

# The Bighorn



SPRING  
2022



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>>> PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS BIGHORN SOCIETY

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



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THE DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP IN WEST TEXAS**

# 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 via email and in one of the following formats:

- PDF (Preferred)
- TIFF
- JPEG

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

All other formats must be approved by our production staff

## SUBMISSION DEADLINES

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Fall - October 1st

Winter - February 10th

## DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENT RATES

Location	Rate Per Issue
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Back Cover (Supply as full color bleed)	\$315.00
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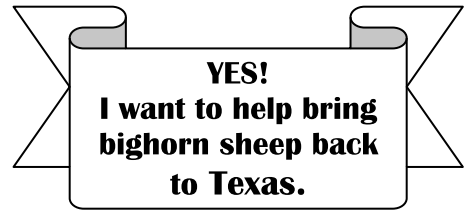
Photo by Chris Stahl

Spring 2022

# BIGHORN



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# 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

Robert Bergin	Donald Hudson
Charles R. Brown Jr.	William Juve
Jason Cassel	Heath Kilcrease
Brandon Cullen	Karrie Kolesar Meadows
Jason Dean	Ben Meadows
Joseph Edling	Dillon Michalk
Sarah Fritts	Ken Nowicki
Richard Fryer	Jefferey Previtera
Bob Glover	Paul Rogers
Marc Haile	Christian Salge
John Hertenberger	David Spann
Tony Howard	Clayton Strolle

Mike Zumar

## three year membership

Kevin Bedford	John Haberer
Patrick Foley	Tyson Hale
Kevin Guthrie	Matt Maddock

Alan Schafer

## family

Duane and Natalie Frey  
 Colin and Chelsea McDermott

## student/military

Brady Boykin	Adriel Perez
Caleb Clarkson	Sabrina Sanchez
Madison Darwish	Melanie Sheppard
Laci Hertenberger	Emily Stelling
Matthew LonHicks	Paul Stinson
Sara Julian	Joseph Villarreal

## life

Adam Adams (upgrade)	Elyse Kearns
Zachary Atkinson	Justin Kearns (upgrade)
Michael Blackburn	Jasper Klein
Paul Hicks (upgrade)	Michael Posey
Mike Howard (upgrade)	Peter Smith
Jason Huffman	Diane Smith
Kevin Hurley	Elizabeth Smith (upgrade)
G. Alan Joyce (upgrade)	Chris Ulrich

# \*please,

Help us stay current with your address and email information! Contact Kathy Boone if you have moved, changed email addresses, or have questions about your membership. She can be reached at: [membership@texasbighornsociety.org](mailto:membership@texasbighornsociety.org) or 806.745.7783

# A LETTER FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

““ Members,

It has been a busy time at TBS! We kicked off the inaugural “Adopt A Guzzler” project where we checked and repaired guzzlers on Black Gap WMA and El Carmen Conservation Co.-Cemex. So far, we have had commitments for five guzzlers to be adopted. If you are interested in this program, please contact the office.

The following weekend after the “Adopt A Guzzler” was our yearly work Project. A big THANK YOU goes out to all the volunteers that made it such a tremendous success. TBS constructed two mountain top guzzlers in the Eagle Mountains, providing a much-needed water source for the Desert Bighorns there.

The Texas State Desert Bighorn Sheep tag was auctioned at the Wild Sheep Foundation show in Reno in January. Bobby Theis was the successful bidder and the Desert Bighorn ram he took from Elephant Mountain WMA is a “*Pending New State Record!*” Congratulations Bobby!

The landowner tag raffled at last year's Roundup was drawn by Whitney Leavell. He recently completed his successful sheep hunt with a genuinely nice ram as well. Congratulations Whitney!

March 12-13 was the “Symposium on the Ecology, Management & Economics of Desert Bighorn and Aoudad, held at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. The first symposium was 40 years ago. This latest symposium was held to discuss aoudad populations, research, disease transmission to Desert Bighorns, sheep habitat degradation and management strategies. There were interesting presentations from both Texas and New Mexico. Hopefully, this will lead to better management of the aoudad numbers in Texas.

