & Sons logo on the side of the boot.

TreadHeavy Testimonial

After many years of searching for a solution to minimize boot issues, we were introduced to the Lathrop & Sons Custom Boot System. We recommend that all of our hunters use their services to help ensure a successful and comfortable hunt. They have incredible customer service and an essential product for mountain hunters. Thanks for the great product!"

- Jarrett Deuling, Deuling Stone Outfitters

The advertisement features a central photograph of a hunter standing next to a large moose trophy in a wooded area. A small logo for Deuling Stone Outfitters is visible in the bottom right corner of the photo.

WATER DEVELOPMENT WORK IN THE DESERT

by Debbie Miller Marschke, SCBS

It's official: the western United States is currently experiencing an El Nino year, when sea surface temperatures fluctuate and cause increased precipitation during the winter and spring cycles. All of Southern California has been washed with recent rains, and our satellite monitored Big Game Guzzlers demonstrate the evidence that it has been a "good" winter for the Desert Bighorn Sheep (see graphs). Every monitor has reported an influx of water so far.

While the monitored guzzler systems show a favorable initial outlook for 2024, SCBS volunteers do not breathe a sigh of relief with each storm. Potentially, each storm could culminate into a resultant flash flood which could damage the guzzlers. It all happens in a heartbeat, and there's nothing that can be done to predict or prevent this. It's "the Way of Things". According to the National Weather Service, the El Nino pattern will continue until at least April of 2024. Predictions show a 79% chance that weather will level out to "normal" conditions through June of 2024, but there is also a 55% chance that the La Nina pattern will set in until August, which means severe drought. Expect the worst and pray for the best.

The Society for Conservation of Bighorn Sheep continues to develop water sources for wildlife armed with the knowledge that rain is fickle and undependable in the desert. One mountain peak could get pummeled by a storm, and the nearest peak could be surpassed completely for the year. It happens more than you think. Constructing and maintaining artificial water catchment systems and placing them in arid zones with redundancy is how we up the odds that the water will be available for the indigenous animals.



The Crew with Debbie kneeling in front

SCBS is currently working on the long term project of installing new systems upon State Land parcels that SCBS has leased from the State of California. We currently have approximately 5 parcels in the vicinity of Ludlow, CA that we are preparing. The initial work before the actual installation is tedious. Once the leased parcel is selected, it must be prepared and pre-screened following a pre-set list of guidelines in compliance with the lease. One of the necessary steps is to survey the parcel for sensitive plants and species. Herein lies the bottleneck for progress; it's the desert. Surveys for key plant species absolutely needs to include the spring blooming season, spanning from February to April. There's no way around the season; a lot of the plants disappear in the summertime. Currently, SCBS project volunteers are preparing to survey the 5 initial parcels this season so we can commence building our first State Lands guzzlers.

Another hurdle we must clear in the State Lands parcels is the archeology component. Though it is not expected that we will find significant archaeological evidence on the selected parcels, we have agreed to perform our due diligence in this respect. SCBS is looking for a trained archaeologist who can survey the sites and identify evidentiary artifacts on the parcels, if any. If you know anyone who can perform this component for our project, please contact SCBS immediately at debmillermars@gmail.com. The work will need to be done in person, hiking required.

Given the best possible outcomes, SCBS may have the ability to install our first State Lands Raincatcher system as early as May 2024. This is dependent upon our volunteers completing all the preparatory fieldwork in advance. If you are interested in joining our guzzler installation crews, make sure you are on our volunteer email list now and we



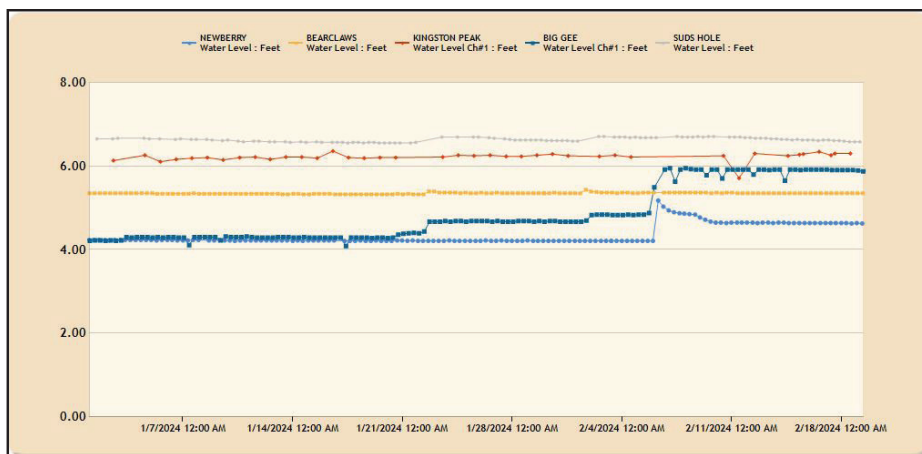
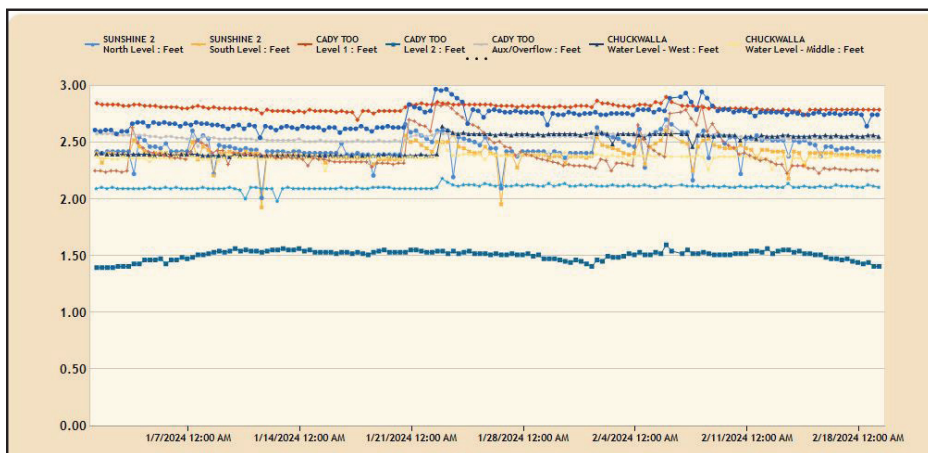
The Crew hard at work

will announce our projects as they mature in the planning process (email Debbie at debmillermars@gmail.com).

