



MONTANA  
WILD SHEEP  
FOUNDATION

# WildSheep

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**2022 Online  
Banquet Raffle  
Packages**

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**2021 Life Member Hunt**

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**Cover photo credit** - Dustin Tetralt  
**President's Message Photo** - Steve Kline

## SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLES AND PHOTOS!

Have a photo from a great sheep hunt or an article you would like to have published in our newsletter? Submit your photos (in .jpeg format and with a short description) and your articles to [tulberg@meetingsnorthwest.com](mailto:tulberg@meetingsnorthwest.com).

## CONNECT with Montana WSF

Visit us online at [www.montanawsf.org](http://www.montanawsf.org)!

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



*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).

## Board of Directors

**D.J. Berg, President**  
[dj@montanawsf.org](mailto:dj@montanawsf.org)

**Don Patterson, Vice President**  
[d5357mt@gmail.com](mailto:d5357mt@gmail.com)

**Max Bauer Jr., Treasurer**  
[bauertranch@gmail.com](mailto:bauertranch@gmail.com)

**Jeff Mortensen, Co-Treasurer**  
[jcmort7@gmail.com](mailto:jcmort7@gmail.com)

**Grant Winn II, Secretary**  
[g.winn@nm.com](mailto:g.winn@nm.com)

**Levi Bowler**  
[levibowler@gmail.com](mailto:levibowler@gmail.com)

**Alex Russell**  
[alexrussell@cushingterrell.com](mailto:alexrussell@cushingterrell.com)

**Justin Spring**  
[justin@boone-crockett.org](mailto:justin@boone-crockett.org)

**Ray Vinkey**  
[rvinkey@hotmail.com](mailto:rvinkey@hotmail.com)

**Brian Solan, Volunteer Executive Director**  
[brian@montanawsf.org](mailto:brian@montanawsf.org)

**Kurt Alt, Conservation Director**  
[altwildlife@yahoo.com](mailto:altwildlife@yahoo.com)


## Newsletter Editor & Publisher

**Traci Ulberg**  
Meetings Northwest, Inc.  
(406) 273-7224  
[tulberg@meetingsnorthwest.com](mailto:tulberg@meetingsnorthwest.com)

*Contact us at:*  
Montana Wild Sheep Foundation  
PO Box 17731  
Missoula, MT 59808

Visit us at [montanawsf.org](http://montanawsf.org).

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# President's Message

**T**he new year is here, and like many of you, I like to spend some time reflecting on the past year and thinking about the future. I'm a glass half full guy, and this past year was full of successes. We were able to advocate and fund the bighorn sheep transplant in the Little Belt Mountains, reintroduce bighorns into the Tendoy Mountains, and assist in the early phases of a capture and collar project in Highland Mountains. We advocated for wild sheep conservation and our hunting heritage at the 2021 Montana Legislative Session and continued to foster good relationships with our neighbors at Montana Fish Wildlife, and Parks, Montana Wool Growers, the Wild Sheep Foundation, and many others.

I couldn't be more proud of the progress we made last year, and you should be too. We directed over \$100,000 to wild sheep initiatives. The dedication of our members and sponsors to fund projects year after year is strengthening Montana's bighorn sheep herds. For that, I offer you a sincere thank you! I also want to thank our Executive Director Brian Solan, Conservation Director Kurt Alt, and the Board of Directors for their hard work this past year. All of these folks bring an incredible amount of dedication and talent to wild sheep conservation efforts in Montana.

It is important to celebrate our successes and I look forward to raising a glass with you at our 30th Annual Banquet and Fundraiser, in Butte, America! We opened ticket sales in December and sold out within weeks. We worked with the hotel to secure overflow seating and those seats were also sold out. That is a testament to the energy our members bring to bighorn conservation. We have some great raffles and auctions planned for the event, in addition to a membership meeting, seminars, and vendors. We cannot wait to see you in February!

I know that some of you will not be able to attend the banquet. I am sorry we will miss each other this year and ask that you consider a donation to Montana Wild Sheep Foundation in lieu of your attendance. Visit our website today to donate!

We still have work to do in Montana to expand wild sheep distribution and to increase our opportunities to interact with these amazing animals. In this coming year we will be working closely with our partners across Montana to influence and fund bighorn sheep projects. Efforts in the Little Belts, Tendoy, Bridgers, and Highlands are evidence that the future is bright for Montana's most prolific big game species.

*D.J. Berg*

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation President  
[dj@montanawsf.org](mailto:dj@montanawsf.org)  
(406) 366-1849



# Conservation Director's Update: Landmark Efforts Developing in Montana for Bighorn Sheep Conservation and Restoration

by Kurt Alt  
Conservation Director, Montana and International Programs

The Highlands bighorn sheep project presented in the last newsletter is live - Butte area biologist Vanna Boccadori and Statewide research biologist Dr. Kelly Proffitt started capturing, collaring, and testing bighorn sheep during the last week of January for the Highlands Bighorn Sheep Restoration project.

On December 18, 2021, area biologist Jay Kolby led the second translocation of 33 bighorn sheep into the Little Belt Mountains. Last year 50 bighorn sheep were introduced into the Little Belt Mountains, but experienced high mountain lion mortality (15) their first

winter/spring. Houndsmen have been upping their hunting efforts in the bighorn sheep establishment area to relieve/reduce this source of mortality as the population is establishing.

