



The
Bighorn
SUMMER 2016

>>> PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS BIGHORN SOCIETY

Restoring Bighorn Sheep to their Native Ranges in Texas, and Ensuring the Viability of their Habitat

TEXAS BIGHORN SOCIETY'S 28TH ANNUAL ROUNDUP

June 10 - 11, 2016 Fort Worth Texas

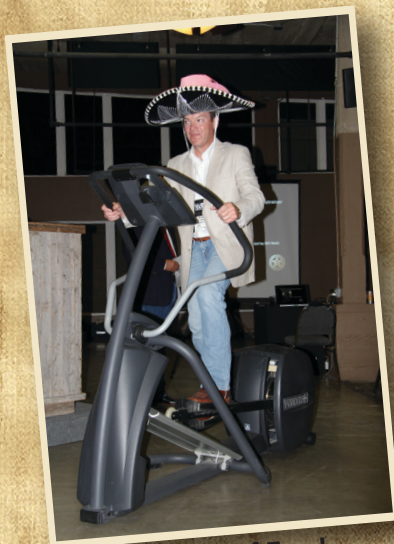


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BIGHORN

The official magazine of the Texas Bighorn Society
Advertising Rates Effective 1-1-2009
Bighorn is published 3 times annually

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Bighorn is a four-color glossy publication, and the following is required:

Ads should be supplied on a disk and in one of the following formats:

- Photoshop
- TIFF (Preferred)
- PDF (Preferred)
- JPEG

Each ad should be: 300dpi (minimum) in CMYK color space

All other formats must be approved by our production staff

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Spring – February 1st

Summer – April 1st

Fall / Winter – October 1st

DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENT RATES

Location	Rate Per Issue
Inside Front Cover (Supply as full color bleed)	\$270.00
Inside Back Cover (Supply as full color bleed)	\$270.00
Back Cover (Supply as full color bleed)	\$315.00
Full Page (Supply as full color bleed)	\$225.00
Half Page (4 3/4" Tall X 8" Wide)	\$175.00
Third Page (4 3/4" Tall X 5 1/4" Wide)	\$120.00
Quarter Page (1 3/4" Tall X 8" Wide)	\$ 75.00

Note: An exchange of advertising for Donations, Sponsorships, and In-Kind Advertising will be considered on a case by case basis.

PRODUCTION

Bighorn's production staff is available to help you build your advertising copy. Production costs, hourly rates, and estimates are available upon request.

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Cover photo is of a painting by member Jan Martin McGuire. Ms. McGuire donated this painting to TBS for our Roundup in 2015.

BIGHORN Summer 2016

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photos by René Graham, Rut High, Forres Meadows, Dirk Parks and Earl Watters

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bighorns don't live in Texas
bighorns don't matter

bighorns don't need the internet. bighorns need you.



Texas Bighorn Society
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4

M. Jones



Texas Bighorn Society

[Summer 2016 Membership Application]

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TBS Membership
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Lubbock, TX 79416

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Vern Bleich	Froylan Hernandez	Mike Pittman
Clay Brewer	Mark Kielwasser	Tamara Trail
Charlie Butler	Terrel McCombs	Carleton Turner
Ben Carter	Bob McCoy	Betty Warren

Howdy, New Members!

On behalf of the current members, the TBS Officers & Directors, and all the Texas Bighorn Sheep your patronage will go to support, we'd like to welcome you to our organization! We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you at the next TBS event!

individual

Ted Albracht
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Travis Davis
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family

Terry Anderson

student

Rachel Bittner
Raylor Daily
Cooper Harrison
Scott Lacina

Don't forget - Student Memberships are only \$25/year!
Encourage students you know to join today!

* please,

Help us stay current with your address and email information!
Contact Diane Gregson if you have moved, changed email addresses,
or have questions about your membership. She can be reached at:

dgregson@texasbighornsociety.org
806-745-7783

This & That

Bull Roar

Q: Why did the man throw a bucket of water out the window?

A: He wanted to see the waterfall.

Q: Why did the man throw the butter out the window?

A: He wanted to see the butterfly.

Q: Why did the man put the clock in the safe?

A: He wanted to save time.

Q: What has two hands and a face, but no arms and legs?

A: A clock.

Q: What has a neck, but no head?

A: A bottle.

Q: Where is the ocean the deepest?

A: On the bottom.

Q: Why did the man throw his watch out of the window?

A: He wanted to see time fly.

Q: How many people are buried in that cemetery?

A: All of them.

Q: What can't be used until it's broken?

A: An egg.

Q: What do tigers have that no other animals have?

A: Baby tigers.

Q: What is Black and white and read (red) all over?

A: A newspaper

Q: How do you know when a motorcycle policeman is happy?

A: He has bugs on his teeth!



Check facebook.com/texasbighornsociety for more news, info, photos and videos!

April 2016 Board Meeting Summary

APRIL 7, 2016

The Board of Directors of the Texas Bighorn Society met at the Lajitas Resort in Lajitas, Texas at 5:00 P.M. April 7, 2016. There were 9 Directors present along with 8 Advisory Directors and guests. The acting Secretary (Bill Scott) announced there was a quorum present and the President called the meeting to order at 5:25 P.M. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved. The treasurer's report by Robert Joseph was sent to the Directors prior to the meeting and was also handed out. Robert explained some of the items on the report and the report was approved. The society is in good financial condition. The society now has 785 members as of April 1, 2016. We have gained a few members since last report.

There was a Bighorn Sheep Advisory Council meeting on April 6 and was attended by Kathy Boone and Robert

Joseph. There was interaction between landowners and Froylan Hernandez, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, concerning the sheep population at Sierra Diablo Wildlife Management Area. Froylan mentioned that after the 2015 surveys in the Sierra Diablo Mountains, lower than normal sheep estimates were reported and confirmed by the landowners. Discussion ensued as to what caused the lower numbers and how to correct it. Several fatalities were found during the survey. More research is needed to determine the cause of death. After considerable discussion, BSAC ask Froylan to recommend to TPWD instituting a fee based system for non-public hunters with all the proceeds going to the Desert Bighorn Sheep Account to further support for the Desert Bighorn Program. This might take some time to get changed.

There was a motion to give Kathy the authority to negotiate advertising for the permit with Lone Star News. The motion

was approved. There was discussion for additional items for the auction, such as trips, etc. Steve Bolner will research the feasibility and make the decision.

