

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

WildSheep

Fall 2017 | Volume 25, Issue 3

S.O.S - Kind of...

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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.

Photo on page 2, 12, and 13 is courtesy of Steve Kline of Superior, Montana. Cover picture courtesy of Brian Solan.

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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.



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Reward

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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Executive Director Message

Fall is upon us and I hope you are all out hunting and recreating in the outdoors. It is always a somewhat difficult time to focus for me personally as I would rather not be in front of the computer, but hiking around some mountain range. We've started to see some member success on bighorn sheep as you will see from some of the photos in this newsletter. As you will read in the following pages and articles, the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) board has made some changes. We have elected new board members as well as new leadership for the board. This will be my last President's message, as I have agreed to take on a role of volunteer Executive Director for the MTWSF chapter. I'm somewhat following former Executive Director Jim Weatherly's vision and hoping that I can be more effective in this role with a President to help handle some of the burden. So you will not see my name on the Board of Directors moving forward, but I'll still be working to "put more sheep on the mountain" in a somewhat different role.



Thank You!
MIKE COLPO

One major change on the Board of Directors is that Mike Colpo has term limited out and has rolled off the Board after nine (9) years of service. Mike has been a great asset to the chapter and brought a perspective from the outfitter community that is valuable to our organization and working relationships in Montana. The beauty of our organization is the wide diversity of personalities and perspectives that are included in the discussion. Mike is not going anywhere and will still be involved with Montana WSF as he has donated a Dall Sheep Hunt for our 2018 Life Member raffle. Additionally, he is coordinating our 2018 Custom Rifle Raffle build. Thanks for all that you do and have done Mike.

Justin Spring was elected to his second term on the Board. Justin will continue to act as a conduit with Boone and Crockett (B&C) and brings a great perspective to the board, specifically that of a DIY, public land hunter. We are also welcoming two new faces to the Board in Ray Vinkey and Levi Bowler. All of you should have seen these bio's, but I wanted to print them again to make sure you get familiar with your new board members:



Welcome!
RAY VINKEY

RAY VINKEY

It is my honor to introduce myself—Ray Vinkey—as a candidate for the board with the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation. I'm fortunate to have found Montana, its people, wildlife, and wildlands 25 years ago. My most treasured moments have been spent recreating with family and friends in Montana's wildlands and working outdoors in this amazing place.

We all have unique skills and qualifications to bring to the table. From my perspective, I would bring knowledge of bighorn sheep research and management, experience working with the Wild Sheep Foundation to acquire habitat, and multiple relationships with hunters, land owners and agency personnel. My experience with bighorn sheep began over two decades ago in Sheep River, Alberta—and on the National Bison Range—where I was fortunate to work on a research project observing bighorn sheep behavior before and during the rut. During 8 seasons, I watched them for hundreds of hours, scrambled through sheep country, and on many days, froze my tail off. Needless-to-say I was hooked from my very first day watching bighorn.

After working 5 years working in the field on species from salmon to sheep, I completed graduate school in the wildlife program at the University of Montana (2003) on another species (fisher) that required me freeze my tail off, worked as a wildlife biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in the Upper Clark, and currently work as wildlife biologist for the Forest Service on the Kootenai National Forest. I've been dedicated to learning about bighorn and working for them since Sheep River.

Executive Director Message *continued from page 3*

Thanks to the efforts of the Wild Sheep Foundation, bighorn hunters, dedicated agency employees, and other nongovernmental organizations, I was able to protect bighorn sheep winter range on the Blue-eyed Nellie and Stucky Ridge Wildlife Management Areas near Anaconda. I am happy that I've played a role in the conservation of habitat for bighorn sheep and other species associated with intermountain grasslands and Montana's mountains. And I look forward to continued work with all of you to assist in the conservation and management of wild sheep.



