

*** Montana ***
WILD SHEEP
FOUNDATION
KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN

WildSheep

Fall 2016 | Volume 24, Issue 3

2016

Youth Expo Camps

94 kids were able to attend various camps throughout Western Montana

2017 LIFE MEMBER RAFFLE
**Fully Guided Dall
Sheep Hunt in
Alaska**

Check out the

Photo Gallery

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All contributed material will be published at the discretion of the Editorial Board of the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation (MTWSF). The Editorial Board consists of the editor of the newsletter, the executive director of the chapter, and the president of the chapter.

CONNECT with Montana WSF

Visit us online at www.montanawsf.org!

While there, visit the **Photo Gallery** page. If you would like to have a picture posted, email (photos@montanawsf.org) your name, the photo (jpeg format preferred) along with a brief one to two sentence description of the hunt.

You can also visit us on Facebook!



The Montana Wild Sheep Foundation will give a reward of up to \$1000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of cases involving the illegal taking of bighorn sheep in the State of Montana. If you have information of any illegal act, contact 1-800-TIP-MONT (1-800-847-6668).

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President's Message

I hope everyone is doing well. By the time you read this, the Montana big game season will be coming to a close. For those lucky souls who had a Montana Bighorn Sheep tag in their pocket, I hope to see all the photos and hear the stories of the hunt. We would also love to hear any unique hunts and experiences, and if possible we would love to print in future newsletters. Please send any photos or stories to bsolan.bs@gmail.com.

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation (MTWSF) Board Elections

Operating in a post Jim Weatherly world, we were a little late with our board elections this year and had some issues mailing the ballots. I apologize for the delays and we are working on getting the process dialed in moving forward. With that said, we had Max Bauer re-elected as well as Grant Winn, III and D.J. Berg elected to our MTWSF Board of Directors. We were lucky to have a slate of (5) great candidates this year and we are planning on putting both Levi Bowler and Luke Coccoli to work on committees moving forward. We also had Bruce Sterling leave the MTWSF board as he was term limited out. Please join me in thanking Bruce for his (9) years of service and all of the critical, thoughtful and intelligent input he brought to the board. His expertise with wild sheep was a great asset to the board and will surely be missed.

Bighorn and Domestic Sheep Working Group

In the past six months, we have been doing a substantial amount of work with the domestic industry and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). The focus has been "Montana" solutions that are practical and work to provide a place for both wild and domestic sheep on the Montana landscape. The kickoff event will be a Wild & Domestic Sheep Symposium that will feature experts on both wild and domestic sheep. This event is tentatively scheduled for February 9th & 10th. More information will be available on our Facebook page and website when it becomes available.

2017 Fundraiser – 25th Annual

We will be in **Bozeman March 3rd & 4th 2017**, at the Gran Tree Inn, and big Tom Grimes is leading the planning effort. This will surely be a not to miss event as we will be **GIVING AWAY A FULLY GUIDED ALASKA DALL SHEEP HUNT TO A LIFE MEMBER PRESENT AT THE BANQUET**. Someone present in the room will be going sheep hunting in Alaska - August 12-25, 2017. This will surely up the ante for the 2017 banquet. Make sure you get signed up for your LIFE MEMBERSHIP online, as well as put the banquet on the calendar now. You **MUST** be a LIFE MEMBER and **MUST BE PRESENT** to win. As those of you who were at the banquet in Helena will tell you, we had a packed house! We sold out the room a month in advance and adding a Fully Guided Sheep Hunt raffle to the mix will mean that you will need to get your tickets early. Our board members will start selling tickets in December 2016 and we will have online ticket purchase up and running by the end of December.

Brian Solan

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Besides our newsletter, you can stay up to date on news, activities & current events by visiting our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/MontanaWildSheepFoundation



2017 LIFE MEMBER RAFFLE

- All **LIFE MEMBERS** of MT Wild Sheep Foundation are included.
- **MUST BE PRESENT** at MTWSF Annual Banquet in Bozeman, March 4, 2017.
- Transferrable **ONLY** to **another LIFE MEMBER** that is also **PRESENT**.
- Hunt Dates **August 12th-25th, 2017** with Mike Litzen Guide Service, Alaska.
- This is a great Alaska Dall Sheep Hunt with a very successful outfitter.



