



**MONTANA
WILD
SHEEP
FOUNDATION**

Welcome to

Wild Sheep

Fall 2011 | Volume 19, Issue 3



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All contributed material will be published at the discretion of the Editorial Board of Montana WSF. The Editorial Board consists of the editor of the newsletter, the executive director of the chapter, and the president of the chapter.

Cover photo by Steve Kline, Superior, Montana.

DIRECTOR & OFFICER ELECTIONS

With 31% of ballots returned Mike Colpo and Steve Kline were reelected and Brian Solan was newly elected to the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation Board of Directors. They join the six hold-over directors to begin their three year terms.

At the September 1, 2011 Board of Directors meeting the board elected officers with the following results. Mike Menke – President; Glenn Erickson – Vice President; Doug Dreeszen – Secretary; and Tom Grimes – Treasurer. Jack Chambers will continue on the board as Past President. Officers serve one year terms on the Board of Directors.

The board expressed its thanks to Dan Spicher for all his work on the board during the past three years. Dan provided invaluable information on the Missouri Breaks bighorn sheep issues.

The board also thanked Jack Chambers for his work as President during the past two years. His prioritizing of issues helped the board focus its efforts on the most important impacts on bighorn sheep in Montana.

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President's Message

After two and a half terms, I have stepped up to take a turn as President of our Chapter. Jack has done a great job for the last two years and I want to thank him for his efforts. Jack will continue to serve as a Director. I also want to thank outgoing Director Dan Spicher. Dan has been a very active and productive Director. Dan has worked hard on past fundraisers and projects with special interests in the Region 6 and Missouri Breaks area. However, wait until you see our 2012 Fundraiser custom rifle. Dan has spearheaded this one and has put together something very special. Now, welcome Brian Solan as a new Director. As with all board positions, we soon find ourselves very busy all year long.

I am very excited about our future. Our 20th Anniversary Fundraiser will be held in February of 2012 in Bozeman. It is lining up to be a very special get together. Don't miss this one. After my wishing for the last five years, we finally have developed and designed a Montana WSF specialty license plate. This beautiful plate was approved by the Board and designed by Steve Kline with one of his beautiful pictures. After 5 years, YAHOO!

The Chapter is presently active with several other important projects that will be covered in this and future news letters. By the way, our newsletter has taken on some major changes as you probably have notice.

One goal that I have is to increase our membership and your participation with projects. Your membership needs to become more exciting and fun. The Board is open for questions, comments, and new ideas. How about this one, "Adopt-a-Highway" areas in different regions, where Bighorn Sheep live. Send Comments! Lastly, I would like to thank all of our members for your support of our Chapter. I am asking for help to increase membership. If each existing member could recruit 1 new member, our membership would double. Let's try it!

Mike Menke

Montana Wild Sheep Foundation President

p.s. Check out YOUR website as it takes on a new look over the next few weeks!



Photo by Steve Kline

The “30 Year” Ram

by Kevin Hurley, Montana WSF Life Member
Conservation Director, Wild Sheep Foundation, Cody, WY

Simply put, I waited 30 years for this moment. In fall 1981, I started down the path of wild sheep work, thanks in large part to an interesting and relatively new organization known as FNAWS. For those of you who know me, the rest is history.

Having retired at the end of January from Wyoming Game and Fish Department after almost 30 years, and going to work “part-time” for the Wild Sheep Foundation, 2011 was the year to go north!

With support and a promise from my 20-year old son Kyle to help his old dad hike the mountain, I booked an Alaska Range Dall sheep hunt with long-time friend and outfitter, Mike Colpo, owner of Lazy J Bar O Outfitters, Big Timber, MT.

As you know, Mike serves Montana WSF as one of our long-standing board members, and is a major donor to wild sheep conservation organizations, including the Wild Sheep Foundation. Personally, I highly value loyalty to a cause, and Mike is “a sheep guy”! That’s why I booked with him!!

Since 1998, Mike has owned and operated a hunting camp on the Yanert Fork (of the Nenana River), in Alaska’s Game Management Unit 20A. Mike’s is a fly-in backcountry camp, and he runs some top-notch, stout draft-horse cross stock, agile yet tough enough to handle the thick alder and willow brush the Yanert Fork is famous for.