Welcome!
LEVI BOWLER

LEVI BOWLER

As a third generation Montanan, I grew up in the small farming community of Scobey where access to hunting and the outdoors was welcomed and easily obtained. I later attended Montana State University–Bozeman where I graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in graphic design and was a member of the MSU Rodeo Team. With “outdoor lifestyle” written all over it, Bozeman was an obvious place to settle down, but my taste for adventure soon took me to the west coast where I spent the next few years traveling the world discovering that Montana truly was home. After a short stop in Idaho I finally executed a plan to return to Montana and for the last 10 years my wife Cami and our two kids, Addy (10) and Jack (8), have been able to soak up everything

the Flathead Valley has to offer!

As concerns over access, public lands, and wild animal conservation again begin to make headlines I feel it is our responsibility as hunters and participants of the outdoors to do what we can to preserve these wild places and wild animals for the future generations. My wife and I are both life members of the MTWSF and it is an honor to have been nominated for a board position where I hope to begin a long partnership in contributing to the efforts of keeping sheep on the mountain! Thank you for taking the time to vote.

For your information, we are back in **Bozeman** on **March 9-10, 2018, at the Gran Tree Inn** for our 26th Annual Event. We will refine the ticket purchase process to make sure all Life Members have the opportunity to be in the room for the drawing. This will surely be a not to miss event as we will be **GIVING AWAY ANOTHER FULLY GUIDED ALASKA DALL SHEEP HUNT TO A LIFE MEMBER PRESENT AT THE BANQUET....** This generated so much excitement and increased the revenue for the chapter, so it makes sense to continue. **Someone present in the room will be going sheep hunting in Alaska with Lazy J Bar O Outfitters August 20-31, 2018.** This will surely up the ante again for the 2018 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 last few banquets will tell you, we pack the house! We sold out the room last year in 10 days and continuing our Fully Guided Sheep Hunt raffle will mean that you will need to get your tickets early. We will also only be selling tickets online next year. We will have online ticket purchase up and running in January 2018 and we will put the information on the website in December.

If you haven't checked out the new MTWSF website, get over there and look around: www.montanawsf.org. It was in need of an update and Shane Clouse led the committee to get it revamped. Meetings Northwest facilitated the work and did an outstanding job.

Thanks again for our membership's support of bighorn sheep in Montana. Our membership is active, engaged and committed to “putting more sheep on the mountain”. Thanks for all that you do.

Brian Solan

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation, Volunteer Executive Director
bsolan.bs@gmail.com ♦ (406) 461-7432

Billings Volunteers Needed!

Billings Volunteers Needed!! Our 2019 Fundraiser/Banquet will be in Billings and we need some boots on the ground in the area to find a venue, logistics, etc. If anyone in the Billings area would like to help out, please contact Brian Solan. THANKS!!!

Get Involved Now!

Get involved now! Committee members needed for the following committees:

- Fundraising/Banquet - Chair Corey Piersol
- Membership Development/Website/Social Media - Chair Levi Bowler
- Project Grants/Outreach Chair Ray Vinkey

Please Get Involved in Committees to help put more sheep on the mountain!

2018 LIFE MEMBER RAFFLE

- All LIFE MEMBERS of MT Wild Sheep Foundation are included.
- MUST BE PRESENT at Annual Banquet in Bozeman, March 10, 2018.
- Transferable ONLY to another LIFE MEMBER that is also PRESENT.
- Hunt Dates August 10th-21st, 2018 with Lazy J Bar O Outfitters in unit 20A.
- This is a great Alaska Dall Sheep Hunt with a very successful outfitter.



2017 Life Member Raffle Winner
Matt Martin and his tremendous ram.



2017 Rams from
Lazy J Bar O Outfitters
Brian Solan and Ryan Trenka

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Fun Day at Whittecar Shooting Range with the Next Generation

Story by Tom Powers





Every year that we do the Teller Wildlife Refuge (Youth Conservation Education Expo) we try to create another way to get our youth involved in the outdoor world. Shooting is one of those key items that engages many of our youth who attend the Expo.