In the last newsletter I noted a major effort is underway to develop science-based separation practices to address co-mingling of wild and domestic sheep. This project is in its final stage of development in collaboration between Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Montana State University College of Agriculture with support by MTWSF, MTWGA and MTWSF/WSF. This is a first-of-its-kind project to develop new tools for managing and minimizing co-mingling between domestic and wild sheep. We are expecting a final work proposal by the end of March. This project will be a 5-10 year effort and require significant collaborative funding and support.

Montana's current Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy (2010) guidance is for reintroductions or existing bighorn sheep herds be  $\geq 14.5$  km from domestic sheep and goats. However, many of Montana's herds are within that distance and most introductions into suitable habitat will also be within that distance. With new management tools we are hoping to move away from a line on a map (i.e., 14.5 km) defining risk,



and create and expand new opportunities to restore sheep in suitable habitat previously rejected due to risks that couldn't previously be mitigated. These management tools will be developed in collaboration with both wild and domestic sheep interests and designed to assure healthy and thriving environments for both domestic and wild sheep.

MSU College of Agriculture is continuing its landmark research efforts on respiratory disease in domestic sheep, specifically *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M.ovi.). Diane Bimczok, D.V.M., Ph.D., is the principal investigator and just received another four year grant. We are strong supporters of this work, the benefits it can bring to Montana woolgrowers and spinoff benefits to wild sheep.

In addition, Working Dogs for Conservation (WD4C) received a Wild Sheep Foundation grant to develop reliable approaches for detecting M.ovi. in sheep under field conditions and developing training protocols for herding dogs as a domestic/wild sheep separation tool. Last winter WD4C conducted trial work in collaboration with Dr. Bimczok on M.ovi. detection in domestic sheep and will look to expand work on wild sheep integrated with MTFWP efforts. 🐾

# 2021 Life Member Hunt: Dall Sheep in the Brooks Range of Alaska

by Dustin Tetralt

I sat in my living room having a cold beer and watching the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation navigate COVID with an annual banquet streamed across a YouTube live channel. It was nearing the end of the banquet and having been unsuccessful with any of the auctions or raffles, I was thinking to myself, "it's all about putting sheep back on the mountain." The life member drawing for a Dall sheep hunt in the Brooks Range of Alaska was up next.

"Wow, what an opportunity," I thought, as they spun the lottery bin and pulled out a tag. When the winning ticket was pulled, they had to verify that the life member had bought a dinner ticket as well to win.

"From Twin Bridges, Montana," they announced. At this point, it was almost 9:00 pm, and I was struggling to stay awake but was soon flooded with adrenaline as I heard my hometown get read off.

"How many life members can there be from Twin Bridges, MT," I thought as they verified that the person had, in fact, bought a dinner ticket.

"Yes, we have a winner," said Brain Solan. As he read my name, I instantly shot up off the couch and started a low-level shrill of a scream of excitement, careful not to wake up our sleeping children. Half asleep on the couch, my wife was confused and figured I was just drunk and won a coffee cup or something but I quickly filled her in on what I had just won. We both celebrated, running around the house, waiting for reality to sink in of what had just happened. After a few calls to friends and family to tell them about the big news, I went to bed and laid there for about an hour with my mind racing with anxiety that I was going on a trip of a lifetime in about five months that most people plan for years.

"You better get in sheep shape," everyone said when

I told them about my upcoming hunt. As an avid hiker, hunter, firefighter, and outdoorsman, I felt pretty good about my plan for preparing myself both physically and mentally. My wife did not want to miss out on the trip, and as my primary hunting partner, I was delighted to have her go along. After summer came along, we came

up with a good plan of attack for our workout and hiking programs to get us into a good physical state before the hunt. Little did we know that having full-time jobs, small children, and an early and intense wildfire season would blow up any consistent program we had thought we were going to be able to do. We hit it hard when we could and tried as much as possible to get some long hikes in with heavy packs, all while navigating the logistics and funding for the other parts of the hunt. The Thofts' from Ovis Outfitters were top-notch and helped along the way with the planning and logistics. I figured with the hunt of a lifetime coming my way, I should probably use this opportunity to purchase a new gun. I was able to make a case to my wife that all my current rifles were too heavy, and therefore I needed to get a new one that is lighter and better for hiking in Alaska, and she bought

into it! June and July brought more wildfires, and I was deployed with the Montana DNRC's fire team for about twenty of thirty-five days to seven different fires and could not stick to my training or get my gun sighted to where I wanted it to be.

Crunch time! It was August 1<sup>st</sup>, and I was about two and a half weeks away from the trip. I had shot a few rounds through my new gun, but we still hadn't gotten all our gear packed or sorted which, for some reason, led to a slurry of random purchases of dry bags, underwear,



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**“Life Member Hunt” continued from page 5**

and socks. Also, about this time, I had realized that the alpine hunting boots I had purchased had made my plantar fasciitis worse and that they were not going to be a good option for the hunt. I sprung and bought a different boot that was not quite as stiff a couple of weeks before the hunt, which was a great choice in the long run. At this point, I finally felt good about our gear and preparation.