The SCBS organization does not forgo other options to put water in the desert when opportunities are available. Each water system that is installed creates a new coverage circumference of available water for the animals. Redundancy of water sources leads to interlocking transitional zones, where all animals (including Bighorn) use each station to move about and ultimately, navigate a broader scope of travel. Over the weekend of January 19-21, 2024, two new wildlife drinker systems were installed in the East Mojave Desert with the cooperation of many parties. Due to the fact that the two areas were primarily deer habitat, SCBS secured the funding for these systems by and through a generous donation from the California Deer Association and the Santa Clarita Valley Wildlife Federation of Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation. The two systems were installed by volunteers represented by SCBS, the Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association (MDHCA), California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the National Park Service. The Goffs guzzler was installed upon the private property of the MDHCA Goffs Schoolhouse and Museum along the exterior perimeter of

their property adjacent to the Mojave National Preserve. This system is a single Raincatcher tank drinker, and will be filled manually on site using the MDHCA well. Volunteer Neal Darby (NPS) commented that he has seen collared sheep come down to the base of the nearby Fenner Hills, so bighorn may now be encouraged to cross the desert here. The second guzzler system, dubbed "Quail Rock", was installed upon a private parcel in the center of the Mojave National Preserve near Government Holes. This single tank system will also be filled using the anonymous owner's well water. The Quail Rock guzzler is near suitable escape terrain and thus, bighorn may find this new dependable water source quickly. The owner reports a healthy visitation from the local deer population regularly.

SCBS is looking forward to installing more new systems upon our State Lands parcels in the coming year. **A wholehearted "Thanks in advance" to the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation and their "Give A Lamb A Drink" campaign which will fund these new systems!** We can see the light at the end of this tunnel, coming soon to the East Mojave! Stay tuned!



MARINE CORPS HELICOPTERS TRAINING AND HELPING ENDANGERED BIGHORN SHEEP

By 2nd Lt. Madison Walls (Reprint by permission)

Editor's note: This project continues the legacy of bighorn conservation in the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, where the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep (SCBS) built the very first bighorn sheep guzzler in 1971. CA WSF has been involved with helping to keep many older drinkers in operation while we continue building new systems to increase our state sheep herds. This is part 1 of the story, look for part 2 in our next issue.

U.S. Marines with Marine Light Attack Training Squadron (HMLAT) 303, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, provided aerial support to a multiagency operation to preserve the life of the desert bighorn sheep in southern California's Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, Nov. 3-5, 2023.

In a testament to the versatility of the U.S. Marine Corps, HMLAT-303 "Atlas" teamed up with federal, state and non-governmental agencies to respond to extreme drought threatening the lives of the endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep that reside in the Anza-Borrego desert. The diverse project group came together for the third year since 2021 for a three-day mission to replace water guzzlers providing critical habitat resilience for the bighorn sheep.

The multi-agency response included representatives from the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Armed Forces Initiative and the Sycuan Casino.

"Any entity can put a stop to it at any moment[...] but everyone is donating their time and their money to make this happen," said Marine veteran Dennis Scott Gibson, a



Photo By Scott Gibson



Photo By Chief Warrant Officer Trent Randolph | A U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom doing water haul

volunteer and secretary of the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation board of directors. Gibson says the foundation is dedicated to restoring the bighorn sheep population and giving them a better chance of survival in their natural habitat.

The operation involved 32 flight hours between two UH-1Y helicopters, transporting new, 2,500-gallon water guzzlers to remote parts of the desert to replace the aging water guzzlers. The replacement allows Peninsular bighorn sheep to access water following another dry summer in the southern California desert.

Due to the rugged terrain, the long-line external lift capabilities of the UH-1Y Venom were vital to the replacing water guzzlers at Whale Peak and Harper Canyon.

"The precision required to put our helicopter support team Marines in some of these zones creates a high demand on the flying pilot as well as a heavy demand on our crew chiefs in back," said Capt. Nico Portera, a UH-1Y Venom pilot training officer with HMLAT-303. "The team is working at maximum efficiency and precision without sacrificing safety."

The operation presented a valuable real-world training opportunity with combat application for the Marines of HMLAT-303. The Marines used a 120-foot long-line to insert heavy equipment into the remote park sites.

They externally rigged the water guzzlers and executed flight maneuvers needed to safely lower them into the desired positions. UH-1Y Venom air crews and pilots are trained in an array of helicopter insert and extract operations, but typically use a 15-foot pendant, making the long-line method a nonstandard and challenging operation.

To be continued in our next issue.

SHEEP SCOUTING WITH DRY CREEK OUTFITTERS

By John Ware, Distinguished Life Member

If you are like me, you've been a long time supporter of Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) and CA WSF, but never drawn the tag or won the lottery that would put a sheep hunt within reach. Whether it's kids, family, the economy, luck, or the passage of time, the simple fact is many of us have only slim chances of ever experiencing a sheep hunt. But there is always "the next best thing".

Beverly and I recently had the opportunity to execute our "Pre-season scouting ride-along with Dry Creek Outfitters for 2 people". This was purchased at our state fundraiser way back in 2019, then COVID and life happened, and DCO was kind enough to allow us to postpone until 2023.

We were lucky enough to get scheduled when they would have two different hunters in camp. Both of them were successful (see Photos from the Field) and we were very excited that one was Tim Mercier, a long time friend of CA WSF and ours.



We arrived to find the camp all set up, including a nicely heated and laid out tent for us.

DCO are strangers to no one, and I'm sure you won't be surprised to know they run a tight ship and have a hunting camp that is about as good as it could get and still be called a 'camp', with every detail thought out. I wouldn't have been surprised to return to camp and find a chocolate on my pillow, it was so nice.