The “Annual Roundup” is fast approaching. It will be held on June 10-11<sup>th</sup> in Grapevine, Texas. There are great auction items both Friday and Saturday. There will be dinner and auction on Friday night, a sporting clays shoot Saturday morning and dinner and auction on Saturday night. We will be auctioning the State tag for a Desert Bighorn hunt during the Roundup. Please register online to reserve you place there! ””

Hope to see you in Grapevine!



Sam



# EDITOR'S *letter*



Bonnie McKinney  
Editor, *The Bighorn*

What a busy year so far, the New Year kicked off with Dallas Safari Club annual convention, followed shortly by the Wild Sheep Foundation annual show in Reno, TBS had a booth at both shows and lots of visitors and new members joining TBS.

The TBS family was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of our friend for many years, Pam Coburn. Pam was always happy and spent a tremendous amount of her time on TBS activities over a period of many years. We extend our deepest condolences to all of the Coburn family, Pam will be missed by everyone.

A huge thank you to Chris Stahl for his great photo that graces the cover of this issue of "Bighorn."

The inaugural TBS Adopt a Guzzler project kicked off in early March with great participation. Two sites were chosen, one at Black Gap WMA and one at El Carmen Conservation Co., the weather was beautiful and everyone had a great time.

The annual work project was held at the Eagle Mountains south of Van Horn. What a great sheep mountain. Close to 100 people attended, Earl Waters did a great flying job. Thursday all the equipment was flown to the two sites, ready for work on Friday and Saturday. However, Mother Nature had other ideas, Friday morning was cold, high winds, even some snow north of Van Horn, no flying and no work, but Friday evening everyone had a great time at dinner and were ready for work on Saturday. Both guzzlers were completed on Saturday, Earl had many flights with people to the sites, then returning them all to the base below the mountain. Saturday evening dinner was great with everyone having fun visiting with old friends and new. Great to have student participation again this year. Keeping our young people interested in habitat work and conservation is an insurance plan for our future wildlife programs.

Texas Tech University hosted the site for the second Symposium on the Ecology, Management & Economics of Desert Bighorn and Aoudad which was held at TTU on April 12-13, 2022. The symposium was sponsored by Sitka, HSCF, Texas Bighorn Society, Wild Sheep Foundation and New Mexico Wild Sheep Foundation. There were a number of papers presented as well as a panel discussion. Landowners, Texas Tech University, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas Bighorn Society, Cemex-El Carmen Conservation Co.-Texas, New Mexico Game & Fish, Sul Ross State University-Borderlands Research Institute, and Texas A&M University were all represented at the symposium. A detailed article will be in our next issue.

TBS ANNUAL ROUNDUP is just around the corner, June 10-11, in Grapevine, Texas at the Embassy Suites, please make plans to attend.

I am always looking for new articles and photos, hunts, projects and anything pertaining to our desert bighorns always has a place in TBS magazine.

*Bonnie McKinney*  
Bonnie McKinney, Editor  
El Carmen Land & Conservation Co,  
Wildlife Coordinator  
Cemex USA-Texas