It was the day before departure. Grandpa was set to babysit the kids, gear and food packed, gun dialed out to 400 yds, and in as good physical shape as possible other than a bum foot. We boarded our flight out of Bozeman to get to Anchorage and overnights in Anchorage, which consisted of a good meal and a few local beers before a sleepless night of racing thoughts and worry. About the time I dozed off, the alarm was going off for an early flight to Prudhoe Bay. As we descended into Prudhoe Bay, the land looked like something from another world. Water everywhere with oil derricks and stacked connex boxes were strewn about the landscape. Upon arrival, we rendezvoused with David from Ovis Outfitters and the other two hunters coming in with us. The cool crisp air and spitting snow were a welcome change from the heat and smoke we had left in Montana but forced us to overnight in Prudhoe Bay due to the weather. The evening dinner in the hotel cafeteria with the other hunters was enjoyable. It allowed us to all get to know each other before we all went our separate ways for adventures of a lifetime. One of the other hunters had hunted Dall sheep with Ovis before and offered his veteran insight and stories of being snowed into a tent for six of the ten days on his first venture that led to an unsuccessful hunt.

The following day came, and we were greeted by clearer skies which meant we were packing back into the van to hit the Dalton Highway for a two-hour commute to the airstrip. The famed road was not a disappointment, littered with speckle belly geese and DIY caribou archery hunters chasing them around the tundra. We arrived at the airstrip, and we were able to meet Matt Thoft, the owner of Ovis and lead pilot, with his Cessna ready to go to camp. Kathy and I were up first, so we loaded up and got on the way to camp. When we arrived at the main camp, the resident black lab, Oscar, greeted us with wagging tales and belly scratches. We met a couple of the successful hunters who were coming out



of sheep country and heard their stories of trials and tribulations.

We also heard about the two hunters coming out after being unsuccessful - after missing legal rams. I thought to myself, “Wow, that must be a horrible feeling,” and then the creeping thoughts began of “What happens if I blow it and miss as well?”

We went right down and shot our rifle to ensure that nothing had happened during the flight, and I was reassured after sending six rounds down range from 100-300 yds, and all were right on target. As soon as we got to the main camp, we were getting our gear repacked to go into the hunting camp. We loaded into the super cub and were off. I sat eyes and mouth wide open in awe of the view from the plane as we flew into camp. Kathy was flying with Matt’s wife Emily just above us and thinking the same thing as we flew over the rugged terrain of the north slope of the Brooks Range.

We landed in camp and were greeted by our guide, Mikey. Mikey was not what you would expect out of a sixteen-plus-year sheep guide. All of 5’5” and 49 years old, Mikey was a welder from upstate New York and, at first glance, not someone who you would think crushes mountains for three months a year. Later, I began to see that all of Mikey’s bags and gear were labeled “Mountain Goat Mikey.” I knew that if the outfitter marks his stuff with that title, he probably is going to kill us in the hills.

“What’s the plan for tomorrow, Mikey?” I asked.

“We will just go for a nice easy hike for the first day and not climb unless we see something,” said Mikey that night.

We woke up for the first day of hunting to pleasant skies and cool temps as we made our instant coffee and warmed up some oatmeal with boiling water, with the anticipation palpable between my wife Kathy and I. We got on the trail the first morning. We were in heaven, being total tourists, taking pictures and enjoying the scenery as we picked our way along the river bottom while glassing the green vegetation where it transitions to the rock scree. It wasn’t long before we spotted a few young rams

feeding up high in one of the bowls.

“Let’s climb up there and take a better look just in case there is something else up there we can’t see,” Mikey said as we looked up at the mountain and a steep slope that even made us Montanans a bit intimidated. We started up the suffer-fest and soon found ourselves at the top, and Mikey said, “wow, that was steeper than it looked.”

“No shit,” I muttered between my heavy breathing. The view was incredible. We sat on the ridge and watched sheep and caribou feed below us for the day as I got a lesson on judging sheep and caribou from Mikey as we got to know him a little better. The outfitter and outgoing hunters had told us how many caribou bulls were in the area, so we opted to buy an add-on caribou tag for Kathy. We were excited about the potential to harvest a nice caribou as well. Every time I looked over at her, I



noticed she would be glassing caribou in the river bottom and would occasionally ask, “Well, what about that one?” to which Mikey would reply “Not this year, there are too many big ones up here this year. We will hold out for one bigger and closer to camp.” We finished our first day of hunting with a long walk back to the camp and about thirteen total miles for the day. My foot was throbbing, and I immediately plunged it into the frigid waters when I got back to camp to dull the pain and put my camp slippers on to recover.

The second day we awoke to fog and went back to sleep for an extra hour until the fog lifted. When it lifted, we immediately saw a herd of caribou feeding our way. We got into a better position to intercept them, and they changed direction ten times before finally cresting over the mountain as we planned for the sheep hunting for the day. As we got the plan together and looked

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back towards camp, we saw another group of caribou coming over the hill from the other direction. We quickly hurried back towards camp and over towards them to get a better look. We were able to get within 200 yards, and the wind was perfect as they fed on a hillside above us. As we looked them over, two bulls were impressive to me, but without much to compare to because of my lack of experience with them, I had no idea if they were day two shooters. Mikey was ok with waiting and passing on these, so we began to head up the river bottom, careful not to spook them. We got a little closer and sat back down to glass them, and I could tell Kathy was getting excited and would have loved to get a chance to shoot any of those bulls. Mikey then said, “Yeah, he is a shooter if you want to try it Kathy.”

It didn't take much arm twisting for her to get prone and get the crosshairs settled on him at just over 200 yards, and she squeezed the trigger while letting out a big exhale. We heard the gun go off and the loud whap that ensued. The caribou ran about twenty yards and began to waiver, and she hit him again and finished him off. She was speechless after the shot and shaking like a leaf from the adrenaline rush. As we got up to him, we were both amazed at the animal's size and his horns.