Meals and "camp-time" were just as fun as other hunts I've been on where shared values, interests and struggles accelerate the development of friendships. But the greatest part was seeing the strategy around scouting efforts, riding along and learning where and why they were looking for sheep, and getting to spend time behind a spotting scope.

High points were learning how to maintain hope when scouring dozens of square miles on a mountain a mile or two away one small section at a time, being the "first-spot" on a



band of rams, getting to see a successful hunter in camp with his newly acquired desert sheep trophy, and see how experts dealt with the struggles once a good ram was located...not the mechanics of how to make the stalk, but more around the emotion of bringing to a close a 40 year journey of failed hunt applications, a long season that wasn't over yet, and a great ram that had a "potential defect", (he was collared and collars can sometimes do damage to the cape). Ultimately a decision only the tag-holder can make, and it was an honor to be there with them.

We spent 2 days and 3 nights at the camp with a cadre of guides and two lucky hunters. Our experience is one that will last a lifetime and we've made many friends from this one excursion into "almost a hunt". Imagine what it would be like if we were actually hunting!

Keeping the dream alive...



GOVERNMENT ISSUES UPDATE

by Don Priest, Distinguished Life Member, Board Member

BRIGHTLINE WEST HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE WILDLIFE OVERCROSSINGS

The US Department of Transportation (DOT) has provided funding, via private activity bond authority allocated for the Brightline West High-Speed Rail Project. The \$12B Project is thus being financed with the additional \$2.5B from this private activity bond, as \$1B was already approved back in 2020.

DOT commented that this Project will create 35,000 jobs, ease I-15 traffic and connect American cities. They also commented in their belief that this fully electric rail line will be a zero-emission system and be one of the greenest forms of transportation in the country, cutting 400,000 tons of carbon pollution annually.

Additional Federal funding for the Project includes a \$3B Grant from the latest infrastructure bill to the Nevada Department of Transportation. And, this past June a \$25M Grant was awarded by DOT to San Bernardino County Transportation Authority through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Program. The San Bernardino funds are purposed for the construction of the Project's stations in Hesperia and Victor Valley, California.

The Project is expected to break ground here in 2024, with completion in 2028. CA WSF, along with our conservation partners and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, will continue to monitor this Project. Especially to include that the wildlife crossings we've all work so hard to make part of this Project are incorporated and completed during the rail line construction; and, in a manner that best benefits desert bighorn sheep and other wildlife.



CONTROL-SILVER PEAK TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

CA WSF has responded to a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) request for comment on the Control-Silver Peak Transmission Line Project (Project) in the White Mountains. The Project is a replacement of an existing transmission line that includes passing through the Silver Canyon of the White Mountains. This area is utilized all year by desert bighorn sheep ewes.

CA WSF is concerned that the Project's work will impact the health and population integrity of this herd. This includes a reduction in lamb survival, the potential of disease spread and possible injury due to sudden sheep movements to avoid abrupt personal or equipment movements and loud noises.

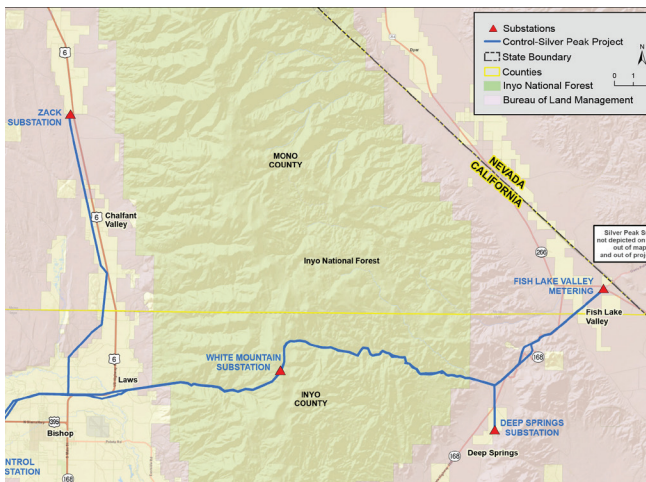
Alternative routes for the line replacement were suggested that include paralleling either of two highways, one north of the White Mountains with the other through a lower elevation in the southern part of the range.

Should the Project move forward as a direct replacement along the existing lines, CA WSF recommended a number of mitigation measures against the concerns listed above.

CA WSF finds the Project would help reduce the risk of fire danger with the updated lines, protecting against the potential impact of a fire starting due to downed transmission lines during high wind events. Thus, we favor the execution of this necessary safety work.

Whichever alternative is selected, we requested that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife be in full consultation by BLM and the Project proponents through the full duration of the Project in order that all mitigations measures be taken and monitored.

Control-Silver Peak Transmission Line Project



SB31 BEARCLAWS REPAIRS IN THE SHEEPHOLE MOUNTAINS

By: Scott Gibson, Distinguished Life Member, CA WSF Board Member

Background: The Sheephole Mountains are located east of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC 29-Palms), south of Amboy and north of Joshua Tree National Park (JTNP). This small mountain range sits at the western edge of the "Sheephole Valley Wilderness" in the Mojave Trails National Monument (MTNM). There are currently four (4) Bighorn Sheep wildlife water developments within the Sheephole Mountains; SB17 Sudshole, SB31 Bearclaws, SB45 SD Tank and SB68 Bearclaws Temporary Tank. These water developments have suffered several mechanical issues and a general lack of rain in recent years.

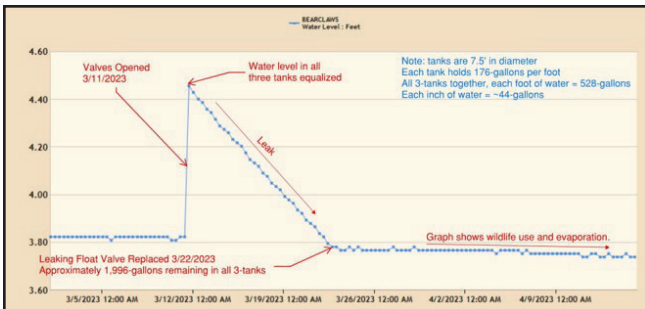
March 11th, 2023: a Hot Shot crew from the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep (SCBS) performed a water haul



Longtime SCBS Members, Marty Ambrose and John Nelson check the Bearclaws float. Photo David Davis

to the temporary tank while a separate crew hiked to the SB31 Bearclaws system. CDFW had turned off the tank valves the season before, suspecting a leak. We opened the valves after performing an assessment and maintenance. We could not find any evidence of a leak.