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Jim Weatherly Honored

Pictured: From left to right, Jack Chambers, Jim Weatherly (with his Lifetime Conservation Award), Tom Powers and Shane Clouse

On the night of October 20, 2016, in the barn of well known Smoke Elser, our own Jim Weatherly was awarded the “LIFETIME CONSERVATION AWARD” by the Western Montana ‘Conservation Roundtable’.

This is the highest honor the conservation group gives in recognition of an individual’s cumulative, lifetime support of conservation work in Montana. The three presenters, Tom Powers, Shane Clouse, Jack Chambers, plus a letter from Montana Wild Sheep Foundation chapter president Brian Solan, all praised Jim for decades of countless hours of unselfish work for Montana’s wild sheep. Through years of work on our Montana WSF Board, Jim has championed the embattled causes of our Bighorn sheep of Montana. Those issues involved acquisition of critical winter habitat, enhancement of year round habitat, augmentation of herds throughout the state and most importantly the never ending health issues wild sheep

face. His consistent, knowledgeable presence before the State Legislature, Montana FWP Commission meetings and our National WSF community has made Jim one of the best known advocates for wild sheep in North America. All the presenters agreed and gave testimony that Jim Weatherly has done more for wild sheep than most of us put together. Congratulations, Jim, on this well deserved, prestigious award and thank you for your years of leadership, advocacy and dedication to “putting more sheep on the Montana mountains.” YAHOO!!!!!!

*Jack Chambers
Past President Mt. WSF*

Montana's Wildhorse Island: Bighorn Factory

Story by The Biologist's Corner
Bruce Sterling,
Wildlife Biologist MT FWP

Montana has a very unique landscape feature when it comes to bighorn sheep management. We have an island that is also a state park, which grows a lot of bighorn sheep. Wildhorse Island is approximately 2,200 acres in size, and is located in northwestern Montana, surrounded by the clear, pristine waters of Flathead Lake.



Wildhorse Island was privately owned until 1977 when the Bourke MacDonald family, with assistance from The Nature Conservancy, donated the island as a state park to the people of Montana.

The original transplant of bighorn sheep to the island occurred in 1939 when Lewis Penwell moved two sheep from the Mission Mountain Range. The first transplant was not successful. So, in 1947, the Montana Fish and Game Commission transplanted six sheep from the Sun River Herd of Montana to the island. By 1956 there were 83 sheep on the island. The population continued to grow through the 1970s and has shown two distinct peaks, one in 1971 and the second in 2012 when 230 sheep were observed on the island. Today, the population is around 125 animals.

One of the tools biologists use to expand existing populations or to start new herds is through translocation - mostly via trapping of ewes, lambs and young rams. That's where Wildhorse Island's "production line" comes into play.

Since the island is a state park, no hunting is allowed. Also, since it is separated by water from the mainland, there are relatively few predators on the island. Although, on occasion, mountain lions are spotted and for a brief period a grizzly bear resided on the island for a few days but, in most years, the area is free of predators except for some coyotes and an occasional eagle. With nearly 1,000 acres of Palouse Prairie grassland and great habitat, Wildhorse Island can grow bighorns!

In 1971, over 300 bighorns were documented on the island. The current management plan recommends a sheep population of between 100-125 animals which helps prevent habitat degradation. The island

is also home to a population of mule deer and six wild horses. These wild mustangs are all mares and were adopted through the Bureau of Land Management's Adopt-a-Wild-Horse program.

Without hunting, the only way to manage the bighorn sheep population is to remove excess animals. Over the course of 60 years, more than 550 bighorns have been removed from the island to areas needing transplant stock, mostly within Montana, but bighorns have also been provided to the State of Oregon. A few additional sheep have been captured for disease research purposes at Washington State University in Pullman.