We immediately got to work and thanked him for his life and the meat he was providing for our family and got him butchered and loaded up to get back to camp. Mikey was able to notify the pilot that we had one down and come get the meat if he could make it in.

We cooked up the tenderloins almost immediately and enjoyed some fresh, clean meat while we waited for the plane to arrive. We heard the buzzing sound of the plane motor shortly after as the pilot approached and made his landing. The pilot and Mikey were quick to load the meat and horns up and get it on the way back to the main camp, where it would be processed down, vacuum packed, and frozen for us. Mikey didn't want to waste any time, so he proposed after the three-mile morning that we go for a little late-night hunt, so we

packed up and hit the mountains until about 10:00 pm as it was typically light until about 11:00 pm and then the twilight set in where it was not quite dark. We were able to find a ram that night, but again, not a full curl, so not legal to go after.

Day three and four brought us into all parts of the mountain. At times we found sheep but were a thousand feet above them and found some living in nasty areas that were inaccessible by foot. We were able to see another ten or so rams and still nothing legal. Mikey had decided that after spending four days with us and seven with the hunter before in this spot, there were no other legal rams on the mountain and asked if we could get a pilot to come to move us to a new location. At this point, we had hiked about forty miles in four days, and we were gaining confidence with our abilities to hunt in this new environment.



The next day the pilot showed up as soon as the weather broke, and we were packing camp up and moving about seven miles upriver to hunt some new country. Upon landing in the new spot, I was able to glass several ewes and lambs as well as three rams before the pilot even returned

with Kathy or Mikey. When I saw the plane coming in with Mikey and the last load, a rain cloud was bearing down on us, so we hurried to get our tents set up and tarped all our gear so as not to get our stuff wet. Mikey had warned us on day one; if you get wet here, it is tough to ever get dry for the rest of the hunt, so we were careful to keep all our gear as dry as possible. Donning rain gear and pack covers multiple times a day as the fickle arctic weather changed every hour.

We were unable to hunt that day because we flew, so we opted to enjoy some freshly picked blueberries we made into a compote to serve over the other caribou tenderloin and rehab our sore muscles and feet for the rest of the day. The pilot also brought us six Pabst Blue Ribbons when he flew in to move us in our care package, and a fresh PBR never tasted so good to me as they did on this trip.



The first hunting morning, which was day six of a ten-day hunt, was now upon us. We awoke to thick fog and to the sound of a wolf howling close to our camp. Mikey thought that he was alerting others to our presence. Once the fog lifted, we pushed our way up into one of the three drainages that the main river split into and was able to find six sheep relatively quickly and opted to push further to get a better look. As we hiked up to get a closer look, we saw numerous caribou feeding in the area and a grizzly sow and cub on a trail coming our way. Once closer, we could tell that these sheep were a group of young rams, and again nothing that was a legal ram.



So now we have seen about thirty sheep and primarily rams but nothing legal. It was getting frustrating to Mikey as we kept hammering out mile after mile, another thirteen this day to be exact, only to not find a legal ram.

The next day was more of the same, only this day we had decided to pack up our tents and sleeping gear and spike about four miles further up the drainage so we wouldn't have to go so far every day. The day was filled with heavy packs full of three days of food and all of our gear. We set up our spike camp and pushed up one of the drainages to the top. Soon we found ourselves in some of the most beautiful sheep country, only no sheep to be found. This day was our biggest day yet; at almost seventeen miles, we limped back to camp feeling defeated.

Day eight consisted of more of the same, no new sheep to be found even though we were in fantastic habitat and pushed hard to hike a lot of miles to see a lot of country. That was the first night that I laid in our tent and thought to myself, “This might not happen; I might not even get an opportunity to take a sheep.” As I lay there, my mind raced with what-ifs. I reflected on the hunt thus far and was elated with the entire thing. Getting to be in this country, hiking, spending time with my best friend/wife without the distractions of kids or

work, getting to know my guide and his story, getting to watch Kathy



harvest a caribou, and just the entire experience. I felt a sense of calmness come over me. I thought to myself, “If I had come up here and not given it my all and not gotten anything, I would always wonder if I had given it more effort, would I have gotten one?” I felt like I had given it 110% up to this point, and if it was not in God's plan for me to get

an opportunity, I was ok with it because we had been crushing it thus far.

I woke up the morning of day nine to the sound of snow hitting my tent and a cold, wet teepee wall sagging onto my head. I stuck my head out of the tent to see the miserable conditions outside and immediately zipped back into my sleeping bag and proceeded to make coffee and breakfast with the hopes of a clearing so we could push up the last drainage. My prayers were answered just before lunchtime, and we were able to pack up and get hiking.

As we started our ascent, I asked Mikey, “When was the last time you had a full-length hunt without killing a ram?” to which he replied, “With a willing, in-shape hunter who can go where I want to go, 2009.” Wow, I thought, those are some good success rates; too bad we will ruin it. I guess Mikey will remember us as the suffer-fest ten-day hunt with no legal rams out of about fifty spotted at this point. We made the quiet push up through the drainage and a saddle into what looked like a sheep oasis; only no sheep were to be found. It was 3:00 pm, and it was setting in that this wasn't going to happen. We had to get our spike camp out the following day and get back to the landing strip to get

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## “Life Member Hunt” continued from page 9

picked up and this isn't going to happen.