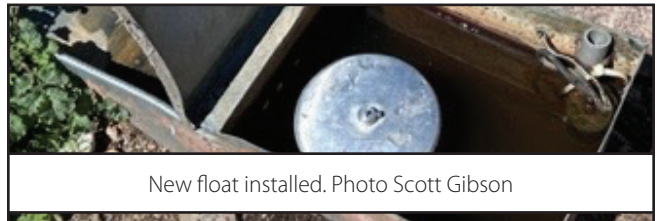
March 22nd, 2023: After monitoring the satellite system for SB31 Bearclaws, we became concerned that there was a water leak. We noticed that the water level was falling rapidly as you can see in the graph below. CA WSF Life member, Greg Tooley and I made a plan. We met up in 29-Palms early on March



22nd. After filling a truck tank with water, we drove to the SB68 site and hiked up to the SB31 Bearclaws tanks. We found that the old galvanized steel float was water logged and water was overflowing the drinker. We replaced the old drinker valve with a new style stainless steel valve. We also installed a new style aluminum pancake float and shoveled out collection dam. We

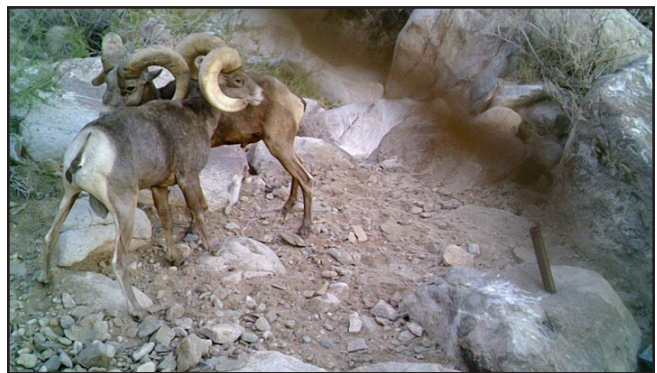


Greg Tooley works on the SB31 Drinker Box to replace the bad float valve with a new stainless-steel valve. Photo Scott Gibson



New float installed. Photo Scott Gibson

Proof that Water Works! I hiked up to SB31 Bearclaws in January, 2024. The system is full of water and functioning properly. I retrieved our trail camera, it captured over 6000 images with close to 4000 pictures containing bighorn sheep. CDFW estimates there are close to a hundred bighorn residing in the Sheep Hole Mountains, Hunt Zone #6. Hopefully we will see a tag allotment for this zone soon.



CALIFORNIA FISH AND WILDLIFE UPDATE AND WHITE MOUNTAIN SURVEY

by Danielle Glass, CDFW
Desert Bighorn Biologist Region 6

The last few months have been busy for California Department of Fish & Wildlife's (CDFW) desert bighorn program, consisting of copious data processing, analysis, and coordination.

After retrieving the ~100 cameras placed at water sources last summer, the program has spent a large amount of time going through trail camera photos to develop population estimates for hunt zones and Death Valley National Park bighorn populations. For example, we estimated ~40 ewes and ~33 rams utilizing the main known water sources in Death Valley's Black Mountain-Greenwater range. CDFW has planned helicopter surveys in the White, San Geronio, and San Gabriel Mountains for March, and will afterwards make its recommendations for tag quotas for this upcoming hunt season.

Fieldwork has consisted of performing checkouts for this hunt season's many successful hunters, conducting mortality investigations, and conducting reconnaissance on bighorn populations close to the Colorado River in preparation for future capture efforts. Public outreach occurred at WSF's Sheep Show. The desert bighorn program also gave Deep Springs College students a taste of biological fieldwork by hiking with them to look for sheep that were collared last November.

The desert bighorn program has been coordinating with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in regards to upcoming guzzler repairs, and has also re-started discussions with the BLM in regards to a formal water management agreement. Additionally, the program submitted a comment to the BLM on the proposed Silver Canyon transmission line improvement in the White Mountains. In all these instances, CDFW hopes to improve communication and find common interest among all parties. Onwards!

Photos are from Death Valley trail cameras.



Danielle Glass)



See the schedule of activities for CDFW for March 2024. Scan the QR code here!

SAN GORGONIO 2023 SHEEP COUNT WITH CDFW & BHA

By: Scott Gibson, Distinguished Life Member, CA WSF Board Member

The Desert Bighorn Sheep hunt was suspended in the San Gorgonio Hunt Zone #5 following the 2018/2019 respiratory disease outbreak. It was necessary for the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) to get a count to assess the number of animals in this hunt zone. CDFW and the California Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) organized a bighorn sheep count for March 4, 2023. I was happy to jump in with this group of department biologists and hunter/conservationists.



San Gorgonio Sheep Count Crew, Photo by Scott Gibson



Volunteers "glassing" for bighorn sheep, Photo by Scott Gibson



Bighorn Sheep from the Whitewater herd on a distant skyline, Photo by Scott Gibson

For this count, volunteers and CDFW biologist broke up into three different groups to cover more ground. My group



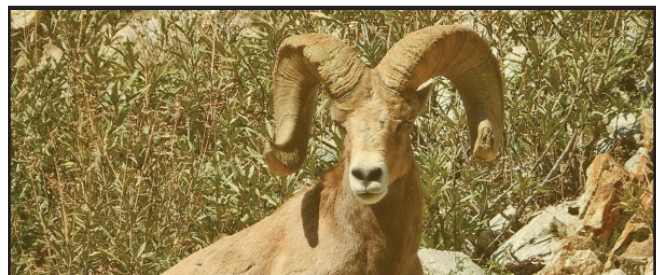
Volunteers descending from a glassing location, Photo by Scott Gibson

spotted thirty-seven (37) total sheep. We noted (6) Class IV Rams, (3) Class III Rams, (2) Class II Rams and (1) Class I Ram. We also counted a total of sixteen (16) mature Ewes and nine (9) lambs. Two of the sheep were marked with ear tags and tracking collars. With our spotting scopes we were able to read and record the ear tag numbers for CDFW. The other two groups were also successful in spotting and counting sheep.