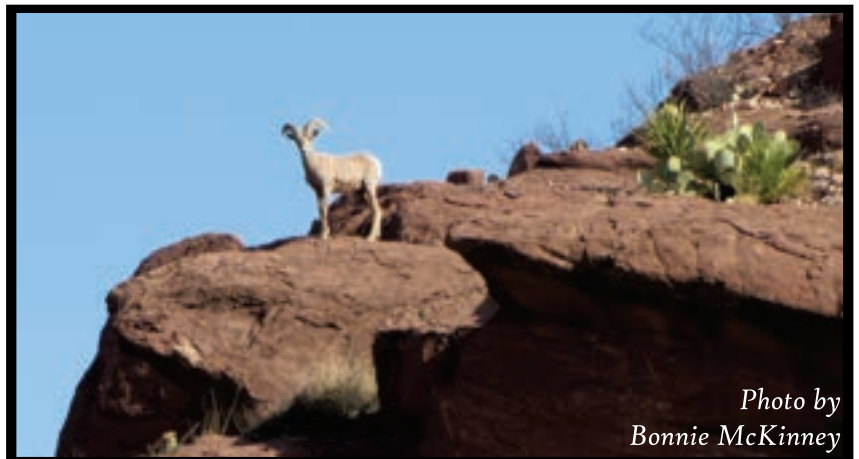


Photo by  
Bonnie McKinney

# This & That

## MARCH 2022 BOARD & GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS SUMMARY

by Curt Brockmann, Secretary

The TBS Board meeting was held on March 10<sup>th</sup> and the General Membership meeting was held on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Both meetings were held at the Van Horn Convention Center. The Board meeting was called to order, and the Board approved the minutes from the January 8<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

We have 835 members as of March 2022, which is a 6% increase since January. This is largely attributable to new members joining during the Wild Sheep Foundation and the Dallas Safari Club conventions. The financial report was presented and approved by the Board. The Board voted on and passed several items including sponsoring the Wild Sheep Foundation's Chapters & Affiliates Summit and the Texas Tech University Aoudad Symposium. The Chapters & Affiliates Summit will be held in San Antonio on May 19-22<sup>nd</sup>. The Aoudad Symposium is on April 12-13<sup>th</sup>. The Board also approved a management project at the Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

In early March, a trial run of the new Adopt-a-Guzzler program was conducted at the El Carmen Land & Conservation Co. (Adams Ranch) and the Black Gap Wildlife Management Area. The teams inspected and repaired several guzzlers in the areas. Plans are to expand the program to include more sites and increase TBS membership involvement.



During the General Membership meeting, TBS members voted on and approved two changes to the TBS By-laws. One By-law amendment reduced the number of Directors from 12 members to 11 members, and the other changed the Fiscal Year from July 1-June 30, to January 1-December 31 of each calendar year. The membership also elected Kathy Boone, Lynton Holloway and Jim Breck Bean as Directors. After the General Membership meeting, the Directors elected the following Officers: Sam Cunningham, President; Ace High, Vice-President; Kathy Boone, Treasurer; and myself, Secretary.

The 2022 TBS Roundup will be in Grapevine, Texas at the Embassy Suites near the Bass Pro shop on June 10-11. Please plan to attend, and we hope to see you there. Have a great summer!

### REMINDER TO ALL TBS MEMBERS:

TBS uses "mail chimp" service to email our members upcoming news and events. If you are one of our long-time members please make sure we have your most recent and up-to-date email address.

Please send to:  
[info@texasbighornsociety.org](mailto:info@texasbighornsociety.org)  
or call 806-745-7783





# Texas Bighorn Society Sheep Tag

**LIVE AUCTION @ TBS Roundup 2022**  
**Saturday | June 11, 2022**  
**Embassy Suites | Grapevine, TX**



*2021 Texas Auction Tag Winner Bobby Theis*  
*PENDING New Texas State Record Desert Bighorn Sheep*

For more info call:

Sam Cunningham, TBS | 806-282-6889

Froylan Hernandez, TPWD | 732-837-0666 x 227

Texas Bighorn Society | 1615 West Loop 289 | Lubbock, TX 79416

[www.texasbighornsociety.org](http://www.texasbighornsociety.org)

501(c)3 Organization

# Celebrating THE LIFE OF

Pamela Sue Coburn  
June 5, 1946 to January 18, 2022



**FORT WORTH-** On January 18, 2022, Pamela Sue Coburn began her journey to heaven, with her daughter Cathy and her husband Jerrell holding her hands.

Pam was born on June 5, 1946 in New York, New York, to parents Robert and Ruth Norwood.