The drainage had run out, and we looked off the backside into one of the most beautiful drainages and quickly realized we were at the top about 1000 feet up on one side. As we glassed, we were all feeling defeated as we began to pack up for the hike back when Mikey said, “Oh, there are two sheep right over there on the other side of the drainage.”

We got the spotting scope set up to take a closer look. Throughout the trip, I was able to figure out Mikey's body language when he was spotting. Glasses come off and rub the bridge of nose meant ram, not legal, quick look was ewe or lamb, this time he looked, and I saw a smile. I hadn't yet seen this from him, so I immediately knew that meant it was a shooter. We sat and watched for about an hour and had a snack waiting for them to get up and bed in a different direction because they were looking right at us. This gave us a little bit of time to examine our surroundings and plan for our stalk.

Step one was making the 1000' descent down a sheer face to get to the bottom undetected and alive. Once the rams got bedded into a better position, we could pick our way down the mountainside, picking our footholds carefully one step at a time. Once at the bottom, we hurried across the river bottom and got under them out of sight. We had planned

to get below them and try to get a shot from the river bottom, but a small ridge in front of them quickly led to a change of plan. We backed around the corner and made a sidehill approach on an adjacent ridge just out of sight. We got to a good spot where we could pop our heads up and keep an eye on them when they got up to move because we couldn't see the legal ram, only his buddy bedded above him. We sat there for almost two hours, waiting for him to get up and trying to get in position to shoot at a steep uphill angle. All the while, I was having the thoughts running through my head of “Don't mess this up and miss.”

Once I was almost set to shoot in an awkward sitting position with my gun resting on top of the rail of my Mystery Ranch pack, the legal ram got up and immediately headed up a small draw out of sight. I thought I had just blown it. I was set to shoot at this point, and after a couple of minutes, he proceeded to come back into view.

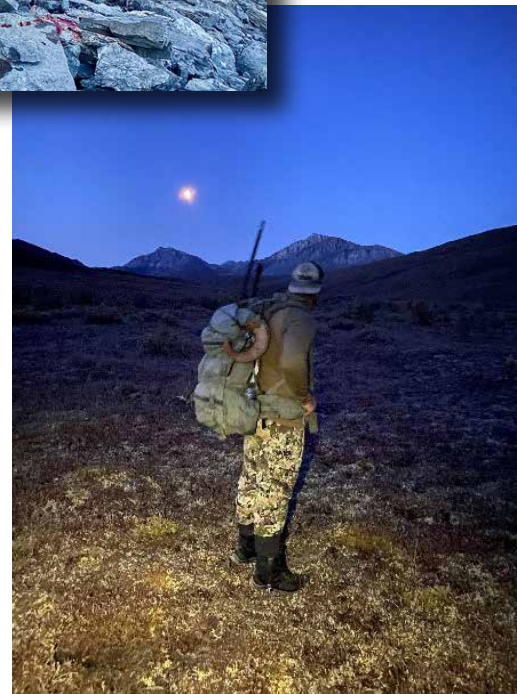
As he turned to head back up the hill, Mikey whispered, “324, get him if

you can,” I didn't hesitate. I had him in my crosshairs, he was quartered away hard heading uphill, and I settled the crosshairs just in front of his back hip and squeezed it off. Whap! I knew I had connected; he wavered and took a half step back down the rock scree and turned broadside as I racked another round and put it just behind his shoulder for a follow-up. Whap! And he rolled down the hill. I had done it; the flood of emotions and relief immediately came over me. I was shaking and about to cry, cold, hungry, and full of joy. We celebrated with high fives and hugs and began to pick our way down the slate scree back to the river bottom to glass up to where he had fallen to.

When we looked up at the scree field and assessed a path of travel up the ridge about 500 feet, we started our ascent. The climb felt effortless with the fresh shot of adrenaline running through my veins. Once we got

to the ram and I could go out on the scree field and get my hands on him, I immediately felt a feeling of relief and joy. I knew the work was just about to begin, but I didn't care at this point.

We quickly



butchered and deboned the animal, knowing that we had a brutal climb back out of the valley floor back to where we spotted the rams from. We carefully loaded our packs and slowly picked our way back down the loose gravel ridge with the occasional sit-down and slide as the footing was inconsistent as we descended. Back across the river bottom to the saddle, we had to climb to get back out.

“This is the last big climb of the trip,” I thought. I took my phone out and turned on some downloaded workout music and put my head down, and proceeded to bear crawl my way up the mountain and thought I was crushing it only to get mid-mountain and look to my left to see my wife pass me and Mikey trailing right behind her. Dammit, my competitive side thought, I wanted to win!

We got it done, and this whole experience has been amazing, so who cares. Once to the top, we all did the wardrobe shuffle as we had done ten times a day in the previous days. Heavy layers on over base layers as the temps had dropped below freezing as it was now almost 10:00 pm.

“Let's try to get out of that canyon above spike camp,” Mikey said. We had glassed this small drainage above camp that looked tight with rock walls and a couple of waterfalls. “9 times out of 10, you can get out and just



sidehill around the waterfalls,” he offered up.

“Real assuring, and in the dark to boot,” I said. Kathy was not as excited about the plan as the creek crossings had gotten old to her as we crossed it what seemed like 100 times a day. Not to mention her feet had gotten wet a couple of days prior and were so cold that when we killed the sheep, she had taken her boots off and taken the warm meat in

garbage sacks, and sandwiched her feet in them. We picked slowly down the canyon, careful not to slip on the icy rocks and fall down the various spots we had to sidehill on the mountainside to get around waterfalls.