Fast forward to this winter, 2024. Two of our regular volunteers with the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep (SCBS) have been out taking some photos. There are some magnificent sheep in this unit. We are hoping to see a tag allotment in this hunt zone as early as this year, our fingers are crossed.



San Gorgonio rams coming down from the high country for break from the snow, photo by David R. Dickenson (SCBS)



A Whitewater ram showing off this February, 2024. Photo by Monte Hammer (SCBS).

THE EAST CHOCOLATE MOUNTAINS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA'S FOURTH BIGHORN SHEEP HUNT ZONE (PART I)

by Nancy G. Andrew and Vernon C. Bleich, Ph.D.

During the Spring of 1994 the California Department of Fish and Game's (CDFG) newest bighorn sheep hunt zone, known as the East Chocolate Mountains Hunt Zone (Zone 4), was approved and three tags were allocated. The recommendation to open this zone, as documented in the Environmental Assessment for the hunting of desert mountain sheep, was approved by the California Fish and Game Commission. The data to support this conclusion was generated by intensive research by a graduate student, Nancy Andrew, with the help of many others. Information needed by CDFG centered on the distribution and habitat use by bighorn sheep, and a detailed population profile that could be used to support the limited harvest of some mature rams. In Part I of this essay, we describe the early work that was completed in the East Chocolate Mountains, and subsequent efforts to explore habitat issues with which bighorn sheep were faced.

The historical knowledge of desert mountain sheep in extreme southeastern California was quite limited. Indeed, Weaver's 1957 assessment of the status of bighorn sheep in this area [1] noted that, "... all the ranges have some sheep in them at some time" but could provide no further details; moreover, security issues and access was—and continues to be—restricted by the Department of Defense [1, 2]. During December 1968–January 1969 Dick Weaver and Jerry Mensch undertook another survey in eastern Imperial County to update the status of desert sheep there [3]. This time their effort was distributed among the Chocolate, Cargo Muchacho, Palo Verde, and Little Mule mountains. Again, this "boots on the ground" survey, while brief, confirmed that a native population of sheep persisted in Imperial County, and specifically in the Chocolate Mountains.

The general area referred to as the Chocolate Mountains is vast, and was by far the largest, most rugged, and highest elevation of the ranges that were surveyed by Weaver and Mensch [3]. Fully, the northern two-thirds of the Chocolate Mountains is controlled by the US Navy and serves as an aerial gunnery range with public access strictly prohibited. The East Chocolate Mountains, in which the hunt zone was to be located, refers to that portion of the Chocolate Mountains lying to the south and east of the gunnery range, and is delineated by State Highway 78 and Imperial County Highway S34 on the west, Walter's Camp Road on the north, the Colorado River on the east, and the All-American Canal and Interstate Highway 8 on the south.

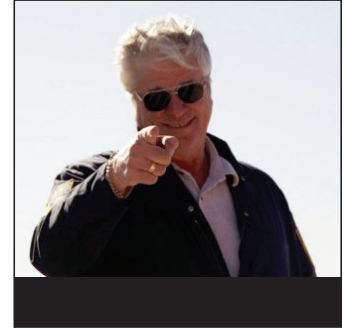
Early surveys in this area [1, 3] were limited both by time and the fact it was conducted during winter, a time when bighorn sheep may be more dispersed across the landscape than during the hot summer, when they are concentrated near water sources [4]. Nonetheless, fruitful information

was garnered during those efforts. There are no permanent water sources within the East Chocolate Mountains, but sheep make little use of the Colorado River water as they cannot access it due to the thick brushy vegetation along its banks [3].

At the time, sheep relied entirely on surface water (rain) runoff collected in natural rock tanks (tenajas). With low annual rainfall in this part of the desert (about two inches per year), Weaver and Mensch concluded "that water appears to be the limiting factor over the entire area" [3]. A second key conclusion, and perhaps of greater concern, was the "...severe competition with feral donkeys [that] appear[s] to further restrict the sheep population" [3]. During their 1969 reconnaissance, Weaver and Mensch came upon a dry rock tank (tenaja) that contained the skeletal remains of 34 sheep that had perished after entering the tank when the water level was low, but then were unable to climb back out [5]. As a result, Dick Weaver and other CDFG personnel undertook what is arguably the first habitat enhancement effort for bighorn sheep in this range by blasting out a portion of the tank wall to provide permanent ingress and egress to water when it is available in the tenaja. This tank assumed the name 'Trap Tank', and two additional tenajas that were enhanced with explosives or by mechanical means [3, 6] in the area remain cautionary reminders that natural rock tanks can also be death traps in areas where they are the only sources of water [7].

Following the survey by Weaver and Mensch [3], the sheep populations in California's Sonoran Desert were largely unappreciated for many years, albeit with the exception of cursory aerial surveys conducted by CDFG wildlife biologists Fred Botti in 1978 and Rocky Thompson in 1987 and 1989 [4]. Based on those reports, the population occupying the East Chocolate Mountains was estimated to consist of 25–40 individuals [8, 9, 10, 11]. Management efforts on behalf of bighorn sheep elsewhere in the Sonoran Desert also were limited, in part because of inadequate funds, but also because many Mojave Desert mountain ranges supported more bighorn sheep and had become a primary focus of the Department's conservation program that emphasized disease investigations, aerial surveys, habitat enhancement projects, and translocations [12, 13, 14].