Pam's greatest passions were her family, and her faith in God. She dearly loved her church family at St. Anne's Church, and their prayers and outreach always lifted her heart. Pam knew that through Christ there is life after death and that she would be going to heaven.

Never content to just sit down and relax, Pam had a long list of hobbies. She made dozens of quilts, and loved selecting the patterns and fabric, piecing, and hand-quilting each one. She loved spending time in the kitchen and was always cooking up something new for supper-and it was always delicious.

Pam and Jerrell were involved with the Texas Bighorn Society and the state's effort to reintroduce Texas Bighorn Sheep to their native home in the mountains of West Texas. Every spring they would travel with a group of 100 or so volunteers to build water catchments (guzzlers) to support that effort. After one trip they figured out that the kitchen was the best place for them to help! The feeding of the crew smoothed right out, and Pam and Jerrell stayed on that job until their health prevented them from working.

The Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, which Coburn Catering has been involved with since 1946, took up a large part of each winter. Hiring staff, booking and managing catering events and a thousand other things both large and small kept Pam hopping in January and February.

In the fall, Jerrell always headed to the mountains, and slowly but surely Pam came along. She practiced and practiced until she was good with a rifle. Pam always loved to look at Pronghorn Antelope until finally she drew a tag. The first one she shot made the Boone and Crockett Records Book. Pam and Jerrell only went when they were able to draw a tag on public land, and Pam put five Pronghorns in the Boone and Crockett Records Book.

On a trip to Wyoming a few years back Pam proved she had figured out the art of camping and she knew how to manage life on the prairie. Jerrell was on one side of the ten and Pam had wandered to the other side when he heard her yell out, "I'm in trouble!" Jerrell ran to help as quickly as he could, only to find out what she had hollered was, "Bring the shovel!"

She was preceded in death by her parents, Robert and Ruth Norwood; parents-in-law, Otha and Marguerite (Marge) Coburn; and brother-in-law, Gary Coburn.

Pam is survived by her husband of 54 years, Jerrell; son, Steve Coburn and daughter-in-law Cindy; daughter, Catharine Coburn DeNote and son-in-law, Phillip DeNote; grandchildren, Ryan Wenzel, Samuel Coburn, Matthew Coburn and Anabel Waggoner, brother, Bob Norwood and wife Carol; sister, Barbara Baxter and husband, Scott; and numerous friends who were her extended family.

**Memorials:** In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made in Pam's name to St. Anne's Church ([stannesfw.org](http://stannesfw.org)), the Texas Bighorn Society ([texasbighornsociety.org](http://texasbighornsociety.org)), or a charity of your choice.



MEMORIAL DONATIONS  
TO  
TEXAS BIGHORN SOCIETY

IN MEMORY OF  
**PAM COBURN**

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CONGRATULATIONS TO  
**JIM BRECK BEAN**  
ON HIS  
**DESERT BIGHORN RAM**

“Being in the business, and having a life dedicated to wild sheep this ram is the pinnacle of my hunting career.” “It has been my lifelong dream and goal to be able to take a ram in my home state, and a ram of this caliber was the icing on the cake.” “Thank you to everyone involved on making my dream come true.”  
*Jim Breck Bean*





## ADOPT A GUZZLER PROJECT - MARCH 2022

*by Bonnie McKinney*

The inaugural TBS, “Adopt A Guzzler Project” kicked off on a beautiful spring weekend in early March. Clay Brewer had brought this idea to the table as it had been used by Wild Sheep Foundation. Plans were made to start this project in west Texas. The first work project sites were selected at Black Gap WMA (TPWD) and Cemex-El Carmen Land & Conservation Co. (ECLCC). Both areas share boundaries and are located in southeastern Brewster County. ECLCC hosted the site and TBS provided meals and expertise in guzzler repair.