Kyle and I were fortunate to be flown in (and out!) of Mike’s camp by seasoned bush pilot Ron Payne of Wasilla, AK. I have to admit, after living through two plane crashes (1991 and 2002) doing wildlife surveys for WGFD, I thought more than a few times about climbing back into a small plane. This was absolutely

my first time in a small plane since my 2002 crash, and a first-time experience for Kyle. I’m not sure whose heart was pounding faster when we took off, Kyle’s or mine.

Once in camp, and given the low clouds and more than intermittent rain, there wasn’t much glassing to be done, but the day before the season opened, we caught a glimpse of 5 Dall rams, the first sheep to be spotted. A good sign!

On opening morning, with clouds still hanging low in the valley, we saddled up and rode into a tributary drainage across the Yanert Fork from the main camp.

After riding and busting brush for 1.5 hours, we tied off and struck out on foot, in search of the rams we had glimpsed the previous day. Within minutes of hiking, we spotted 5 white spots, way up the slope. Through the fog and rain, we were able to make those into rams, including one stellar-looking ram.

We marked their location, and continued scouting up the drainage. After bumping into 2 large ewe/lamb groups, and spotting another 4 rams (including another full curl+ ram), we opted to drop back down the drainage, since that earlier ram was clearly worth another look.

Typical, by the time we retraced our steps, those first 5 rams had moved even higher on the mountain, and as open as that slope was, and noting the time of day, we knew enough to leave them alone. Back in camp, we hatched a plan for Day 2, to come in on these rams from above the next day, entailing a 2-hour ride, followed by a 2,000+ foot climb. What a great feeling that was, trying to climb like I was 27 again (but feeling all 57 of my years!), knowing my son Kyle was mere inches from me, helping me achieve a life’s dream.

Simply put, I waited 30 years for this moment...I finished this ram from ~220 yards.

By late afternoon of Day 2, and following what my son Kyle described as “the hardest hike he’d ever done”, we found these rams, bedded within 100 yards of where they’d been opening day. I credit Mike Colpo and guide Paul Zitzer for their knowledge of Dall sheep behavior and habits; they made the perfect call!

After working into position, Mike set me up at ~290 yards, with a pretty good downhill angle. Now, those

from Mike (an expert marksman and former Olympic shooting contender!), I finished this ram from ~220 yards.

I could not have accomplished this feat without the able assistance and guiding ability of Mike Colpo and Paul Zitzer; I will be forever grateful to those two men, and to the young man at my side.



As Mike and I slid down 1,200 feet of scree slope, Paul and Kyle backtracked to bring the horses around

to where we’d bottom out with the ram. I’m happy to say this ram met, then exceeded my hopes, taping out at 37.5” long, with 12.5” bases; we aged him at 10+. He was almost 2” past full curl, and he was just the kind of ram I had dreamed about. For 30 years.




who know me know I’m honest, and I have to say, I was pretty excited. After huffing and puffing my way up that mountain, and with the expectation of 30 years of dreaming hopefully about to become reality, I didn’t do my best shooting ever!

After Kyle and I both learned some new cuss words

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Special Hunting Access Agreement Reached in Bullwhacker Area of Breaks

*Friday, September 9, 2011
Hunting - Region 6*

A special access agreement reached between a private landowner and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks will maintain opportunities this fall for bighorn sheep and elk hunters in the Bullwhacker Creek area of the Missouri River Breaks.

Bill and Ronnie Robinson own the Anchor Ranch Inc. deep in the Missouri River Breaks south of Chinook. A portion of the Bullwhacker Road that runs through their private property provides the only reasonable access to about 50,000 acres of federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land that is included in the remote and game-rich Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

Public use of the road within their ranch has been contested for years, and in 2009 the Robinsons sued to have the road legally declared private. Blaine County officials earlier had been urged by the Public/Lands Waters Access Association to declare the road open to the public.