In 1979, in response to the disastrous loss of mule deer in the Coachella Canal [15], Leon Lesicka and a group of concerned



citizens founded the organization known as Desert Wildlife Unlimited (DWU), and they began constructing man-made water sources designed by Leon [16] to enhance habitat in Deer Zone D-12, where water availability was a limiting factor and was an area that the locals knew produced big bucks [15]. Moreover, during the 1980s local residents became increasingly interested in the deer and sheep populations in the county. Imperial County had a strong and persuasive County Fish and Game Commission and a large hunting population, and collectively they began asking what it would take to open a sheep hunt in the East Chocolate Mountains; they believed there were far more sheep there than CDFG was aware of. The County Commissioners then invited the junior author of this essay—who at the time supervised the CDFG Wildlife Habitat Development Project throughout southern California—to a meeting to explain the lengthy, detailed, and expensive process that would be involved in creating a new bighorn sheep hunt zone. During the meeting, Bleich noted that a detailed scientific study of bighorn sheep would have to be undertaken, a management plan incorporating the results of the investigation would have to be completed, and the information obtained during the investigation and contained in the management plan would next form the basis for the Department's recommendation. Additionally, a new environmental document would have to be prepared and circulated for public comment, and those comments would have to be addressed by the Department before the California Fish and Game Commission, which held the ultimate say, could approve any such proposal.

During the spring of 1992, CDFG hired Nancy Andrew to assist with the collection of data on bighorn sheep in several Mojave Desert mountain ranges; concomitantly, Vern Bleich was working with Steve Torres—the Bighorn Sheep Coordinator in the CDFG Wildlife Branch—to develop a research plan and secure funds to support an investigation in the East Chocolate Mountains, lining out and resolving the logistics associated with such an investigation, and to convince CDFG's Regional Manager Fred Worthley and Wildlife Branch Chief Red Hunt that the proposed effort had merit. Andrew, then a graduate student at the University of Rhode Island, was searching for an opportunity to pursue research for her Master of Science degree. With a plan of action and initial funds secured, she accepted an offer to investigate the East Chocolate Mountains sheep population, which would include acquisition of data that would be crucially important to support any proposal CDFG might submit to the California Fish and Game Commission for a fourth bighorn sheep hunt zone.

This marked CDFG's first collaborative effort with the University of Rhode Island (URI), and was highly productive and eventually led to an additional graduate student assisting CDFG with research in the Orocopia Mountains—which later would become California's fifth bighorn sheep hunt zone, and the history of which will be addressed in a future article. Peter August, a leading authority on the application of geographic information systems to conservation issues and Nancy's major professor, visited the study area twice; first to see the study area first-hand and how difficult it is to navigate, and later to oversee the project and to meet the key

players assisting with the project. During that trip he gave a presentation to the County Fish and Game Commission, and described in detail the resources URI was committing to the project and how the University believed that partnering with other entities such as CDFG, the County Commission, and the supportive local populace would complement the advanced technologies available at URI. Included among these were pioneering applications of Geographic Information Systems and Global Positioning Systems, and the powerful computing capabilities becoming available to explore ecological questions.

Following that presentation, URI senior staff visited all of the tenajas large enough to hold water for any appreciable length of time and known to occur in the East Chocolate Mountains, and used GPS technology to ascertain the location of each. These were the first water source data collected in this range since those of Weaver and Mensch in 1969. These data, along with two years of location data from 25 radio-collared sheep allowed the first complex GIS modeling of bighorn sheep habitat selection to become available directly to CDFG [4]. At the time, the Department did not have staff to develop that information internally, but it was critically important in learning about the bighorn sheep of the East Chocolate Mountains.

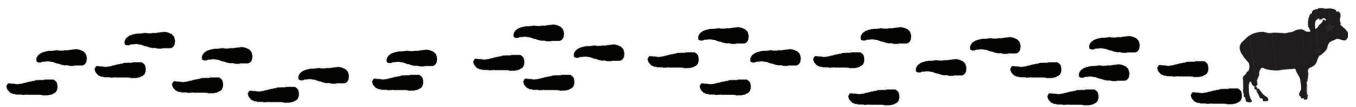
When we overlaid demographic information and locational data on geographic data sets such as elevation, topographic ruggedness, and aspect, we used the newfound methodology to analyze habitat use for the first time in the Sonoran Desert [4, 17]. We documented the timing of sexual segregation and aggregation of bighorn sheep in that area and locations and habitat used by males or



Steve Torres, Vern Bleich, and Nancy Andrew with a mature ram captured for Nancy's field work, which led to the opening of two of the first five bighorn sheep hunt zones. At the time, Nancy was a graduate student at the University of Rhode Island, Steve was the CDFG Bighorn Sheep Coordinator in Sacramento, and Vern was the Eastern Units Supervisor in Bishop, Inyo County.

females during the non-breeding seasons, identified lambing areas and time of the year that births occurred, and developed detailed descriptions of and quantified composition of the vegetation types used by bighorn sheep, all of which proved to be essential contributions leading to the fourth bighorn sheep hunt zone in California. As a result of this work, recommendations to enhance the efficacy of habitat improvements were developed [18], concerns about the potential effects of habitat enhancements on an endangered species were alleviated [19], and impacts of feral ass on the local fauna were brought to the forefront [4, 17, 20], paving the way for further investigations into the impacts of feral equids on bighorn sheep and mule deer in the Sonoran Desert of California [21, 22]. In Part II of this essay, we will further discuss the habitat assessments, additional habitat enhancements, describe the acquisition of the demographic data and resulting detailed population profile that led to the opening of this hunt zone. Additionally, we will discuss the reason the East Chocolate Mountains Hunt Zone currently is not 'open' to the harvest of bighorn sheep.

—This article is part of a series addressing the historical increase in bighorn sheep hunting opportunity in California. Many aspects of that history are being, or already have been, lost as 'corporate memory' disappears and 'generational amnesia' increases. 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 the past. Nancy Andrew spent the summers of 1993 and 1994 in Imperial County conducting field research for her MS Thesis, which centered on habitat selection, forage quality, habitat enhancement methods, and demography of bighorn sheep, and led to the harvest program in the East Chocolate Mountains. She subsequently became the CDFG Unit Manager for Imperial County, and continued to play prominent roles in efforts to enhance habitat for bighorn sheep and mule deer across the Sonoran Desert. Nancy retired from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in 2011, and currently makes her home in northwestern Ohio. Dr. Vern Bleich was employed by the California Department of Fish and Game for 34 years, during which he 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 completion of a thorough inventory of bighorn sheep in California, and has been 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, serves on two committees of the California Wild Sheep Foundation, and is a member of the Wild Sheep Foundation's Professional Resource Advisory Board. To save space, the complete 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 for that information (vcbleich@gmail.com).