The Pre-Work Project staging started today is going well. The Friday and Saturday night meals will be served in the Pavilion at the RV Park. There will be a short Membership meeting prior to the meal on Friday Night for the purpose of electing Directors. Directors nominated for election are Steve Bolner, Kathy Boone, Lynton Holloway, and Jim Payne.

Kathy stated she had received an invoice for booth space at WSF. Costs will be \$1250.00. Jim Payne moved to approve the expenditure. Seconded by Lynton Holloway. The motion passed.

The next meeting will be at the Roundup, June 10, 2016, 1:00pm at Cooper's Old Time Pit BBQ. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 P.M.

2016 Sheep Tag: Frequently Asked Questions

The Texas Bighorn Society will sell a Texas Bighorn hunting permit for Elephant Mountain at our Roundup in June 2016. Here are some answers for those of you who are curious or who might want to purchase the permit.

How big are your sheep? What is an average ram?

Over the last 20 years 67% of the harvested rams were “book rams” (14 out of 21 scored over 168), with the largest scoring 183 5/8 final.

How abundant are your sheep? Will I see many on the hunt?

According to the data we have, the hunt party observed an average of approximately 84 sheep per hunt.

How physical is the hunt?

All sheep hunts have some degree of difficulty. The degree of difficulty depends on a number of variables that are out of our control- including sheep behavior, weather, and the hunter’s physical condition.

Who will be guiding the hunt?

The guides are generally the wildlife biologists and wildlife technicians who oversee the area where the hunt takes place. They have an intimate knowledge of the hunt area and the resident sheep. They are all seasoned and successful hunt guides.

What all is included in the purchase of the tag? What is not included, but needed? What accommodations/meals are available?

Included in the purchase of the tag is one guided sheep hunt with lodging, all meals, and on-site transportation. All hunters must provide their own personal hunting equipment (appropriate dress, firearm, ammo, etc.) and a valid Texas hunting license.

When does the hunt take place? What is the season for the hunting permit? When is the best time to hunt?

Currently the hunt season extends from September 1 through July 31. Hunters select when they want to hunt during this timeframe. A hunter might solicit the advice of the hunting guide when selecting the most opportune time to hunt based on the hunter’s criteria.

How long is the hunt?

Typically the hunter is allowed 10 days to harvest a ram. On average a ram is harvested in 3-5 days. The number of days allowed for “the hunt” should be specifically lined out in the auction description.

What is your success rate? If unsuccessful, can I come back?

The last 21 auction hunts dating back to 1994 have all been successful in harvesting a ram. If you are unable to harvest during the maximum allowable days for the hunt, the hunt is concluded and you will not be able to return for a second hunt. This has never happened.

If successful, how do I get my ram home or to my taxidermist? Who does the skinning and trophy prep?

The hunter will be responsible for transporting the harvested ram to its final destination. The biologists/technicians conducting the hunt will prepare the animal for the taxidermist, all of whom have done so numerous times with good results. Hunters are welcome to do this themselves if they so desire.

What type of weather can I expect?

This depends on when you come. Generally speaking the Trans-Pecos region of Texas has warm summers and rather mild winters compared to other states. If impending inclement weather might jeopardize the hunt, it could be rescheduled assuming there was enough time left in the allowable hunt season.

References?

Most of the previous auction hunters have busy personal and professional

lives and generally do not want their contact information published. However, there are a handful of recent hunters who would be willing to answer questions on a case-by-case basis, assuming the inquiry was coming from a serious potential bidder.

How much does a Texas hunting license cost?

Prices vary based on age, military status, and residency. Generally speaking a Texas resident hunting license is \$25 and a non-Texas resident hunting license is \$315.

How many tags are available? Public? Private?

The State generally has 3 permits available:

- 1 for the public hunt drawing (application available on-line through TPWD webpage)
- 1 for the Grand Slam drawing (essentially a raffle contest with \$10 tickets available on the TPWD website)
- 1 permit donated to our partners (TBS, TWA, DSC, WSF, etc.) to be auctioned with the proceeds returned to the state to support continued management and restorations efforts

Approximately 12 permits are issued to private landowners annually.

How many tags are issued per year?

On average TPWD issues 15 permits per year statewide.

Is this hunt tax deductible?

Assuming the permit is purchased at auction from a qualifying charitable 501(c)(3) organization, a majority of the price is tax deductible. This question came up in 2009 and the IRS determined the value of the hunt to be \$1000. This amount would be deducted from the sales price and the remainder would be considered a charitable donation. We advise that a tax professional be consulted if detailed questions arise.



TEXAS BIGHORN SOCIETY

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Email: information@texasbighornsociety.org

NEED A BOOK DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP? TEXAS IS THE PLACE!

The Texas Bighorn Society will auction a Texas Parks & Wildlife Governor's Desert Bighorn Sheep Tag on Saturday, June 11, 2016. This auction is part of our annual 2016 Roundup Fundraiser that will be held in the Historic Stockyards District, Fort Worth, Texas. The hunt will take place on Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

Texas is the home to one of the most successful desert bighorn sheep restoration programs anywhere, and that success is directly attributable to a strong working relationship between Texas Bighorn Society, Texas Parks & Wildlife, and private landowners. There are currently over 1500 free ranging sheep in the Trans-Pecos area of West Texas. 100% of the proceeds from this hunt will be used for the restoration, management, and research of bighorn sheep in Texas.

If you would like more information on the Texas Bighorn Society, or specifics of the auction proceedings, please feel free to contact me. If you would like to know more about the hunt and details on the Texas Bighorn Sheep Program, please contact Froylan Hernandez with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Kathy Boone, President
Phone: 806-438-3939
kboone@sonoramfg.com

Froylan Hernandez
Bighorn Sheep Program Leader
Texas Parks & Wildlife
Phone: 432-837-0666 ext 227
Froylan.hernandez@tpwd.texas.gov

www.texasbighornsociety.org
501(c)3 Organization

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THINKING ABOUT A BOOK SHEEP?