The first trapping operation occurred in 1954 when 12 bighorns were relocated to the Kootenai Falls area in Lincoln County, Montana. The latest removal from the island happened in 2014. In between, Wildhorse Island bighorns have helped augment or re-establish new herds in 16 separate areas of historic habitat within Montana. Periodic transplants will continue to maintain a healthy herd and prevent overpopulation on the island.

Wildhorse Island offers a great opportunity for bighorn sheep enthusiasts to hike and explore the island while having a rare chance to see and photograph bighorn sheep up close. The state park has several trails and some picnic spots to help you enjoy your experience and give you a good chance to photograph one of Montana's legendary bighorn rams. Overnight camping is not allowed on Wildhorse Island.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will continue to manage this bighorn population within habitat capacity while removing excess animals to help "put and keep sheep on the mountain™". Bighorn sheep production will continue at Montana's unique bighorn factory! 🍷



*** Montana ***

WILD SHEEP
FOUNDATION

KEEPING SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN

25th Anniversary
Annual Fundraiser
March 3-4, 2017
Gran Tree Inn - Bozeman, MT

2016 Youth Expo Camps

Story by Tom Powers

Picture: The Whole Camp Magruder



It has been nearly five (5) long years or five (5) short years since the National Wild Sheep Foundation offered a challenge to the state chapters to get a youth program going in their areas. Much work has gone into this for us here in Montana and many organizations and agencies have joined us at our annual (Youth Conservation Education Expo) held at the Teller Wildlife refuge at Corvallis, Montana held each May. It is a one day event when all the area youth get to listen to or participate in each organizations presentations. Everything from horse packing to archery, pellet gun shooting, fly fishing, aquatic identification, etc.

We now have 42 organizations represented at our annual event. Many of these along with other private donors give money to supply scholarships to the different conservation, and wildlife related camps. Others actually give summer camps themselves. After the kids have attended a minimum of 12 of the work stations and have their report cards signed off they can put in for a drawing for the summer camp they qualify for (normally age is a factor at each camp).

The drawing is held at the end of the day and the kids are then notified along with their parents or guardians. The arrangements are made and paper work handled by Traci Ulberg. (Article continued on page 10)

The first year, with little time to prepare and limited funds, we were able to send 20 kids to the Theodore



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Out of Africa in Montana Gallery



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2016 Youth Expo Camps *continued from page 8*

Roosevelt Summer Camp at Dupuyer, Montana. It is a five day camp and takes youth 11 to 17 yrs of age.

Fast forward to this year and we were able to send 94 kids to various camps across Western Montana. Those camps included youth from seven years old to 17 years old. Camps this year included: Glacier Institute; Montana Natural Resources; Raised at Full Draw; Theodore Roosevelt Ranch Outdoor Adventure Camp; Jack Creek Youth Wilderness Camp; Montana Trappers B.E.A.R Camp; Teller Wildlife Refuge; Montana Natural History Center and the Magruder River of No Return Camp.

The Magruder River of No Return camp was held along the banks of the Selway River deep in the heart of the Selway Wilderness. A short walking distance from this camp you step into the Frank Church Wilderness. Together these two wilderness areas form the largest wilderness area in the the lower 48 states. What a beautiful setting for the lucky 21 kids that attended the camp. Plans are already underway with the Forest Service for 2017.

These young adults were divided into four groups during the camp and learned the art of horse





Pictures

Page 10: Top - Campers getting into their work. Bottom - The matching game.

Page 11: Top left - Heading out. Top right - Bugs, bugs, bugs. Bottom - Learning to score.



Youth Expo Camps *continued from page 11*

packing; archery and archery safety; Boone & Crockett scoring of big game heads; and aging of wild sheep and wild goats. Additionally, identification of different North American deer species; fly tying and fly casting; trapping and trapping techniques; and trail work with the help of the Wilderness Ranger and his staff were also included.

During a mini-class, they learned how to think like an elk. This class took the youth up the wilderness trails and showed them the different vegetation that elk depend on for survival throughout the year. This camp was also able to have three youth from one of the area youth homes join us.