This year the Wild Sheep Foundation, Western Montana Chapter of Safari Club International, The Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Ravalli County Fish & Wild Life Association worked together to make possible a shooting event at the Whittecar Shooting Range west of Hamilton.

The Mule Deer Foundation has a shooting trailer for pellet gun shooting every year at the Youth Expo. This year 140 kids shot 2800 pellets at their booth. They were all given a chance to sign up for a shooting event at Whittecar on June 17th. 70 of the kids did and 20 were drawn.

The work getting ready for this event started last fall when we began by attending board meetings at Whittecar. We kept in contact with the board over the winter months and finalized the plans in May of 2017.

Saturday, June 17th went off like clock work. The kids and their parents/guardians met at 9 a.m in the classroom at Whittecar. First a safety meeting! Then we all moved out to the shooting ranges. Half the kids went to the rifle range, the other half to the pistol range. There was more safety instruction before any shooting took place.

On the rifle range the kids shot 22 rifles (furnished by Whittecar) at bench rests at 25, 50, and 75 yards. On the pistol range the kids shot at 7 yds with pistols supplied by Whittecar. Ammunition was supplied by Arm-score (Darren Newsom) 6 bricks of 22 Long Rifle shells.

Shooting instructors for the day were both board members of Whittecar - Jim McCormick and Dan Ashmore (both certified NRA instructors). Shooting on both ranges proved to be very competitive with kids from 11 to 16 yrs of age. They all helped one another spotting for the shooters on the rifle range. The target scoring was done by the instructors for both the morning shoot and the afternoon shoot.

When the morning shoot was over we broke for lunch in the classroom building. A very nice lunch was prepared by Tracy and Christine Manning of the Mule Deer Foundation for everyone in attendance. At 1 p.m. we resumed the shooting and the kids switched ranges for the afternoon shoot. By 3 p.m we had completed the shooting and met back in the classroom for awards and pictures. The scoring was completed by the structors and final scores tallied for both pistol and rifle.

The high scoring shooter for the pistol range was Taylor Wood from Hamilton and he was awarded a Marlin .17 caliber rifle donated by Montana WSF.

The high scoring shooter on the rifle range was Bryce Mayn of Corvallis and was awarded a very special edition Ruger 10/22 donated by Western Montana SCI chapter.

Jim McCormick, president of the Whittecar Board of Directors, said he was impressed with the kids interest and their abilities and looks forward to continuing the event next year. He said we could plan for 36 kids and do it in the same time frame as this year. Dan Ashmore said we will look at a second event for next year where the kids bring their own rifles. We will be working on this over the coming months. It is our hope that we can continue this event and continue to award the kids some great prizes again next year. All the kids received new T-shirts recognizing the event and new Mule Deer hats. Å





S.O.S.-Kind of...

Story by Brian Solan

Hunting wild sheep has taken me places I never imagined I would go and introduced me to some of the most interesting characters this world has to offer. I fell under the sheep hunting spell immediately and as Jack O'Connor once said, "There is no half way. After his first exposure, a man is either a sheep hunter or he isn't. He either falls under the spell of sheep hunting and sheep country or he won't be caught dead on another sheep mountain." Alaska dall sheep hunting has always been a dream of mine.

I've known Mike Colpo for a long time. We've served on the Montana WSF board together for the past six years and I've talked about going hunting with Mike countless times. Mike runs a great dall sheep, moose and interior grizzly outfitting business in the Alaska Range – Lazy J Bar O Outfitters. They have a remote horse camp that allows them to go further into the range utilizing horses. The only problem is I'm not a horse guy. Not even in the slightest. I've been on one horse in my life and I damn near died from allergies and asthma. I can certainly appreciate them when you have an elk or moose to pack out, but they are just not my thing. I'm a backpack hunter to the core. Mike knew that and was willing to tailor a backpack hunt around my style of hunting. Mike has some great guides working for him

that can handle a backpack style hunt and as I would come to find out, Tyler O'Brien is an absolute monster on the mountain. I do a lot of mountain hunting and it's not often someone can flat out walk away from me. Tyler is definitely "that guy".