TEXAS SPECIAL DESERT SHEEP TAG
TBS ROUNDUP AUCTION JUNE 11

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
TBS-KATHY BOONE
806.438.3939

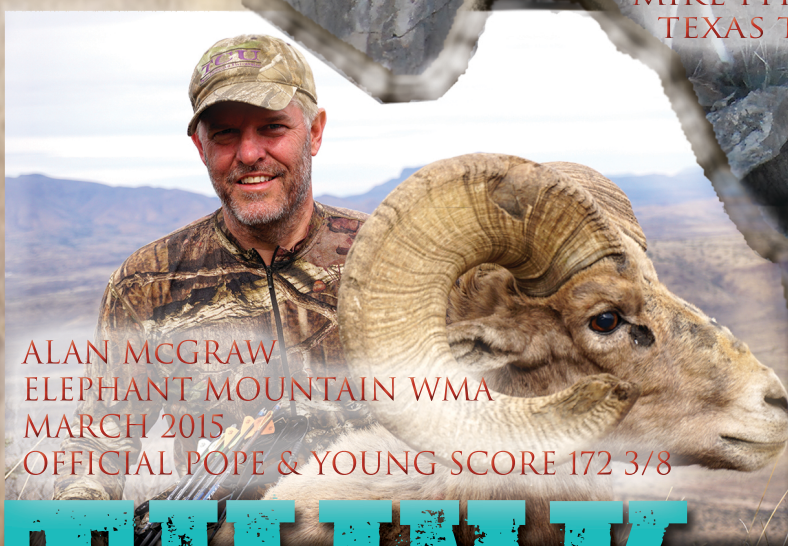
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ELEPHANT MOUNTAIN WMA
OCTOBER 2015
GREEN B&C SCORE 173 6/8
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MIKE PITTMAN
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ELEPHANT MOUNTAIN WMA
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THE DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP IN WEST TEXAS**

Looking Forward to Another Great Year

President's Letter



Kathy R. Boone
TBS President

Wow! What an awesome 2016 Work Project at Big Bend Ranch State Park, Lajitas, Texas, attended by approximately 90 volunteers. Having a superior helicopter pilot, Earl Watters, really made a difference; he had nearly all of the guzzler volunteers on top of the mountains by 9:30 a.m. Friday. "Thank you, Earl."

We built two new guzzlers on the top of Santana Mesa. With the help of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department –Parks Division, we constructed a viewing station on Texas Highway 170 at the base of Santana Mesa equipped with a high-powered telescope donated by TBS. That brings the total to 5 guzzlers that have been built by TBS at BBRSP since the first sheep translocation in 2010.

In addition to having a successful auction on Friday night, TBS members donated \$7000.00 for the benefit of Nicholas Cardoza a second grader in Alpine, Texas with brain cancer. I am so proud to be a part of this great organization.

Our 2016 Roundup is almost here – June 10th & 11th at the Hyatt Place Hotel in the Fort Worth Stockyard District. This year will be special because we have an Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area Desert Sheep Permit to auction. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – Wildlife Division generously donated this permit. Mike Pritchard and Mark Wallney will entertain us again this year. Register online at www.texasbighornsociety.org or call 806-745-7783. See you in Cowtown!

Kathy Boone
President

don't forget to register for the Roundup!

online at www.TEXASBIGHORNSOCIETY.org

or

call us at 806-745-7783

RESTORATION GOALS

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's
2016 Desert Bighorn Sheep Restoration Goals
By Froylan Hernandez

GOAL

To restore desert bighorn sheep to all suitable historic habitat within Texas.

OBJECTIVES

1. Promote cooperation between TPWD, landowners, interests groups and general public through education and awareness workshops.
2. Provide public viewing and hunting opportunities through the establishment of distinct populations across the Trans-Pecos.
3. Establish approximately 2,500-3,000 desert bighorn sheep in 15-16 mountain ranges in Texas.

IDENTIFIED HABITAT (Appendix A.)

There are 16 identified habitat areas in Texas that are and potentially could support viable populations of desert bighorn sheep through implementation of the following strategies:

Strategy I – maintain or enhance the habitat areas currently supporting viable populations of desert bighorn sheep.

Strategy II – enhance habitat on three habitat areas with remnant or recently established herds that are capable of supporting viable populations.

Strategy III – maintain and enhance historic habitat in habitat areas to allow re-introduction and restoration to viable populations.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Sierra Diablo/Baylor/Beach Mtns | I |
| 2. Elephant Mountain WMA | I |
| 3. Black Gap WMA | I |