We are so happy that the camp turned out so well as we ran the entire camp with our own staff. Members of the WSF, Western Montana SCI, Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky MT Elk Foundation Montana Bow Hunters Association, Selway Pintler Wilderness Back Country Horsemen, Montana Trappers Association and Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association made this camp a success.

We were honored with the presence of Dale Burk and Smoke Elser whom talked to the youth at one of our evening gatherings about the Wilderness and the Wilderness Act and how it all came about. Then all the campers were presented with Smokes Horse Packing Manual and he signed it for them. Many more awards were given to the youth at each of the evening sessions. They also got to listen to Shane Clouse perform some of the songs he wrote about the great outdoors and he presented the kids with CD'S. All-in-all a great camp. 🍷



One Hunters Point of View on the Appropriateness of Auction Tags

by Justin Spring

I have been fortunate growing up in and around the outdoors, I counted the days until I was twelve and could hunt myself. I grew up on the Oregon coast before the days of leased ground and had the ability to chase blacktails and Roosevelt Elk every year. At the time, I had no clue they were a unique species and the desire hunters had to pursue these secretive residents of the Pacific Northwest. Even though I was surrounded by trophy species, I took after my family and grew up as a meat hunter. At least the best I can recall my dad killed a buck every year and while not every year was successful during elk season, most years the cooler held a bull elk or more waiting for the hunting group to reconvene for a cutting party. As I grew older and headed off to college I began to see different types of hunting around the country and eventually found myself volunteering and eventually working in the realm of wildlife conservation. While it has given me the opportunity to meet some amazing people and hunt some amazing places it also has shown me the dollar and cents side of conservation. Many, and some not all that old, remember the days of a friendly conversation and an offer to put up some hay or repair some fence that would result in an open invite to hunt their ground as long as you shut the gates. Not that those days are completely gone as I have been able to still get some access to some amazing ground with the same approach but we are living in a different world. In my short career as a hunter, spanning only slightly over a couple decades, the United States population has grown by 61 million or nearly 24%. While the hunter population hasn't stayed pace the amount of space for wildlife has decreased. Litigation, ballot initiatives, powerful interest groups, politics, and unfortunately last, emerging science stresses state agencies more daily. In the face of these emerging demands the states must perform higher and higher level management with a budget funded by fewer hunters.

To this point, most states have been able to squeeze the turnip harder and harder and squeaked by. Even in the face of this pinch, many of us are still fortunate enough to be able to buy resident deer and elk tags at

a cost that make wild game meat about the cost of a fine steak per pound and not quite that of Wagyu beef, but the coffers are empty and recruitment is down. This has led many states to pursue selling tags as a way to fill this void. Most of the naysayers will point out the price paid for these tags don't really help the budget but just for kicks I added up the total of people putting in for sheep tags in Montana. That totaled 27,819 applicants. Given some are nonresident hunters already paying 50 dollars, but to cover the cost of the one governor's sheep tag, each hunter would have to pay an application fee nearly 20 dollars higher per using the historic high the Montana Governor Sheep tag brought. If you ask states being forced to increase any outdoor recreation fees they will tell you the blow back they must deal with. While this gets louder and louder every time, eventually the ceiling is hit where the higher the price goes the fewer hunters are buying and the lower the budget revenue in the end.

Looking at historic predictions, this funding failure should have already happened in some states yet for the most part, most state agencies are still able to manage to a level where harvests are at acceptable levels to the majority of their paying constituents. While it may seem to some the justification for additional funding is greed or mismanagement, we also must consider a recent unforeseen influx into conservation funding. This influx has come mainly from Pittman Robertson funds. As conservationists and hunters we should all realize we pay a tax on hunting related items, what many don't realize is that same tax applies to all firearms purchased so the 11% on your classic bolt action is the same 11% on all the modern sporting rifles. Regardless of what you think of the current administration, the efforts they have put into gun control have lined the pockets of many state agencies and regardless of how this current election goes this surge cannot continue forever as it has for the last few years. For comparison, prior to 2009, the amount collected (per the national shooting sports foundation) by this excise tax never surpassed \$400 million, in 2013 it hit \$800 Million. This being considered the states will need more money and it has to come from somewhere, let alone the conservation organizations and causes that the revenues from the gun manufacturers