At 1:00 am we stumbled back into camp and unloaded the heavy packs. Exhausted, we all got into our tents to cook up the mountain house dinners we had become so accustomed to, knowing the following day would be a heavy pack out with all the camp and meat the almost five miles back to the main camp at the airstrip. As I fell asleep that night, I didn't have a care in the world: no work stress, home stress, worry of bears getting the meat, or anything else, just a sense of calm and satisfaction.

I slept amazingly, woke up the following morning at almost 9:00 am, and had our morning routine of

*continued on next page*

## Thank you to our 2022 Beartooth Sponsors!



## “Life Member Hunt” continued from page 11

coffee and breakfast as we packed up our camp and meat and made the heavy trip out to the main camp. We chatted and laughed on the hike out, filled with joy and happiness that it had happened after an emotional rollercoaster of acceptance of defeat to the highest of highs. We arrived back to main camp after many breaks to hydrate and eat blueberries on the way out and found our camp to still be intact and no food or tents messed with by any of the numerous bears or wolves in the area. We dropped packs, and I immediately dug out my flask of bourbon that I had brought along to sip upon my success. I had made it; ten days and 83 miles later, and damn, that bourbon tasted good as I sat on the ground and leaned against my pack looking at the ram’s horns and just beamed as I enjoyed my last moments in the Brooks Range.

As I heard the plane coming in, I took one last look at the area and tried to take in as much as I could to remember this for the rest of my life. I was soon being congratulated by Ovis Owner and pilot Matt Thoft.

We loaded up the meat and my gear and flew back to main camp where I was greeted by Matt’s wife Emily with a hug and congratulations as Oscar, the dog, came out wagging his tail as well as to congratulate me. I enjoyed a cup of coffee at the kitchen table and exchanged stories with one of the other hunters that came in with us as I waited for Kathy and Mikey to get picked up and brought back. We spent that night at the main camp and got to have a nice dinner with the other guides and hunters and heard all the stories of their hunts and the trials and tribulations they experienced as we ate caribou and sheep meat and drank the remaining PBRs that were in camp.

What a fantastic experience that this was. I cannot thank the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation enough for the opportunity that I would have otherwise never have had. It was indeed a trip of a lifetime and will live in my memories for the rest of my life, and hopefully, this written account will remain a vivid story for my children when I am gone and to others who may read this. 🍷

## Science Corner

by Ray Vinkey, Science Corner Editor

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation has ponied up \$20,000 to help initiate innovative research by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks starting this winter on bighorn sheep in the Highland mountains south of Butte. The goal of this work will be to learn how to best recover bighorn sheep populations which have suffered from all-age, pneumonia induced, die-off events.

While some Montana herds find their footing after die-offs with numbers returning to pre-die-off numbers within a decade, other herds, like the Highlands (or sub-herds within it), have perpetually reduced lamb recruitment and sporadic pneumonia activity among juveniles and adults. Even with augmentation, herds with these characteristics are unable to return to their prior number or colonize formerly occupied habitat.

One hypothesis for why this occurs is that some individuals who survive epizootics serve as reservoirs for pathogens and continually reinfect the herd. An evolving approach to address this challenge is ‘test and remove’—which is a herd health management strategy whereby populations are monitored and individuals who are disease reservoirs are culled from the population. This has been a successful strategy in Hells Canyon for a metapopulation of bighorn that dwell along the Snake River and its tributaries, and this strategy may hold promise for chronically depressed populations in Montana as well.

Research in the Highlands, by Vanna Boccadori, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Butte Area Wildlife Biologist, and Dr. Kelly Proffitt FWP Research Scientist, will determine if test and remove and mineral supplementation could be an effective approach to recover bighorn sheep herds in Montana. This will be a six-year study with an adaptive management approach which may ultimately inform herd management statewide.

Here’s an overview of the Highlands work written by Vanna and Kelly.

### HIGHLAND BIGHORN SHEEP POPULATION MANAGEMENT EXPERIMENT: *Evaluating management for herd recovery*

Recently, the FWP Mountain Ungulate Working Group developed an adaptive bighorn sheep management program that is designed to reduce key uncertainties in pathogen and population dynamics and facilitate bighorn sheep restoration in Montana.

As part of this program, we propose a management experiment in the Highlands meta-population to test the efficacy of two actions that may facilitate increased lamb survival and population growth:

- 1) test and removal of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* (*M. ovi*) positive animals, and
- 2) mineral supplementation.

We will collect two-years of baseline information on the five sub-herds that comprise the Highlands meta-population to

- 1) monitor disease exposure of individuals,
- 2) monitor lamb survival, and

- 3) estimate connectivity of sub-herds.

After two-years of baseline data collection to identify chronic *M. ovi* carriers, we will implement a test and removal strategy in two of the sub herds, a mineral supplementation strategy in two sub herds, and no management intervention in one of the sub herds. The efficacy of management treatments will be monitored for an additional two-years. An increase in lamb survival and population growth and decrease in *M. ovi* detections in the sub herds treated with the test and removal strategy would indicate success of the management strategy. An increase in lamb survival and population growth in the sub herds treated with mineral supplementation would indicate success of the management strategy. We expect results of this management experiment are applicable to the management of struggling bighorn sheep herds across Montana.