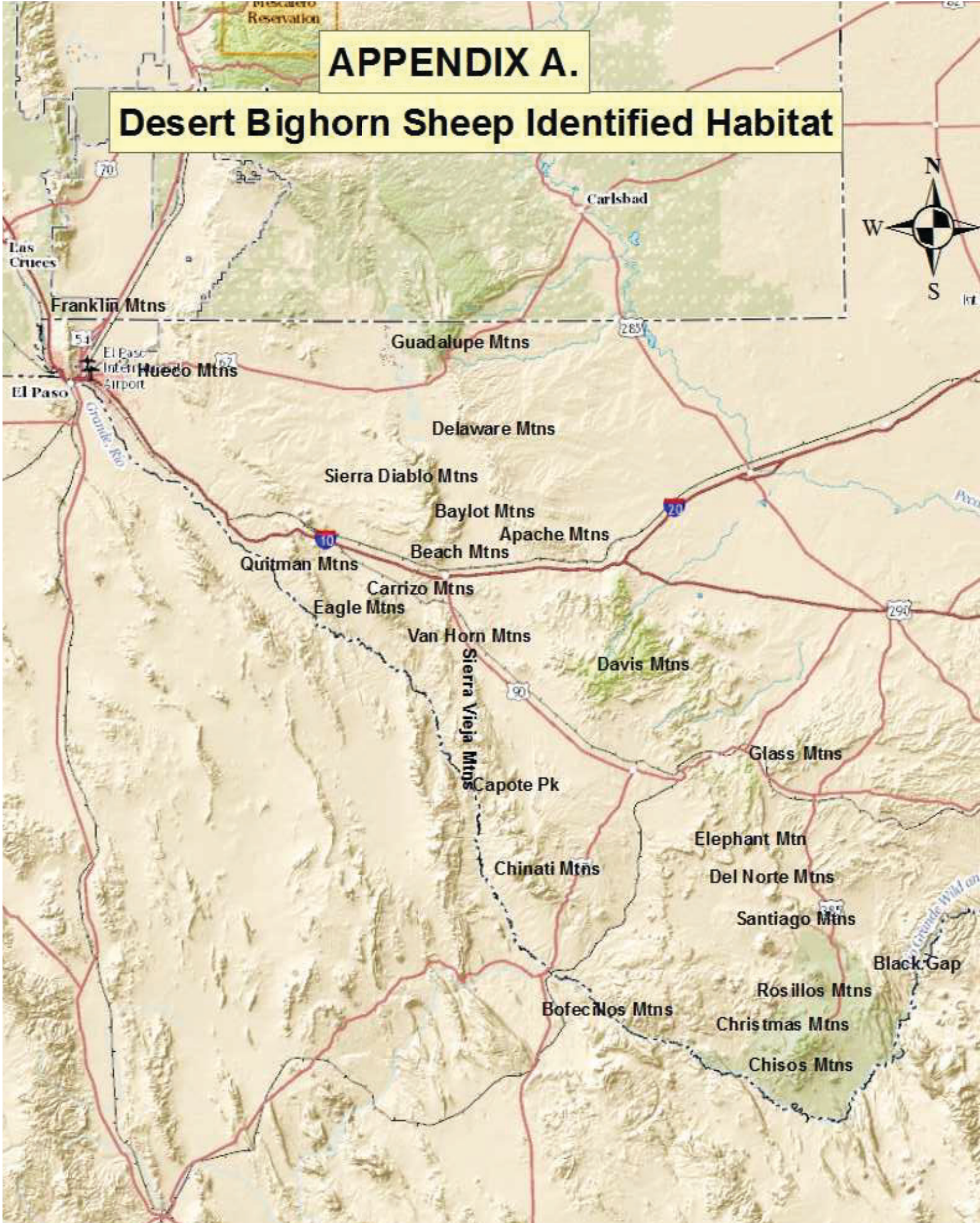
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|---|-----|
| 4. Van Horn Mtns | II |
| 5. Sierra Vieja Mtns | II |
| 6. Bofecillos Mtns (BBRSP) | II |
| 7. Chinati Mtns | III |
| 8. Chiso Mtns (BBNP) | III |
| 9. Eagle Mtns | III |
| 10. Glass Mtns | III |
| 11. Apache Mtns | III |
| 12. Davis Mtns | III |
| 13. Del Norte/Santiago/Rosillo/
Christmas Mtns | III |
| 14. Quitman Mtns | III |
| 15. Guadalupe Mtns | III |
| 16. Delaware Mtns | III |

STRATEGIES

1. Develop educational programs about desert bighorn sheep biology, behavior, and habitat requirements for presentation to schools, wildlife organizations, and other interested groups.
2. Conduct educational field trips and provide guided public access for wildlife (e.g. bighorn) viewing opportunities.
3. Promote public involvement through recreational and non-hunting activities (e.g. wildlife photography, captures/releases, research/monitoring, etc.).
4. Develop educational brochures to be made readily available to the public at appropriate functions (e.g. school/university career days, non-hunting venues, etc.).
5. Conduct desert bighorn sheep public/landowner awareness workshops to highlight restoration efforts and emphasize importance of landowner

APPENDIX A.

Desert Bighorn Sheep Identified Habitat



- cooperation.
6. Establish desert bighorn sheep viewing sites in strategic areas on TPWD property.
 7. Provide and increase public hunting opportunities through the establishment of cooperative private landowner agreements.
 8. Continue yearly surveys to determine population trends, sex and age composition, maturity, mortality, and distribution.
 9. Continue exotic management efforts in conjunction with yearly surveys.
 10. Reduce predation losses by continuing focused and effective predator management program at free-ranging brood sites.
 11. Reduce predation losses by implementing focused and effective predator management program at potential release sites prior to translocations.
 12. Release a minimum of 50 bighorns during each translocation event to increase the potential for “nucleus-herd” establishment.
 13. Encourage landowners to increase water distribution by placing water sources in strategic areas beneficial to sheep.
 14. Encourage landowners to construct wildlife friendly fences if feasible and remove/modify dilapidated fences where appropriate.
 15. Establish cooperative agreements between TPWD and release site landowners which grant reasonable access to the property to conduct desert bighorn activities and projects (i.e. removal of surplus animals, provide TPWD sheep hunting opportunities, conduct research and monitoring, etc.)
- d. Identify surplus desert bighorn sheep source (e.g. EMWMA) for BGWMA augmentation efforts.
 - e. Repair BGWMA holding facility (release pen).
 - f. Identify potential release sites within the Sierra Vieja and Chinati mountains and initiate restoration plans for those sites. (Miller Ranch, Chilicote Ranch, Livingston Ranch and Kelly Properties).
 - g. Identify potential release sites within other mountain ranges when opportunities arise.
 - h. Continue seeking access for desert bighorn capture purposes to areas currently under “restrictions.”
 - i. Closely monitor BBRSP, 9 Point and Capote Peak herds.
2. Intermediate Term – 1-5 years
 - a. Perform augmentation to BGWMA.
 - b. Continue closely monitoring BBRSP, 9 Point and Capote Peak herds.
 - c. Develop DBS restoration agreements with identified potential release sites.
 - d. Repair Chilicote Holding Facility.
 - e. Perform translocations to newly identified release sites (e.g. Sierra Vieja and Chinati mountains).
 - f. Initiate hunting programs at 9 Point Mesa and Capote Peak.
 - g. Construct BBRSP DBS Viewing Area.
 3. Long Term – 5-10 years
 - a. Augment “newly” restored areas (i.e. Sierra Vieja, Chinati, etc.) as needed.
 - b. Explore and identify potential release sites within other mountain ranges including Quitman, Rosillo and Christmas mountains.
 - c. Establish free-ranging brood sites for restoration purpose to include EMWMA, Metapopulation, 9 Point Mesa and Capote Peak (if applicable).
 - d. Conduct TPWD sheep hunts on 9 Point Mesa and Capote Peak.
 - e. Statewide population estimate to be 2,000+ bighorns.

GOAL/OBJECTIVES: Who is responsible?

With direction and approval from TWPD Leadership, as well as assistance and input from DBS Technical Committee (comprised of field staff), it is the responsibility of the Desert Bighorn Sheep Program Leader

1. To ensure the goals and objectives are met in a timely manner and make the necessary adjustments as needed.
2. To procure appropriate release sites and coordinate corresponding captures/transplants.
3. To solicit input from TPWD DBS Technical Committee on particular issues/concerns as needed to determine appropriate action.