Venison Stuffed Squash

from Tony Gigliotti

Ingredients:

- 2 acorn squash approximately the same size (type of squash does not matter)
- 1 lb hot Italian venison sausage (any ground meat will work)
- 1 sliced leak
- 6 diced garlic cloves
- 1 teaspoon of olive oil
- 2 ears of corn
- 1 diced bell pepper
- 1 cup of diced celery
- 2/3 cup of grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- 1 cup cooked farro

- 1) Slice the squash in half removing the seeds. Brush with olive oil and place face down on a cookie sheet with foil. Place in the oven at 425 and bake ~30 minutes or until tender
- 2) While the squash is cooking toast the pine nuts in a pan; once toasted, place in a large mixing bowl
- 2) Using half the garlic and leek begin to fry in a pan with the olive oil
- 3) Once the leak and garlic are aromatic add the meat and cook through

- 4) Dice the bell pepper and celery and add to the bowl with the pine nuts
- 5) Add the meat, 1/3 cup of parmesan, cooked farro, and remaining garlic and leek to the bowl and mix thoroughly
- 6) Remove the squash from the oven
- 7) Remove the inside of the squash leaving ~1/4" around the skin and add the bowl mixing in
- 8) Fill the squash with the mixture then sprinkle the remaining cheese on top before placing back in the oven
- 9) Remove from the oven when the cheese is melted



THE POLITICS OF CONSERVATION

KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN AND YOU IN THE FIELD

By Bill Gaines, Gaines and Associates

2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Off and Running

The 2024 Session of the California State Legislature – the second year of the two-year 2023/2024 Legislative Session – is nearing the end of its second month and activity at our State Capitol is quickly picking up speed. With the bill introduction deadline of Friday, February 16th, just recently passed, countless bills are just now showing up in print, and the challenges we will face this year coming into focus.

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Below is a latest status of two-year bills of interest lingering from the 2023 Session, followed by a summary of just some of the legislation the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (CA WSF) will be tackling on behalf of our members in 2024.

Bills are listed in numerical order, not in order of priority or interest.

2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION – “TWO YEAR” BILLS

Most bills of concern to CA WSF introduced during the 2023 Session have realized their fate, but a few remain in play. Below is the final status of “two-year” bills of interest highlighted in our Winter 2023 Issue of California Wild Sheep.

AB 293 (ALANIS) – LIFETIME HUNTING & FISHING LICENSES: GOLD STAR FAMILIES – DEAD

AB 293 by Assembly Member Juan Alanis (R-Modesto) would have required the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to issue lifetime hunting and sportfishing licenses at no cost to “Gold Star Family” members – family members of those in the armed forces who paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

During the 2023 Session, AB 293 passed out of Assembly policy committee, but was held in Assembly fiscal committee. Having failed to pass out of committee and to the Assembly Floor by the mid-January 2024 deadline, AB 293 is dead.

AB 1507 (GALLAGHER) – FIREARMS: STATE PROPERTY – DEAD

Legislation passed in 2022 prohibits the sale of firearms and ammunition on any state or county property. AB 1507 by Assembly Member James Gallagher (R-Yuba City) would have exempted events hosted by youth sport shooting



organizations, youth hunting organizations, and nonprofit conservation organizations from that prohibition.

AB 1507 was set to be heard in Assembly policy in April 2023, but was held to allow time for the author to build more bipartisan support for the bill. Having failed to meet the January 2024 deadline for being heard and passed to the Assembly Floor, AB 1507 is dead.

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

Co-authored by Senator Catherine Blakespear (D-Laguna Hills) and Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Oakland), SB 8 would have required gun owners to maintain a gun liability insurance policy which covered losses or damages resulting from the negligent use of that firearm.

SB 8 was heard in the Senate policy committee in April 2023 with testimony taken from CA WSF and others. But the bill was not voted on and was held in committee.

Having failed to pass to the Senate Floor by the January 2024 deadline, SB 8 is dead.

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

SB 637 by Senator Dave Min (D-Irvine) would have prohibited state agencies 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 in 2023 but was never heard. Having failed to be heard and passed to the Senate Floor by the January 2024 deadline, SB 637 is dead.

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

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

SB 772 passed out of Senate policy committee on a unanimous vote in April 2023, but was held in Senate fiscal committee. Having failed to make it to the Senate Floor by the January 2024 deadline, SB 772 is dead.

2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION – NEW LEGISLATION

With the deadline for introducing new bills in the 2024 Session having just passed, CA WSF is still studying seemingly countless new bills to determine their possible impact on the health of wild sheep or those who wish to pursue them on the mountain. Below is a summary of those of interest as of late February 2024.

AB 1889 (FRIEDMAN) – GENERAL PLAN: WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY ELEMENT

Existing law requires cities or counties to adopt a comprehensive general plan that includes various elements, including land use and housing elements. AB 1889 by Assembly Member Laura Friedman (D-Burbank) would require a general plan to include a wildlife connectivity element that considers the effect of development within the jurisdiction on fish, wildlife, and habitat connectivity. AB 1889 would require local jurisdictions to identify and analyze habitat connectivity areas, and to implement measures to remediate barriers to wildlife connectivity within their boundaries to the maximum extent feasible. The bill would require cities or counties to adopt or review the wildlife connectivity element upon the adoption or next revision of their general plan on or after January 1, 2025.

AB 1889 has been double-referred to the Assembly Local Government Committee and the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee, but has yet to be set for hearing.

AB 2320 (IRWIN) – WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION ACT OF 2024: WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

AB 2320 by Assembly Member Jacqui Irwin (D-Thousand Oaks) would require the Natural Resources Agency to identify key wildlife corridors, connections between large blocks of natural areas and habitats, progress on protecting wildlife corridors, and set goals for wildlife corridor protection in the next 5 years. AB 2320 would additionally make it the policy of the state to preserve, protect, and restore wildlife habitats by acquiring and restoring large blocks of habitat and the lands and infrastructure to provide wildlife corridors for connectivity of habitat. The bill would require the state to identify priority projects for the acquisition, restoration, protection, and expansion of wildlife corridors, and to give priority to projects that protect wildlife corridors.