For those of you who don't know about this new “Adopt A Guzzler” project, it is basically where TBS members have the opportunity to “adopt” one of the many wildlife water guzzlers scattered over the west Texas landscape in desert bighorn habitat. By adopting a guzzler, you make periodic trips to that particular guzzler to check and see if repairs are needed, and if so, you make the repairs,

while there you also check the troughs and the water level in the storage tanks. Most of the TBS guzzlers are located high on desert mountains, so it is a hike to the sites and you must be able to carry tools, repair items and plenty of water and lunch. In addition to the supplies you need to carry, you must know what to look for and how to make the repairs and know how to make sure the guzzler is working properly.

On hand at the ECLCC were TBS guzzler site managers for work projects, Ace High and Lynton Holloway. After breakfast on March 5, everyone formed two groups and headed to the work sites. Lynton was in charge of the ECLCC site. They headed to the mountain on the northwest side of the area to check the guzzler (TBS#1). Ace and his group headed to Black Gap where they were met by TPWD staff, Travis Smith, Kevin LeGrow and Travis Bryan. They traveled down canyon to the guzzler named “Hole In The Wall.”

After a full day of learning the in's, and out's, of guzzler maintenance, troughs, pipelines and how to make repairs if needed everyone headed back to ECLCC headquarters for a great evening meal prepared by Sam Cunningham. Sam did an awesome job of preparing all the meals and the food was great.

Early Sunday morning everyone headed homeward. Many thanks to Claiborne Myers for the great photos of the Black Gap site, and thanks to all that attended. We were delighted to also have three students from the Texas Tech University Veterinary College attend.



### PARTICIPANTS

- |                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Sam Cunningham</b>        | <b>Walker Netherton</b>   |
| <b>Travis Smith</b>          | <b>Ace High</b>           |
| <b>Claiborne Myers</b>       | <b>Travis Bryan</b>       |
| <b>Lynton Holloway</b>       | <b>Dris Abraham</b>       |
| <b>Kevin LeGrow</b>          | <b>Billy Pat McKinney</b> |
| <b>Nelson Grimes</b>         | <b>Melissa Brown</b>      |
| <b>Bonnie McKinney</b>       | <b>Whitney Leavell</b>    |
| <b>Christian Salge</b>       | <b>Bennett Folson-TTU</b> |
| <b>Nicholas Grandell-TTU</b> | <b>Tyler Grahmann-TTU</b> |
| <b>John Meyers</b>           |                           |



*Photos of Black Gap Site by Claiborne Myers  
Photos of El Carmen Site by Bonnie McKinney*

*Bobby Theis's*  
**ELEPHANT MOUNTAIN  
DESERT BIGHORN**

*by Jim Breck Bean / High West Outfitters*

**MAY BE A NEW TEXAS STATE RECORD**



Monday morning March 21, 2022 dawned a very cold, windy day with sideways rain, not the ideal conditions for a desert bighorn hunt. Jasper Klein (HWO guide) and I met Bobby Theis at Alpine, we headed to Elephant Mountain WMA (TPWD). Bobby was the high bidder on the TPWD desert bighorn tag at the Wild Sheep Foundation show in Reno, Nevada. Bobby was no stranger to sheep hunting, and I had hunted with him several times in the past, I think this was our fourth hunt together.

We met with TPWD staff, Mark Garrett, Cody McEntire, Josh Cross, Elias Salcido, Travis Smith, Kevin LeGrow, Froylan Hernandez and Travis Bryan at Elephant Mountain headquarters. Shortly we were on our way to the mountain and despite the weather we saw 23 rams. Cody showed me a photo he had taken through a spotting scope of a big ram he had seen, so our priority for the next day was finding that ram.

The following morning, we were on the mountain at daylight and saw 56 rams, the last group seen was by Josh Cross and Elias Salcido who were both spotting for sheep on the mountain, there were 19 rams in that group and the big ram was with them. I said, "that's the shooter!"

We worked our way up the mountain to get on top and started our stalk from above the rams. The rams were about 1400 yards distant and the group had split, the big ram was in a group of five. I estimated the big ram to be at least 10 years old, and upward of a 170 measurement. We moved into position at about 350 yards away. We waited a bit and the big ram turned so we had a good look at him. We all agreed this ram was a "shooter." Bobby's response was, "as long as it is an older mature ram, I'm good with it!"