TIMETABLE

1. Short Term – within 1 year
 - a. Continue focused predator management program on a quarterly schedule at specific TPWD properties and increase efforts as needed.
 - b. Continue seeking alternative survey methods and explore other options to current permit issuance systems.
 - c. Identify potential population limitations at BGWMA and initiate corrective action.

TBS HELP

TBS can help further restoration efforts by continuing to promote a positive public message regarding our mutual success achieved to date, and an optimistic and confident outlook for the future.

Additionally, success can be achieved through continued desert bighorn projects and support for:

1. Annual TBS Work Projects
2. Support of public hunts
3. Continued positive promotion of the program
4. Serving on the BSAC
5. Serve as a sounding board for ideas to advance our partnership and common goals

Texas Grand Slam Hunt

by Johnny Bunsen



TEXAS GRAND SLAM, JOHNNY BUNSEN

Texas Desert Bighorn Sheep Hunt I waited more than 30 years for a chance to hunt the desert bighorn sheep. Putting in for the draw since 1985, unsuccessful of course. About 10 years ago I met Larry Altimus at a GSCO convention and signed up for his application service. Larry also had been very successful with acquiring permits in Texas. So a couple of years ago I agreed to put my name in the hat for one of those permits. I got a call from Larry last fall and he said he had access to a desert bighorn sheep permit in Texas and wanted to know if I was interested, and of course I said, "HECK YEA!" So we set the hunt up for mid to late January in Van Horn, Texas on the McVay ranch. Larry had told me that the McVay ranch was a special place to be able to hunt the desert bighorn sheep, and that I would have to be patient. Boy was he ever right! It's hard to be patient after 30+ years of waiting for this opportunity! When I arrived in Van Horn I met with Larry and

Stephanie at our hotel. Within about an hour, Froylan Hernandez with Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Darice McVay, one of the owners of the McVay ranch met us at our hotel and we took care of our business and permits. Darice is a very nice person and was very uplifting. She shared a lot of information and history about the "Red Rock" ranch. Her father purchased the ranch back in the 1960's and they have had a very interesting life there. I was so glad to learn all about the history of the ranch and felt honored to be able to hunt there. It was also nice to meet Froylan, I learned a lot of interesting facts listening to Froylan and Larry discuss the sheep program in Texas. Froylan is very dedicated to his job and the desert bighorn sheep of Texas and I appreciated him very much. Now it is time to finally go hunting. The first day Larry and I took his jeep and Stephanie and Sophie (black lab) followed us in their truck. We found a high spot and began to glass for sheep. Within an

hour, Larry had spotted a couple of ewes and small rams. By mid-morning, we saw a ten year old ram that was broomed back to $\frac{3}{4}$ curl on one side at about 200 yards away. Man, you talk about hard to pass up! Now I know what Larry was talking about being patient. Later that afternoon, Larry spotted 9 rams about 3 miles away. Larry said there were two rams in the bunch that were at least ten years old and looked real good. We decided to wait until the next morning and see if we could get a better look. On day 2 we were back where we started on the first day but could not find the group of 9 rams. So we took off in the direction where we last spotted the rams. As we topped a ridge, there the rams were, the wind was bad and they took off to the south west and never seemed to stop. On the morning of the third day we glassed some rams that were on the highest point of the ranch, we did not see any that looked really good but decided to go get a better look.



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We made a couple of stalks on good rams but they were not what we were looking for. So we headed down to a lower spot to eat lunch. From there we spotted another group of rams, but they were in an area we could not stalk, so we just stayed there and did not more glassing. As the sun was getting low in the west, we found another group of rams to the south of us in a red rock ravine. One ram looked really good so we decided to get a closer look. We got about 150 yards from the rams and decided to take a shot at the big ram. He was sitting on the edge of the ravine with the wind just right. We were able

to take the ram as the sun was about to set. It was a moment that was one the best of my hunting career. 30+ years in the making and I completed my grand slam of north American wild sheep. We took a few pictures before dark and returned the next morning for more pic's and skinning and cutting up the meat. All total we saw 43 rams in three days. I had the pleasure of meeting Clay Roberts, with Texas Parks and Wildlife, he plugged and scored my ram. The ram green scored 169 B & C. This ram also gives me #27 north American big game species toward my Super Slam. Thank you so much

to Larry and Stephanie Altimus for a great hunt on the McVay ranch in Van Horn, Texas. I made some really great friends with Larry and Stephanie. If you ever get to hunt with the Altimus's, they have some great stories of their own and have been at it a very long time, truly amazing! Also thank you to Darice McVay and the Texas Bighorn Society for the restoration of the Desert Bighorn Sheep in their native habitat of Texas. As you know, without the conservation efforts of organizations like TBS and others. This hunt would not have been possible.

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A Different Kind of Whitetail

A Different

A full day of hard hiking down some steep and treacherous mountainsides had left my legs a bit wobbly, and a bum knee and ankle hollering for a break, but we reached the truck with enough daylight left to explore the upper reaches of one more canyon before sunset in the spectacular Carmen Mountains of Coahuila, Mexico. As luck would have it a promising old buck showed up about 600 yards out and running up a steep sided draw in the far reaches Mariposa Canyon. We jumped out and set up a spotting

scope to get a better look at him and determined he was worth a closer look, so I straightened out rapidly stiffening legs and grabbed my gun and gear and we headed up the steep hillside between us and where he was last seen, trying to close the distance. After huffing and puffing my way to about 250 yards from where he disappeared, and setting up the spotting scope again, he was nowhere to be found. The lay of the draw pretty much assured us he was still there, but he had vanished into a tiny strip of brush, and with only

minutes of shooting light left we began to discuss returning in the morning for another look. Just then, he popped out into view and I cradled my gun in the shooting sticks my guide Hugo had brought, and determined there was still light enough for a safe shot....