On March 25, Montana 17th District Court Judge John McKeon of Malta ruled that the road was private, and access through the Anchor Ranch property could indeed be controlled by the Robinsons. FWP Region 6 staff and the Robinsons then developed this compromise that protects the Robinsons' property rights while provide hunters with critical access to this large block of publicly owned land.

This section of the Bullwhacker Road is located one mile south of the Cow Island Trail. The access agreement will only be in effect from Sept. 3 to Nov. 27, 2011. The only hunters that will be allowed to cross the property are holders of special elk and bighorn sheep permits valid in Hunting District 680.

Access through the Anchor Ranch on the Bullwhacker Road will be controlled between Sept. 3 through Oct. 21 by hunters making an initial phone call to FWP's Havre Area Resource Office (HAVRO) and then reg-

istering at a sign-in box at the entrance to the property. From Oct. 22, the first day of the 2011 big game rifle season, until Nov. 27, the last day of the season, permission for access through the ranch will be only be granted by an on-site FWP technician.

Other details from the agreement include:

From Sept. 3 through Oct. 21, 2011

- Prior to accessing the Anchor Ranch property all special bighorn sheep and elk permit holders must contact HAVRO at 406-265-6177 between 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- If staff at HAVRO is unavailable, hunters should leave a message and someone will return their call as soon as possible.
- Hunters will only need to gain verbal permission from FWP once during the Sept. 3-Oct. 21 time period.
- However, after hunters contact HAVRO they are required to sign in before their hunt at the Anchor Ranch Bullwhacker Road sign-in box. Hunters then must sign in at the same box each time they enter and/or prepare to cross the Bullwhacker Road private property during the specified sign-in period.
- Maps of the Anchor Ranch are available at the sign-in box.

From Oct. 22 through Nov. 27, 2011

- Twenty bighorn sheep or elk hunters holding special permits will be allowed through the property per day.
- The FWP access technician will be on-site at the Anchor Ranch Bullwhacker Road sign-in box during this period to administer permission. Access permission will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.
- The FWP technician will be at the entrance gate to issue permission one hour before and after sunrise

and one hour before and after sunset, Thursday-Monday each week. Hunters must make prior arrangements with the access technician if they want to cross the private land on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

- Each hunter will be provided a map prior to their hunt.
- To allow easy identification in the field, vehicle tags will be issued to hunters by the on-site FWP technician during the big game rifle season.

ANCHOR RANCH RULES AND REGULATIONS

- To reduce wear and tear on ranch roads, trailer traffic will be restricted to light all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trailers carrying no more than two standard-sized ATVs or one larger-style ATV or a pop-up camping trailer.
- There will be no access on or across the Anchor Ranch during wet and/or muddy periods. During periods of heavy rain or snow hunters will need to park along a BLM road and use adjacent public

land for hunting.

- The Anchor Ranch portion of the Bullwhacker Road may also be closed for short periods when the landowners gather and transport cattle.
- No foot traffic through the Anchor Ranch private property will be allowed.
- No off- road driving will be allowed on Anchor Ranch property, and all gates should be closed.
- Permission will be granted for the length of the individual’s hunt and will be documented on the permission slip and vehicle tag. If the hunt takes more time than anticipated, hunters will need to obtain updated permission slips and vehicle tags from the FWP access technician.

For more information about the special hunting access agreement, please contact the FWP Region 6 office in Glasgow at 406-228-3700 or the Havre office at 406-265-6177.



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Sula, Montana Dedication

by Jack Chambers

On July 1st President Jack Chambers attended the dedication of an informational sign or kiosk at a Highway 93 pullout near Sula, Montana. The Montana Wild Sheep Foundation donated \$1,750 for this project. The kiosk honors Duncan Gilchrist a true icon in the world of wild sheep. Duncan was truly one of a kind and was Montana's first recipient of the National "Grass Roots" award given out each year to an individual who has shown outstanding dedication, leadership and inspirational commitment to wildlife, especially wild sheep. Duncan also served on the National WSF Board. Our Chapter created the "Duncan Gilchrist" award given only when we identify someone who has demonstrated significant contributions to "putting sheep on the mountain." In addition, the signs are a great educational tool for the general public. They explain threats to wild sheep when contact with domestic sheep occurs. The following was prepared by Craig Jourdonnais the Hamilton Area Biologist:

Taking the late Duncan Gilchrist hunting was like pulling teeth. Any of the old guard Bitterroot residents who knew Duncan are stunned by that statement. Just hang on.