One Hunters Point of view on the Appropriateness of Auction Tags continued from page 13

themselves have funneled into conservation. From my conversations with those “in the know” on the topic of funding, and I must admit I haven’t personally verified this, but rumor has it that a prime case study of this is Montana’s Block Management Program, after the revenue’s were lost from the outfitter allocated tags with their abolition through ballot initiative, the program has managed to stay afloat due to this recent influx in the amount of PR funds available.

Now that we have ascertained the need, this brings us squarely to the topic of the idea of Governors tags and their appropriateness in today’s funding of conservation. On the surface perhaps it seems the price the state brings in may not be that significant and while it would sting a bit, could be made up in other areas, but as these tags have become common place, a system of conservation funding has been built around them. Each state has a slightly different process in deciding who sells the tags but in most cases the organization taking on the sale results in a percentage given to the organization and in some cases an addition a buyer’s premium is added by the selling organization. Looking at the National Wild Sheep Foundation Annual report from the 2014 convention Special permits brought in over \$3.6 million with \$3.2 million being returned to states, tribes, and provinces. From my limited understanding, I believe this shows the national foundation took in roughly \$400K to put towards Wild Sheep Foundation mission projects, after costs associated with selling the tags (which they assume the burden of and not the managing agencies).

Using very rough numbers we are now at an individual Montana sheep application increase of 200% per resident applicant. This is a straight dollar for dollar, to see how this system works even further with a proactive approach, look to what New Mexico sheep biologist Eric Rominger has done with the New Mexico auction permit monies. He has funded numerous sheep relocations, trades, and has expanded herds and populations by taking the funds generated through the auctions tags, getting matching funds through Pittman-Robertson funding. A look at the successes and expanded hunting opportunities New Mexico has experienced and offered show how successful this approach can be.

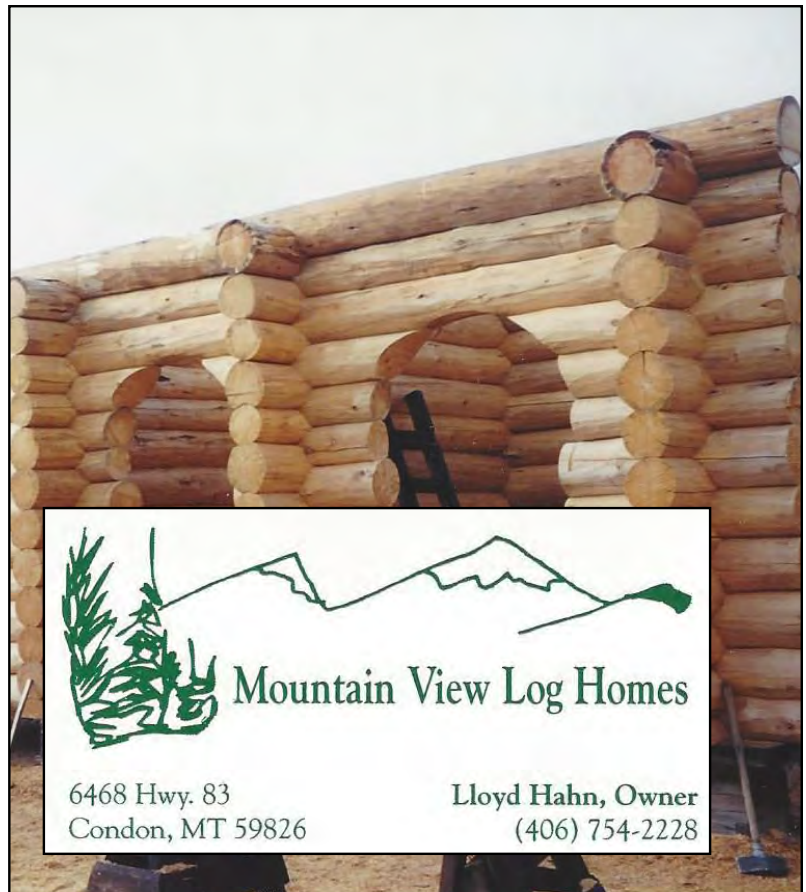
Biologically speaking, and in reference to the number of tags and how Montana’s sheep tag auction is administered, one ram is fairly insignificant considering the states numerous herds. While most of us would