This was not whitetail hunting as I have known it for more than four decades! I grew up hunting skittish whitetails from tree stands in the Missouri Ozarks. After moving to Texas and getting on hunting leases in country dominated by mesquites

Kind of Hunt *by David Wetzel*

and a few live oak motts, I refined an existing passion for still hunting, and sometimes just backing into some cedar brush overlooking a favorite draw or trail for a sit. And trips to the Midwest croplands of Kansas and Missouri later on to chase some of the monster bucks that inhabit that country where drives and box blinds are the preferred hunting method did nothing to prepare me for hunting the elusive and unique “Cola Blanca” of the Carmens! These diminutive relatives of the northern whitetail are a

breed apart! For starters they favor the high country of the scattered mountain ranges they inhabit, beginning their territory at about 6500 foot elevations, up above the mule deer that share this rugged landscape, and continuing on into the dense conifer forests topping out at elevations exceeding 9000 feet. Judging these smaller cousins of the whitetails of my experience was challenging as well, as even the largest specimens would fail to meet minimum requirements for B&C record books on their northern relatives. But

I just couldn't get over how unique this hunt was, and how privileged I felt to partake of the experience.

I was hunting with Sierra Del Carmen Outfitting on the 400,000 acre+ El Carmen Project in northern Mexico at the end of January, 2016. I have worked with El Carmen's General Manager Mr. Billy Pat McKinney for a number of years on conservation projects involving desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, and even a restoration project with Gambels quail and some guzzler projects with



his “better half” Bonnie McKinney on the sister project on the US side of the border, the El Carmen Land & Conservation Company. Collectively these projects represent one of the most ambitious and successful landscape scale conservation projects in North America! Initiated and funded by the CEMEX Corporation beginning in the year 2000, they have successfully restored bighorns, mule deer, pronghorns, elk, Gambels quail, and even the Rio Grande silvery minnow to the properties where they work, providing a much needed boost to numerous other native wildlife species in the process and significant long term protections to the supporting ecosystems, all as part of the master plan. Hunting these lands that had been used and abused for many decades, and their greatly diminished wildlife populations decimated by drought and subsistence hunting is a recent development, and I was one of the lucky few provided an opportunity to do so in modern times. The hunt I was on is considered a “conservation” hunt and they are being developed as an alternative means of sustainably funding the extensive work underway on the project currently,

and that planned for the future. This added a great deal of meaning to me given my past involvement, and I believe represents an extremely graphic example of how hunting really is conservation when done correctly!

My trip began with a figurative step back in time as we crossed the US / Mexico border at Boquillas at the southern end of Big Bend National Park in a rowboat paddled by one of the locals to the backdrop of a Mariachi song sung by the

our destination, it was impossible not to slide back into a mindset no doubt similar to that felt by that icon of desert hunting Jack O’Connor as he hunted this country, and these deer, many decades ago. We entered the property with the stunning visual backdrop of the impressive Carmen Mountains forcing a smile to my face and pumping excitement into my veins! I had visited El Carmen once previously, and already knew that the accommodations were first class with a staff that treats you



“La Cueva” A man cave and dining hall with style!

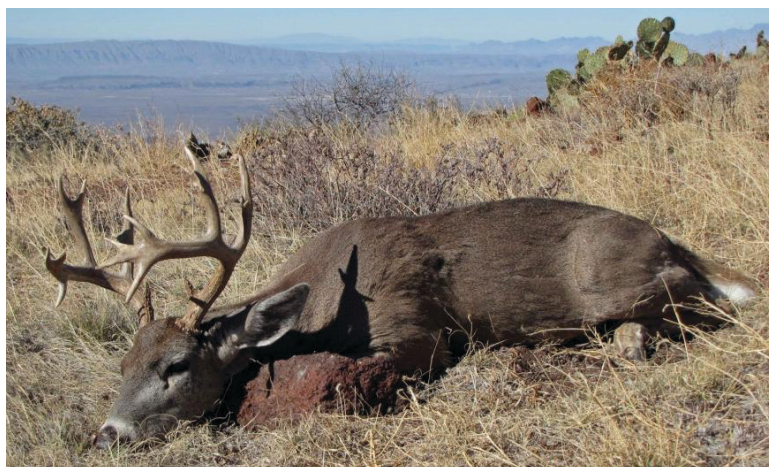
royally and exhibits a rare passion for the work they are doing. And I had worked with some of them on guzzler projects and deer transplants in the US making it feel like I was hunting with family. We arrived and finished lunch with time for an evening

“Crossing Master” on the other shore. This seemingly triggered the arrival of another local resident trailing mules to carry potential customers up the hill to the local cantina and a town that looked to be right out of an old western movie. Minimal time checking in with customs on both sides of the river had jolted me back to the present briefly, but as we began the 30 kilometer ride down a dusty dirt road following a trio of skinny old hounds chasing a rusty pickup load of cattle in route to

run up into the mountains, and were rewarded with the sighting of a huge buck skylined on a distant ridge ensuring an excitement level that made sleep nearly impossible.

Our first full day of hunting saw us back at the site of the previous days big buck sighting, and although several smaller bucks and does were in the area, we chose to head on into higher country where a light snow and heavy frost had transformed the dense forest into a chilly winter wonderland. We

Examples of a couple of the magnificent Cola Blancas from El Carmen





spotted numerous deer amid the sign of bears and mountain lions that share this mountain paradise, and I marveled at the dense vegetation native to these “sky islands” in the Chihuahuan Desert including towering pine, ancient alligator junipers, madrone, and even a few aspen in places!

Evaluating the antlers of Carmen Mountain whitetail bucks is tricky, but we passed up several nice specimens during the course of the rest of the day looking for that special “monster” resembling the giant non-typical taken here in 2013, or the even larger pick-up they had shown me gracing the walls of “La Cueva” (The Cave), their newly completed lounge and dining facility where meals and after hours story telling are hosted. I was enthralled with the possibilities presented by the robust Cola Blanca population these mountains held, and determined to enjoy every moment of the chase! Examples of a couple of the magnificent Cola Blancas from El Carmen