Recently, several of Duncan's family, friends and admirers gathered at a Highway 93 pullout south of Darby to honor the man and dedicate a new kiosk that features Bitterroot bighorn sheep herds and Duncan's passion for wildlife.

John Farley, Hamilton resident and longtime friend of Mr. Gilchrist led the charge on this project. John brought the vision and persistence. Mr. Farley and several members of the Ravalli Fish and Wildlife Association worked diligently with Fish, Wildlife and Parks Information and Education Manager, Vivica Crowser to fund, design and construct this handsome kiosk. The display informs all passersby about an impressive big game animal and Duncan's role in assisting with the protection and conservation of the

Bitterroot Valley's wildlife resources.

Several friends who attended the dedication spoke about Duncan's leadership on wildlife conservation issues in the valley and across Montana. Mr. Farley noted that Duncan was a highly effective past president of the RCFWA. Tom Powers noted that Duncan was deeply involved in management and conservation of bighorn sheep. Duncan assisted with the initial transplant of bighorns in the Painted Rocks area. Several friends and family members recalled Duncan's skills as a published author and outdoor video producer. All those present remembered Duncan as a great and faithful friend.

Long-time hunting partner and valley resident, Steve Wilson remembers Duncan's insatiable appetite for hunting. "He was an expert at negotiating and trading", Wilson said. "That guy could trade taxidermy or some other product in exchange for a hunt. He hunted all over the world because he was so good at trading", explained Wilson.

Wilson also recalled a true story about Duncan preparing to embark on a hunt to a distant country and having a nagging tooth ache. An ache so bad that is about to derail the trip. Duncan attempted to find a dentist that could take care of the tooth but it was late Friday and Duncan's plane departed the following morning; no dentists were available. Wilson, being a true friend, hunting buddy, and suffering from a little dentist-envy offered up a quick and inexpensive Montana-style solution; a bottle of whiskey and a pair of pliers. Apparently, Duncan didn't hesitate. The operation began only after patient Gilchrist sipped copious amounts of liquid courage (I wonder if it was 'Crown' Royal?). A lot of things could have gone very wrong. Yet, as if filming a Bitterroot version of "I slept at a Holiday Inn last night" commercial, the operation proved successful. 'Dr.' Steve selected the correct tooth. Duncan flew to New Zealand the next morning.

This Valley is blessed with many wildlife heroes and heroines, many are still with us. The recent gathering along Highway 93, on that beautiful sun-soaked morning, gave old friends and family a chance to remember a wonderful man.

Perhaps the best part of the kiosk project is that it rests in the shadows of traditional bighorn sheep lambing cliffs that tower above the East Fork of the Bitterroot River a few hundred yards upstream. It seems fitting that the next generations of big-horn sheep can gaze down from the relative protection of the lambing cliffs and observe people at the kiosk, reading about big-horns and a man who spent his life helping to conserve them.



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Hunt Report

by Jan Varner, Life Member, Montana Wild Sheep Federation



I know this newsletter is for sheep hunters but I believe all sheep hunters are hunters first regardless of species. Having been a skeptic of hunting in Africa (Hunting in pens, shooting from trucks, etc.) kept me away from this area. A year ago Troy & Lori Ginn from International Outdoor Consultants of Hamilton convinced me I should enjoy a hunt with Antonie Loun of Makalaan Safaris in Namibia. Several people that I know have hunted with Antonie and gave me positive reports.

I am not an expert on African hunting but I will say hunting with Antoine was real walk and stalk hunting. Ten animals in 10 days with 2 from blinds at waterholes and the rest off hand or from shooting sticks. The animals awareness will give any whitetail or elk hunter a test. If you enjoy hunting you owe it to yourself to make the trip at least once. It's a little like fish-

ing in the ocean on a good day you don't know what will show up next. This was a great hunt by a nice family operation at a good price.