We flew into Fairbanks August 6th, drove to Healy, then took a Cessna A185 into Mike's base camp. Mike's base camp is incredible and quite the setup for remote Alaska. It's obvious he has spent years getting it set up. Wall tents, cook shack, air strip, etc. From there, our hunt plan was to fly a super-cub from Mike's base camp into the base of the Yanert Glacier in the Alaska Range. From there we took off with the backpacks into an unnamed drainage that looked very promising.

We gave this unnamed drainage a very inappropriate name, as it made our super-cub pilot Kevin Asher really excited....

After an eight-hour jaunt through the alders and up the basin we set a base camp and started glassing. This trek is when I realized that Tyler O'Brien was the real deal and could flat out get up and down the mountain. We were instant friends. The setting and the scenery was incredible, truly something that is tough to describe. So big and so remote. Overwhelming. It was a slow start to the hunt, but over the next few days we covered some miles and spent countless hours behind the glass. Lots of lambs and ewes. Lots of big caribou (this is an incredible draw unit). Big moose. Several big bears including one that got a little too close for my nerves. Rain, snow, rain, sun, more rain, more snow, etc. On day six, we ventured into another drainage looking for an old mature ram. On the way there, we decided to crest into a pocket that was between the two major drainages. We looked it over thoroughly, with nothing but a couple caribou there. I was packed up to leave and started hiking when Tyler spotted a bedded ram in a crease that was only visible from that exact spot.

We looked this ram over for a long time and judged him to be full curl and at least 9 years old. Truly a specimen I would be happy to take. I proceeded to put a stock on him with my bow, only to find that the two caribou had bumped him up into a steep chute that was simply not an option for archery hunting. We checked the weather using the In-Reach satellite and it predicted a snow storm coming for the next three days. There was a choice to take this ram now, or risk multiple days of no visibility and difficulty relocating a ram. I'm a guy that takes advantage of the opportunities presented to

me. I made the executive decision to pull out the .28 Nosler. Setting up at 247 yards, Tyler ranged him, I dialed the Leupold to 250 yards and squeezed. I had taken a great Alaska ram. Excitement, high fives, a moment of reflection and photos followed.

The rain started almost immediately after the shot and we had a significant amount of work to do. After a 110-lb+ load off the rocks (each), we got the ram to a spot where we could unload and go back to camp for the night. As Tyler and I rested and commiserated, I decided to check my In-Reach satellite device. To my surprise, the SOS feature had been going off for the past two hours. It had notified the Alaska State Troopers, my wife (emergency contact), my mother (secondary emergency contact) and they were all in a panic that I had been eaten by a bear, fell to my death, etc. Alaska State Trooper Thomas called my wife and assured her that my GPS signal was still moving and that I hadn't confirmed the SOS call.



S.O.S - KIND OF... *continued from page 9*

In-Reach requires you to confirm that you have an actual emergency before they send the helicopters and swat team. This meant I was likely OK and it was an accidental SOS call. Of course, my wife naturally assumed that the bear had eaten me along with my In-Reach GPS and he was the one moving. Luckily this wasn't the case. When I realized what had happened, I quickly canceled the SOS and texted my wife that I was fine and that I had killed a ram. I'm sure there were a few choice words directed at me and definitely some stress relieved back in Helena.

We had another day+ of packing camp and the ram out to the air strip. Then we had to camp on the air strip

for several days waiting out the weather for a flight off the glacier. It was actually a great time to reflect on the hunt, experience, scenery, photos, etc. I also spent a couple days in base camp before getting a flight out to civilization. Back at base camp, Ryan Trenka with Swarovski Optik had come back to camp shortly after me with another great ram, which was his first and exit from the <1 club. It was pretty cool to be able to share stories and be a small part of Ryan's first ram story. Specifically, Ryan's first taste of dall sheep testicles was a moment I'll never forget and I'm sure he won't either. An adventure, experience and journey that I hope to replicate again in the near future, just without the S.O.S. call... Å