AB 2320 is pending referral to Assembly policy committee.

AB 3067 (GIPSON) – RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY INSURANCE: FIREARMS

AB 3067 by Assembly Member Mike A. Gipson (D-Gardena) would require an insurer of residential property to include questions on their application for homeowners' or renters' insurance regarding the presence and storage of any firearms kept in the household, in accessory structures, or in vehicles kept on the property subject to any applicable insurance policy. If passed, AB 3067 would go into effect on January 1, 2026, and require an insurer to annually report this information to the Department of Insurance and the Legislature beginning on January 1, 2027.

AB 3067 is pending referral to Assembly policy committee.

SB 1160 (PORTANTINO) – FIREARMS: ANNUAL REGISTRATION OF FIREARMS

SB 1160 by Senator Anthony J. Portantino (D-Glendale) would require all firearms, except those specifically exempted, to be annually registered with the Department of Justice (DOJ). The bill would also require registrants to annually pay a registration fee to fund DOJ's administration and enforcement of the firearm registry.

SB 1160 would exempt antique firearms, as well as firearms used in service by a peace officer, firearms owned by any department or agency of the state or federal government, or any firearm owned by the Armed Forces of the United States, California National Guard, or California State Guard. Firearms personally owned by any employee or appointee of these entities would not be exempted.

SB 1160 has been referred to the Senate Public Safety Committee but has yet to be scheduled to be heard.

SB 1163 (DAHLE) – WILDLIFE-VEHICLE COLLISIONS: WILDLIFE SALVAGE PERMITS

Sponsored by the wildlife conservation community, SB 1163 by Senator Brian Dahle (R-Redding) would improve public safety and help protect wild sheep and other wildlife resources by reducing the frequency of vehicle-wildlife collisions on California's roadways.

First, some background. SB 395 – also sponsored by the conservation community and signed into law in 2019 – authorized DFW to utilize existing technology to create a user-friendly smartphone app, like those already in use in several other western states, which would allow motorists to report the real-time location of wildlife-vehicle collisions. The intent being for the much-enhanced data made available via the use of this cell phone app to significantly improve the ability of DFW and partner agencies to identify the most effective locations for the placement of wildlife roadway crossings. Further, SB 395 authorized the Fish and Game Commission to establish a pilot program for the issuance of wildlife salvage permits through a cell-phone-friendly web-based portal developed by DFW to persons desiring to salvage deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, or wild pig meat that had been accidentally killed via a vehicle collision. SB 395 also required the Commission to promulgate the regulations necessary to commence the programs by no later than January 1, 2022, and would have "sunsetted" on January 1, 2029.

Unfortunately, to pass SB 395 out of fiscal committee we had

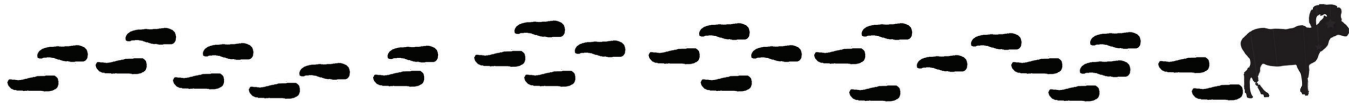
to take language into the legislation which required a special appropriation by the Legislature for the bill's programs to be enacted.

Each Session since the passage of SB 395, CA WSF and our partner conservation organizations fought to secure the special appropriation necessary to implement the important programs called out in the bill. Unsuccessful in those efforts, and with the deadline for implementing the programs now passed, follow-on legislation was necessary.

SB 1163 would delete the requirement that implementation

of the pilot program be predicted upon a special appropriation by the Legislature, and require, rather than just authorize, DFW and the Commission to develop the pilot program. Further, SB 1163 would extend the deadline for the Commission to establish the pilot program to January 1, 2027, and extend the sunset date for the pilot program to January 1, 2034.

SB 1163 has been referred to the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee but has yet to be set to be heard.



A TIP TO GET BETTER FIELD PHOTOS

By Bradley Aboltin

With the growing technology in cell phones, and the cameras they are equipped with, more and more hunters are leaving their heavy DSLR-style cameras behind and using their cell phones for field photos, but after having a great hunt and a successful harvest of an animal you still want to get the best photos you can to share with family and friends. While you could try and prop your cell phone up on a pack or against a tree they never seem to have the right angle and end up getting a photo that is looking up at the animal and into the sky. If you were to equip yourself with a couple of the below budget friendly items, you could be taking magazine quality photos in no time.

Drew Miles of Tricer designed a great Arca Swiss adaptable



cell phone holder, that will work with all tripod heads that are Arca Swiss and given the fact that you are already most likely carrying a tripod and head for glassing this would be an easy item to carry with you and put on your setup. This Tricer-KS will rotate to take photos in a landscape or portrait orientation and will accommodate any cell phone. **(EDITOR'S NOTE: For publications such as CA WSF magazine a landscape photo is most adaptable.)** The price for this set up is approximately \$50.00 as of March 2024. This will assure you not only great steady photos but will as well offer you the opportunity to have the whole hunting party in the success photos.

If you pair that with a Bluetooth shutter button that is connected to your phone you will be able to set up your tripod with the Tricer-KS attachment, get it level, set at the correct distance to assure everyone is in the photo, and then get comfortable behind the animal and just press the button. There are many different options for a shutter button on amazon as well as phoneskope offers one that cost about \$25 at this time.



Before you know it, you will be taking great field photos and be sure to not forget to send and share those photos of your success with the California Wild Sheep Foundation to be submitted into the magazine. Email them to Mike Borel (mike.borel@contextnet.com).

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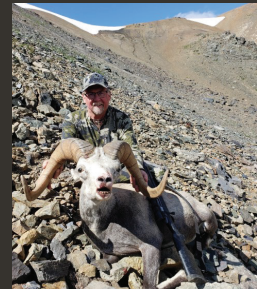
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