Thanks to our long time supporter **Impact Case & Container** of Rathdrum, Idaho. Photo is of Kevin Bailey receiving their appreciation plaque outside of their manufacturing headquarters in Rathdrum. Phone: (208) 687 4400, www.icc-case.com.



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51 1/2" B&C 10" Billy

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51" B&C 10" Billy

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Budd Florkiewicz - '08
21 2/16"

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20 10/16"

Art Rubel - '09
21"

Alan Untermeyer - '08
109 3/8" B&C Buck

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The Montana Chapter of the 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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Wild Sheep Foundation Policy on Domestic Sheep & Goats

The Wild Sheep Foundation believes in scientific solutions to resource management challenges. To this end, the Foundation has invested heavily in wild sheep disease research through the Rocky Crate/Wild Sheep Foundation Endowed Chair for Wild Sheep Disease Research at Washington State University.

This research has shown unequivocally that disease transmission from domestic sheep to wild sheep occurs, reinforcing our belief that potential contact between wild and domestic sheep and goats is a primary challenge facing wild sheep survival, enhancement, restoration, and management in many western states and provinces. Because of this, the Wild Sheep Foundation supports comprehensive strategies to manage for effective temporal and spatial separation of domestic sheep and goats from wild sheep; risk assessments of the potential for contact should be completed, periodically re-evaluated, and revised as necessary.

The Wild Sheep Foundation recognizes, supports, and promotes multiple use on public/Crown lands while acknowledging that not all multiple uses can occur on each and every acre. The Wild Sheep Foundation believes in collaboration and consensus-building among diverse interests, including traditional conservation partners as well as those that do not

necessarily share the Foundation's views, to achieve effective separation of domestic sheep and goats from wild sheep.

The Foundation also believes that federal/government land management agencies, in collaboration with wild sheep conservation organizations, other stakeholders, and domestic sheep and goat interests, must work to identify and offer alternative grazing options outside of wild sheep habitat for domestic sheep and goat permittees currently grazing within the known distribution of wild sheep. Where appropriate, the Foundation supports conversion of domestic sheep and goat grazing permits to alternative classes/kinds of livestock and/or negotiation amongst stakeholders of financial incentives for domestic sheep or goat permittees to waive public land grazing permits as a means to facilitate separation.

The Wild Sheep Foundation supports cooperative efforts to identify and secure research and management funding essential to ensure the viability of wild sheep populations as well as the domestic sheep and goat industries.

Where collaborative solutions cannot be reached, the Foundation recognizes that administrative appeals or legal challenges may be necessary in resolving land-use conflicts that impact populations of wild sheep.

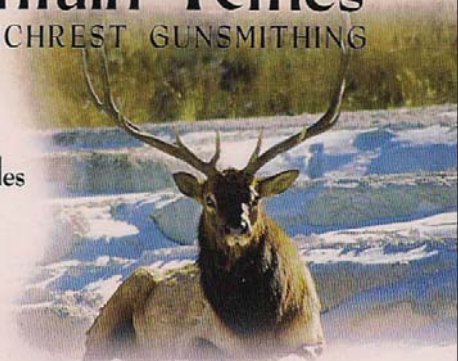



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2012 BIRTHDAY PARTY/FUNDRAISER

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the **February 24 & 25, 2012 Annual Fundraiser** at the Gran Tree Inn of Bozeman, Montana. This will be our 20th Anniversary Event and Chairman Tom Grimes has many special events planned for those who attend both days. Events include exhibitors, a Friday evening Birthday Party with the raffle of a Kimber 84L .270 Win for attendees, a Saturday luncheon with guest speaker, afternoon seminars and a Saturday evening banquet fundraiser with hunts, art work, hunting gear and more. We extend a special invitation to our life members for the special celebration. Watch our website, the January newsletter and your mailbox for more information. Join us on this special occasion while we raise funds for Bighorn Sheep in Montana. A block of rooms have been set aside at the Best Western GranTree Inn, 800-624- 5865 and next door at Days Inn Bozeman, 406-587-5251.

If you have questions, donations or plan to exhibit contact Banquet Chairman Tom Grimes at (406) 580-1856 or tommyg@3rivers.net.