We spent the second day exploring more country in a high racked truck and were treated to sightings of numerous whitetails, mule deer, abundant coveys of blue quail, and even a few bighorn sheep. After a treacherous trek past an old silver mine we even came upon an

ancient rock blind overlooking a narrow gulch where drivers no doubt pushed the ancestors of the deer I was hunting into ambush by the earliest inhabitants of this region. Probably the Lipani Indians, or perhaps the Comanche who came later. We were “forced” to eat steak that night as I had not done my part in bringing home fresh meat for the table, but our chef Lute set a table fit for a king, (or in my case a overweight wanna be vaquero), and formulated plans to hunt the way I like, on foot, through the rugged country where we had seen the big buck earlier when we set out in the morning. Typical habitat for the high country loving Carmen Mountain Whitetails Leaving before sunrise we exited the vehicle high up on the mountain at the edge of the brush line separating the heavily forested mountain top from the more open rocky ridges below. Almost immediately we began seeing deer, and much to my surprise these deer acted almost as if they had never seen a human before, and it’s possible some of them hadn’t. We stalked and glassed numerous nice bucks through the course of the day weaving our way through breathtaking ridgeline vistas and narrow, steep sided canyons including some that at times brought into question my ability

to remain upright! We stopped for lunch and a brief siesta on a remote ridge with two bucks bedded within a hundred yards of us on one side, and three does placidly grazing the valley bottom below only a little further away. Country that our quarry (and my guides) traversed with ease, slowed me considerably, but our pace fit well with the hunting style necessary to pick apart this broken country and to spot the deer that blended in so well. None the less, although I was sorely tempted on several occasions, we didn’t find quite the deer I was looking for on the trip down to lower elevations. It did however leave me grinning from ear to ear and probably my guides somewhat relieved that they didn’t have to quarter and draw me to get me off the mountain! I was also in the perfect frame of mind to pull the trigger on the old buck that appeared just as the sun set on us minutes later at the head of Mariposa Canyon! He may not have been quite the caliber of trophy I was searching for, but he was exactly the deer I wanted, a mature old buck (6-7 years) with gnarly bases and heavy beams, and will be a prized addition to my trophy room proudly representing one of the highlights of a lifetime spent hunting far and wide. At least until I return to this magical place to hunt



One of a complex of Indian dwelling dating back 5000 years or more



A traditional Mexican barbacoa breakfast!

again for one of his bigger relatives.... One of a complex of Indian dwelling dating back 5000 years or more. With a little time to kill the next couple of days we returned to exploring more of this incredible landscape and scheming on ways to move conservation efforts here forward and keep them in place far into the future. In a nod to understanding the history of El Carmen, and to help visualize its future, Jonas, one of my guides and himself part Indian, took me to some old Indian caves in a remote corner of the property and showed me artifacts from their inhabitation here dating back roughly 5000 years. This included the remains of an old sandal woven from the native sotol plant that was a staple of their existence, fire scorched walls around old fire pits, and rock in doorways no doubt put in place to keep them safe from the bears and lions during their sleep. I also

co-opted a custom started by a sheep hunter who had hunted El Carmen earlier, and returned a portion of my kill to the old Indian rock blind we had found to show a measure of respect for the animal, and the incredible operation that made my hunt here possible. We added a sunset toast of fine tequila to the ceremony brought by my amigo Mr. Alejandro Espinosa, the Conservation Director of CEMEX. My final dinner at El Carmen was the icing on the cake as we enjoyed fine wine, Cola Blanca tenderloin medallions, and enough expertly prepared side dishes to make this old fat boy sleep like a baby for the first time since I arrived! Before leaving on my last day they had one more surprise in store for me. I had seen the preparations coming together the night before, and I must admit I was a bit skeptical as a traditional Mexican "Barbecoa" was

put together by mi amigos. A fire was built in a deep pit, and freshly cut and roasted agave leaves were wrapped tightly around a cow's head and wired in place. As the fire reduced down to coals, it was placed in the pit and covered tightly to cook overnight. For breakfast it was unwrapped with much anticipation by all the staff, and using fresh tortillas as our only tool, we pulled off some of the most flavorful and tender beef you can imagine! It was truly a fitting end to the adventure of a lifetime in "Old Mexico" A traditional Mexican barbacoa breakfast! Very limited opportunities exist to hunt El Carmen, but if you are interested in a whitetail hunt like no other, in a place like no other, you can contact Billy Pat at *30-719-0858 and add your name to the list! I promise you will not be disappointed!



Evening's were spent around the fire pit on the rooftop patio of La Cueva overlooking the Carmen Mountains

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2016 Work Project

by Dan Boone, Editor

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Once again the Texas Bighorn Society has risen to the challenge.

The purpose and goal of the TBS is to restore Desert Bighorn Sheep to the mountain ranges of West Texas where they once lived. The last known of our native species of bighorn, the Texana, was found hung in a fence in 1954. We now have over 1500 bighorns alive and well in West Texas thanks to the TBS and Texas Parks and Wildlife efforts. This year's work project began many months ago- i.e. raising the money to pay for the guzzlers and associated costs and

gathering the materials for same. The physical efforts started on April 7, 2016 when various trucks and trailers of members and TPWD showed up at Lajitas to begin the project. Frames, tanks, drinkers, plumbing, tools, sheet metal, pipe, and volunteers arrived in the afternoon along with Earl Watters of Aerowestern Helicopters. Froylan Hernandez of TPWD had chosen two sites in the mountains of Big Bend Ranch State Park for the two guzzlers we would be building. By 5:00 in the afternoon the materials were on the mountain waiting for the volunteers to erect the guzzlers the following day. The TBS will also be building a viewing station in the park and TBS donated a floor mounted telescope so that... (cont. on pg. 31