It’s work like this that proceeds from your membership and participation in our fundraiser support! I look forward to seeing you at our fundraiser in Butte, America!! 🍷

Don’t miss out on the chance for a once in a lifetime hunt....

## LIFE MEMBER RAFFLE



### About the Hunt:

Winner will venture into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with Ovis Outfitters on a 10 day, one-on-one, backpack style hunt.

### To qualify for the 2022 Life Member Hunt Raffle:

1. Must be a Life Member of the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation.
2. Must be PRESENT at the Annual Banquet & Fundraiser on February 26, 2022 in Butte, MT.
3. Transferable only to another Life Member who is PRESENT at the event.

For more information on the 2022 lifetime member hunt, visit <https://montanawsf.org/events-wsf/>.



**Kevin Gilbert**

 **Members**  
*Photo Gallery*



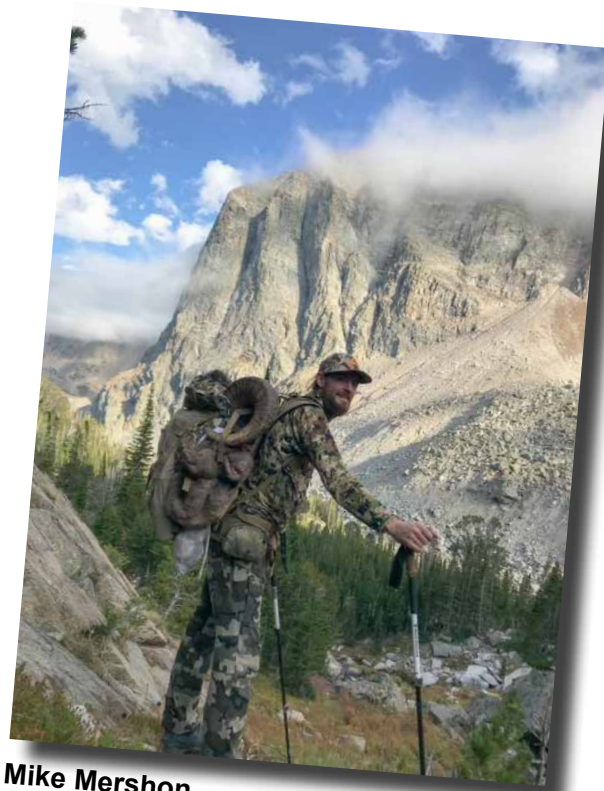
Hank Frank



Jesse Ott



Wayne Schlegel



Mike Mershon

**Members**   
*Photo Gallery*



Brandon Guhy



Tyler Boschma

**SUBMIT YOUR  
ARTICLES AND  
PHOTOS!**

Have a photo from a great sheep hunt or an article you would like to have published in our newsletter? Submit your photos (in .jpeg format and with a short description) and your articles to [tulberg@meetingsnorthwest.com](mailto:tulberg@meetingsnorthwest.com).

**YOU HELP KEEP SHEEP ON THE MOUNTAIN WITH YOUR SUPPORT**



**Thank you for your ongoing support as a member to fulfill our ongoing goal to Keep Sheep on the Mountain!** We now have a way to easily take donations outside of banquet season! Do have an employer who matches your donations? Do you want to maximize your tax returns by donating to a 501c(3)?

**WE MADE IT EASY**

- 1 Scan the QR code (to the right) with your phone's camera app and make a donation today!
- 2 Or, go to our website ([montanawsf.org](http://montanawsf.org)) and click on the "Donate Today" button in our menu to make your donation.





*Copper King Hotel*

& CONVENTION CENTER

**FEB. 25-26<sup>TH</sup>, 2022**

BUTTE, AMERICA



## 2022 Banquet Schedule

### Friday | February 25, 2022

Exhibitors Open 7pm - 10pm

#### 7:00 pm MEMBERSHIP MEETING & SOCIAL

General Membership Meeting and Social with exhibitors. Friday Only Raffles & Prizes. A Night of Conservation Hosted by Stone Glacier. No tickets necessary. **FREE OF CHARGE!** Appetizers and \$25 MTWSF & Stone Glacier bottomless pints will be available.

#### 8:00 pm CAMPFIRE STORY TELLING

Join Lyle Hebel, Marketing Director with Stone Glacier and all around cool guy for stories and photos of his recent sheep hunts.

### Saturday | February 26, 2022

Exhibitors Open 9am - 6pm

*Be sure to register at the registration table when you arrive! Reminder: All raffle sales will be conducted with cash or debit card only.*

9:00 am Highlands Sheep Study Program with Vanna Boccadori and Kelly Proffitt (No Ticket Required)

10:30 am Little Belts and Tendoy's Transplant Updates with Jay Kolbe and Jesse Newby (No Ticket Required)

3:00 pm Social with Exhibitors  
\$25 for a bottomless MTWSF & Stone Glacier pint glass! Appetizers! A no-host full bar! Raffle tickets and games!

6:00 pm 30th ANNUAL BANQUET & FUNDRAISER  
Silent & Live Auctions, Raffles, Dinner, and Fun! Tickets are required for event. **Life Members must be present to be eligible for Life Member Hunt Giveaway.** All auction items will be posted for preview as recieved.

More information at [montanawsf.org](http://montanawsf.org)

# 2022 Online Raffles

Not able to make it to the banquet but still want to show your support? Check out these on-line raffles we are hosting! Tickets are available now at [montanawsf.org](http://montanawsf.org).