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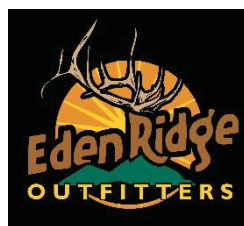
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On your new chapter website you can:

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- read the current newsletter
- see member photos
- renew your membership (it is time to become a **LIFETIME MEMBER***)
- learn about where your fundraising money goes
- find montana wild sheep statistics
- purchase your Montana Wildsheep Expo & Banquet Tickets (when that time comes)

Thank You!

for participating in our Member Questionnaire -
your comments were heard and appreciated!

* **Montana WSF Life Members Raffle** - All LIFE MEMBERS of MT Wild Sheep Foundation are included, but MUST BE PRESENT at Annual Banquet in Bozeman.



Teaming Up

Story by Kurt Alt

The Montana Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation continues to make positive movement with the Montana Wool Growers Association. We have realized that our human-human conflict has kept us from working on solutions to ongoing issues regarding respiratory health of both domestic and wild sheep.

We are working towards developing a statewide wild sheep-domestic sheep working group. We agree our focus needs to be on disease research and surveillance in both domestic and wild sheep, defining what components are important in effective separation between wild and domestics, further defining what constitutes contact, education and outreach to recreational producers and developing collaborative approaches to identifying potential reintroduction opportunities for wild sheep.

We have come to understand that domestic sheep and the industry are impacted by the same and similar respiratory diseases that are impacting wild sheep. These diseases can and do kill domestic sheep, effect overall heard health, and reduce market lamb weights. To that end we have been working with MSU, both the Ecology Department and College of Agriculture, and the US Department of Agriculture National Institute for Food and Agriculture to support and find ways to advance work on respiratory disease in both domestic and wild sheep. ^Å



Photo Gallery



Jeff Hahn and his ram from
HD 482.



Eric Bauer and his ram taken
from HD 482.



Levi Ostberg and his ram from
HD 422.



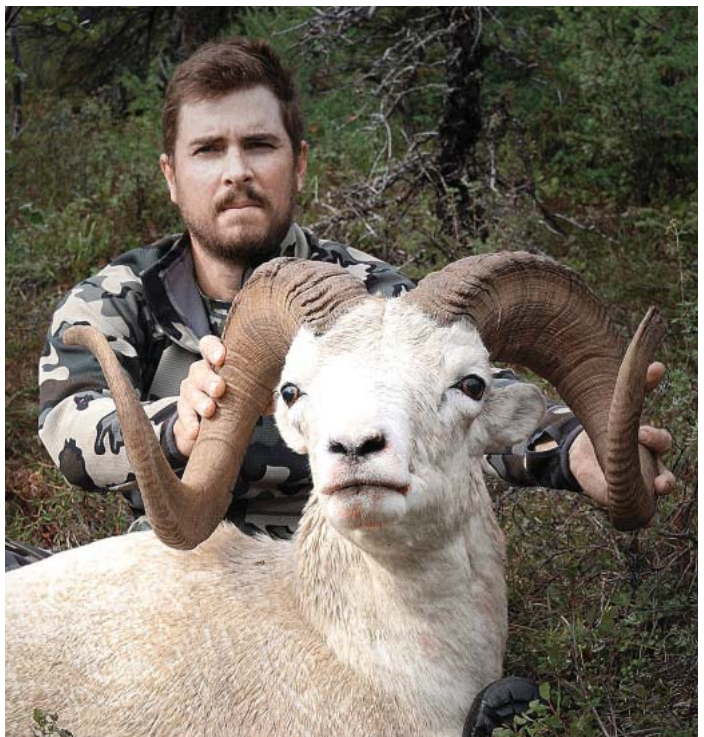
Braiden Brugh and his archery ram taken from HD 270.



Life Member Hunt Matt Martin.



Tom Madden and his ram taken from HD 482-20.



Ryan Butler and Dall sheep.



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