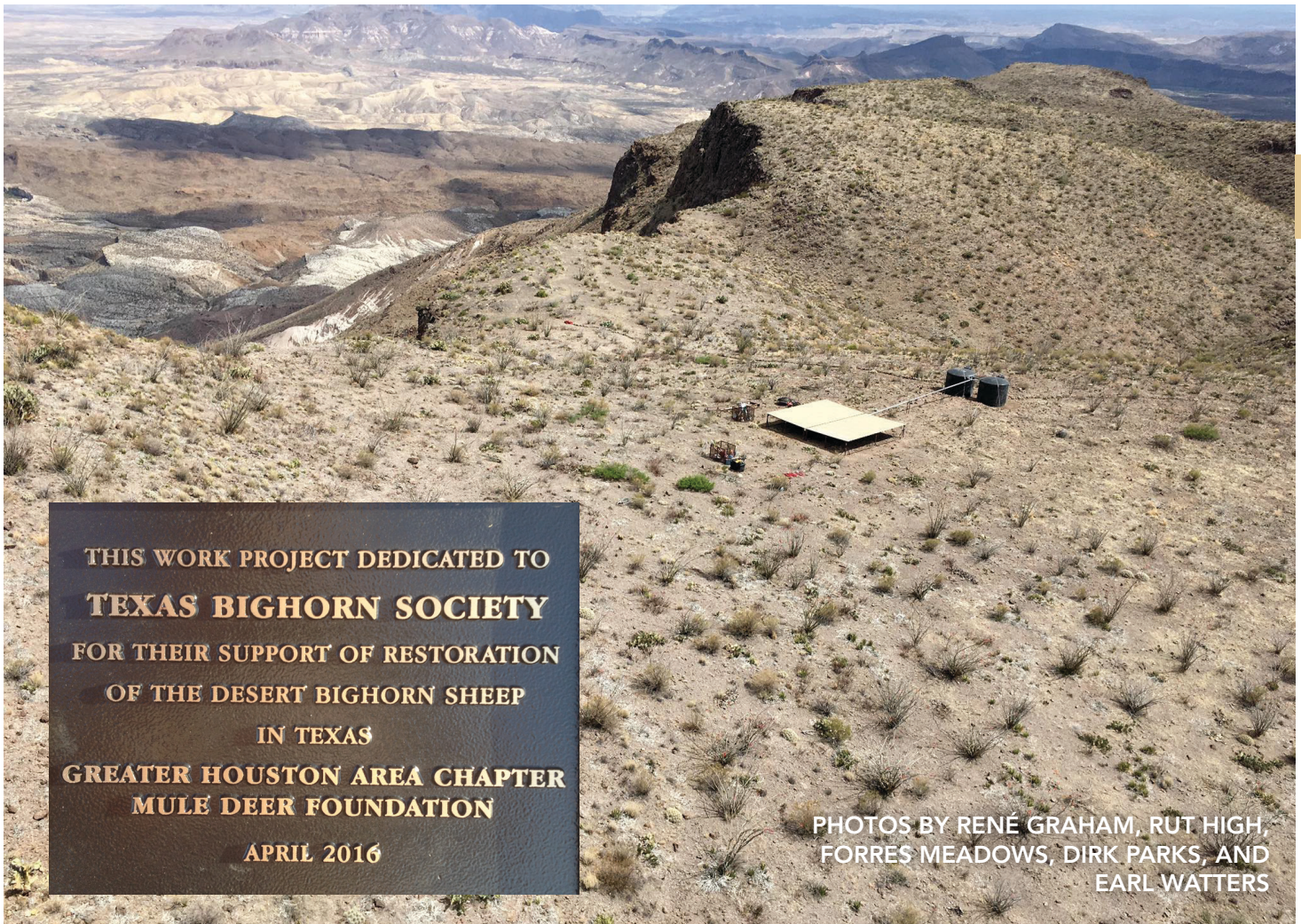


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April 7-8, 2016

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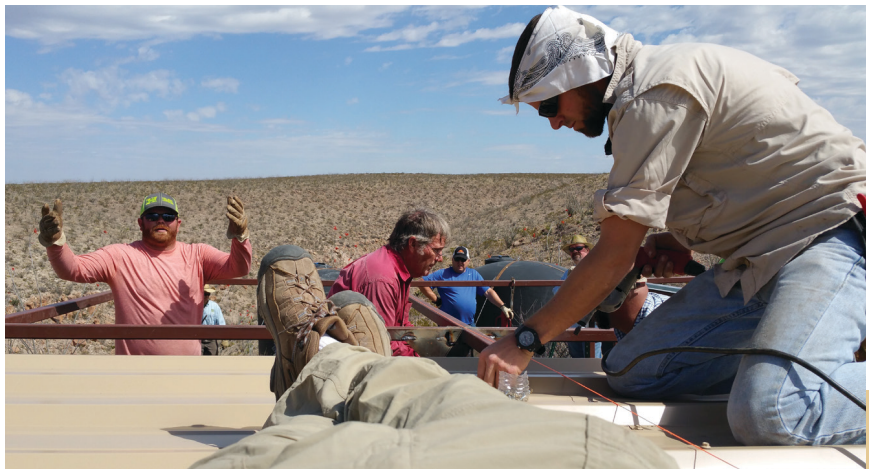
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visitors to the park can view the wild sheep cruising the nearby mountains. April 8th- in front of the hotel 86 people gathered and along with 10 TPWD people and we proceeded to the staging area and started hauling people up on the mountain. I don't know how but Earl took everyone to their worksites and was finished delivering volunteers by 9:30. The viewing station volunteers were able to drive to their site. Lynton Holloway, team/site leader and his people were first to finish and were down off of the mountain by 3:30 in the afternoon. Ace High, team/ site leader and his group took a few hours more. I guess Ace is just a half fast leader. The viewing station constructors are gaining albeit slowly. They will have to work again Saturday. Friday night, we were fed by DB's Rustic Iron BBQ of Terlingua- and boy does he do a good job. We also auctioned off a few donations

and some of us had a toddy or two. Just so those of you who haven't been privileged to attend the TBs work project will know, this is an outstanding group of people. It is my privilege to call them friends. Saturday morning, teams of three went to each guzzler site and Aerowestern brought down all of the tools left on the mountain the previous day. The volunteers moved to the viewing station site and watched that crew finish up the viewing station and were fed by Pam and Jerrell one more time. By the way there was not nearly as much beer drinking at the staging areas this time as it is against the law to display and or consume alcohol in a state park and we were informed of same on Thursday afternoon by a park ranger who caused a few of our members to dispose of their beverage. Saturday night we were fed once again by DB's Rustic Iron BBQ (still

good stuff). Mark Garrett and Froylan Hernandez had informed the TBS of a young man ,Nicholas Cardoza a second grader, from Alpine who had an aggressive, cancerous brain tumor removed and was facing a year of chemotherapy. A Ruger pistol had been donated in his name and the TBS auction of the pistol raised \$7,000 to help out the young man and his family. By the way during our Saturday night get together it started raining in the mountains around us and Saturday morning we discovered that Ace's site we had 1600 gallons of water in the tanks- we are good aren't we? As a side note we had three capable and willing to work volunteers from the Yukon province of Canada- members of the Yukon chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation. Thanks for your help gentlemen. Sunday morning- we are out of here.



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