## CUSTOM RIFLE

\$20

DEFIANCE MACHINE, ZEISS OPTICS, PROOF RESEARCH AND AG COMPOSITES HAVE BUILT A BEAUTY IN 6.5 PRC



- Defiance anTiX medium action
- 24" threaded Sendero Carbon Fiber PROOF Barrel
- AG Composites Alpine Hunter in Midnight Forest
- TriggerTech Trigger, Defiance bottom metal
- TierOne Rings with integrated bubble level.
- ZEISS Conquest V4 6-24x50

**Custom Rifle**  
\$20 per ticket, only 500 sold!

Features of custom rifle:

- Defiance anTiX medium action
- 24" threaded Sendero Carbon Fiber PROOF Barrel
- AG Composites Alpine Hunter in Midnight Forest
- TriggerTech Trigger, Defiance bottom metal
- TierOne Rings with integrated bubble level
- ZEISS Conquest V4 6-24x50

Note: All firearm winners will be responsible for shipment and transfer of their new firearm. Your new firearm will need to be shipped to your local FFL dealer. There you will go through standard procedures to pass the NICS background check where the firearm will then be transferred to you. The FFL most often will charge you a transfer fee, ranging between \$20 – \$50. Make sure you have discussed this fee before choosing your FFL.

## 2022 POLARIS RANGER 1000

\$25



POLARIS

**2022 Polaris Ranger 1000**  
\$25 per ticket

This machine is built to meet the expectations of a sheep hunter! The 1000 cc engine is more than capable with 61 horsepower; enough to tow 2500 pounds or carry a 1000 pound in the box. That's more than enough power to haul out your quarry or to do a few chores around your place. If the going gets tough, this UTV has on-demand AWD to get you out of those sticky situations. To top it off, it will feature a MTWSF graphics package, so you can rep Montana Wild Sheep when you're out in the woods! Don't miss your chance, get your tickets today!

Special thanks to LEWISTOWN HONDA for sponsoring a portion of this prize.

**Raffle Rules:**  
The winner will be drawn in Butte, America, Saturday February 26, 2022 at the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation's 30th Annual Banquet. Must be 18 or over to participate. Need not be present to win. The winner must pick up the UTV in Helena, Montana and is responsible for the taxes, title transfer and registration fees. The taxable value of the prize will be treated as ordinary income to the raffle winner for federal and state income tax purposes.

MT law prohibits sale of raffle tickets with credit cards. Online orders can only be placed with debit cards. Ticket stubs will not be mailed out for online sales. Raffle tickets will be available at the banquet for cash and check. Please do not purchase if online raffle sales are prohibited in your state (AL, CA, HI, IN, KS, SD, UT, WA).

## SHEEP CAMP



\$10 PER TICKET

OR 12 FOR \$100

TRADITIONAL WALL TENT SHEEP CAMP

- CANVAS WALL TENT
- PROPANE STOVE
- CAMP CHAIRS
- SLEEPING BAGS
- COTS
- COOKWARE

AND SO MUCH MORE!

**Sheep Camp**  
\$10 per ticket, or 12 for \$100


Like us, I'm sure you don't want a bunch of camp gear you don't need..... so this year Montana Wild Sheep Foundation will be shipping the winner a canvas wall tent and \$500 dollars in Sportsman's Warehouse gift cards to outfit your very own sheep camp! Cots, sleeping bags, cookstove, cookware, lanterns, whatever you need! More than \$2500 invested into this package. Customize your sheep camp to be everything you have ever wanted with this prize!

## Four Raffles - One Ticket!

### DESERT SHEEP HUNT

WITH SAN JOSE TROPHY HUNTS IN SONORA, MEXICO

\$200



- 2<sup>ND</sup> AOUADAD SHEEP HUNT
- 3<sup>RD</sup> STONE GLACIER GEAR
- 4<sup>TH</sup> ZEISS SPOTTING SCOPE

Buy now at

montanawsf.org

**ONE \$200 ticket gets you into 4 high-quality raffles. Only 500 tickets sold!**

**First Drawing Prize: Desert Sheep Hunt with San Jose Trophy in Sonora, Mexico**  
This is a free-range Desert Sheep hunt and takes place in the San Jose Mountain Range about one hour Northwest of Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. Rams range from the 160's to the low 170's. While a week of hunting is the normal planned trip, hunters can stay until they take a ram, up to the end of the license year. The permit is valid season long November to the end of March. The hunt includes necessary permits, a guide, and the export costs of the sheep. The hunter may take one non hunter along as an observer at no additional fee.

**Second Drawing Prize: Texas Aoudad Hunt - One guided hunter for Barbary Sheep in Texas**

**Third Drawing Prize: Stone Glacier Package with a Stone Glacier Pack and apparel**

**Fourth Drawing Prize: Zeiss Conquest GAVIA 85 Spotting Scope**

**Raffle Rules:**  
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## Join Montana Wild Sheep Foundation!

Interested in becoming a member? Membership rates can be found below. To join or renew, visit us at <https://montanawsf.org/membership/>.

- Youth
  - 1 year - \$20.00
  - 3 year - \$35.00
- Regular
  - 1 year - \$35.00
  - 3 year - \$90.00
- Family
  - 1 year - \$50.00
  - 3 year - \$120.00
- Life - \$500.00