give nearly anything for the chance to hunt one ram out of the few hundred the state allows to be taken a year it seems fairly positive and straight forward to, at minimum, help reduce costs for other sheep hunters by allowing one or two special tags to be used to raise funds, so why the rub? Originally the idea was they give ____ thousands to conservation and they have the opportunity to hunt one ram anywhere in the state but still within the same framework of the states normal season, to which some still subscribe but not all.

The North American Model of wildlife conservation was built on the backs of hunters and with their wallets though this isn’t to say that we have never had to step in and self regulate on particular issues to ensure its’ success. The idea of Fair Chase was promoted by hunters and accepted near universally and the code is the backbone of many of today’s current game regulations. Our original battle was that of overexploitation of the wildlife and its habitat to which we still battle especially on the habitat front today. Other battles have emerged that threaten the very core of the system we created and at the forefront of these concerns is acceptance of hunting by the non-hunting public. Many focus on the continued recruitment of hunters as our main battle, but I feel if there isn’t acceptance of hunting by the non-hunting public we will never recruit enough hunters to be the majority. The idea of trophy hunting, which the uneducated non-hunter views as a hunt purely for a mount, is hugely a black eye on the hunting community thanks in a large part to the narrative put forth by anti hunting falsehoods. That being said, the idea of selling a particular ram to the highest bidder seems to fit the bill exactly of the narrative the anti’s want portrayed. Now because there are some bad cases doesn’t mean we should throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater by doing away with the tags, but rather as hunters and conservationists we must put in perspective what these are for and why they were originally created. All involved from the selling agency and NGO to the average resident hunter and the buyers themselves must ensure the idea shines a positive light on hunting and conservation. The managing agency must ensure they are selling management, age structure, opportunity, and experience rather than a particular ram. In terms of the buyers, it must be about the experience and not only about the end trophy. Hunters and conservationists are greatly in your debt for your contributions and in order for the opportunities to continue your generosity must stay the course, but as a buyer, remember the system that brought these sheep

back from the brink and base your bids on the opportunity for what you may find and experience. Your generosity is rewarded with an opportunity that many of us will spend a lifetime in pursuit of - a ram must always just stay as the icing on the cake. The average hunter must realize the value and the opportunity they may one day have could be the result of a transplant funded by the dollars these tags generated historically. To that end support things that fund your agency and the states wildlife. This doesn't mean if the system starts to pull off course, you should hold your tongue, but ensure it's a legitimate question of the funding mechanism and its appropriateness, not just that of being jealous of another hunter's opportunity.

The selling and marketing of these tags has come a long ways from when the programs were first created and authorized by state legislatures. The resulting funds have been used to help facilitate the robust populations of game we have today. Though as hunters, and as with any of our accepted practices, we must ensure in the end all we do is for the betterment of wildlife and its habitat. 🍷



The image shows a close-up of a log cabin wall made of stacked logs. A white sign is attached to the wall. The sign features a green line-art illustration of a mountain range and a pine tree on the left. To the right of the illustration, the text reads "Mountain View Log Homes". Below this, the address "6468 Hwy. 83 Condon, MT 59826" is listed on the left, and "Lloyd Hahn, Owner (406) 754-2228" is listed on the right.

Photo Gallery



Dennis Steinhauer and his Ram taken from HD 622 in 2016.



Pete Enrooth's and his Ram taken from HD 680 in 2016.



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