Bobby got into position for the shot with his Mesa Precision Arms in 6.5 PRC. The ram turned broadside and Bobby made a perfectly placed shot from a little more than 300 yards. We hiked down to the drainage where the ram had fallen, we then realized how big he was; from above on the mountain top I knew he was good, but not how good! We took photos and some quick measurements. We were all sure this big ram was going to measure over 180. Cody McEntire scored the ram at 185 5/8 green score. We were excited for sure, this ram has the potential score of being a new Texas record desert bighorn, now we wait for the drying period and the final score.

After a great evening dinner and lots of conversation we wrapped up the hunt. Congratulations to Bobby Theis for taking a mature trophy ram that may well be a new Texas record. Guides were myself (HWO), Jasper Klein (HWO), Cody McEntire (TPWD) and spotters on the on mountain were Josh Cross and Elias Salcido (TPWD). Travis Bryan, Travis Smith, Kevin LeGrow, Froylan Hernandez and Mark Garrett (TPWD) were below the mountain.





# 33<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL ROUNDUP

**JUNE 10<sup>TH</sup> & 11<sup>TH</sup>  
FULL REGISTRATION  
ONLY \$150!**

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WITH AUCTIONS, GAMES,  
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PRO SHOPS.**

*"Restoring bighorn sheep to their native ranges in Texas, and ensuring the viability of their habitat"*

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**1615 WEST LOOP 289 | LUBBOCK, TX 79416 | 806-745-7783**

**WWW.TEXASBIGHORNSOCIETY.ORG**





# 2022 ROUNDUP SPONSORS

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Not only do they focus on conservation, education, and hunter's advocacy, but Lubbock Sportsman's Club – DSC Chapter also have an enormous impact on their local community, children, veterans, law enforcement officers, and game wardens.



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This Sponsorship is in honor of Pat Holloway for her love and years of dedication to the Texas Bighorn Society.



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June 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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### HOTEL INFORMATION

**Reservation Cut-Off Date: May 19, 2022**  
**TBS GROUP Rate: \$144 Single Room; \$154 Double Room**  
**CODE BY PHONE ONLY: Texas Bighorn Society**  
**(972)724-2600 – Embassy Suites, 2401 Bass Pro Drive, Grapevine, TX 76051**

**MAIL TO: TBS, 1615 West Loop 289, Lubbock, TX 79416, or FAX to 806-745-8475**  
**Telephone: 806-745-7783 email: [crisy@texasbighornsociety.org](mailto:crisy@texasbighornsociety.org)**  
 Full Refund less \$10.00 handling fee for cancellations received on or before May 19, 2022  
 No refunds for cancellations after May 19, 2022  
 Value of Meals: \$75.00 Friday and \$90.00 Saturday  
[www.texasbighornsociety.org](http://www.texasbighornsociety.org)

# RIFLE RAFFLE

Drawing takes place at our  
Roundup  
June 2022

\$50 per ticket  
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[www.texasbighornsociety.org](http://www.texasbighornsociety.org)  
to order tickets.

## DESCRIPTION OF RIFLE:

Horizon Firearms has designed our Series 003 Custom Texas Bighorn Society Rifle. The rifle is chambered in 6.5 PRC, Horizon defiance action, 22 Benchmark Carbon barrel, Iota Eko Carbon Stock painted in custom camo, a Redsnake DBM bottom metal, a sheep knob, Triggertech Primary Curved trigger set at 2lbs 7oz, and the TBS logo.



## THE EAGLE MOUNTAINS



# TBS WORK PROJECT 2022

*by Bonnie McKinney, Editor*

The Eagle Mountains are an isolated “sky island” mountain with great bighorn habitat and plenty of acreage for bighorn populations to expand. Desert waters are few and far between so the addition of wildlife water guzzlers in this mountain range will enhance desert bighorn habitat.

TBS based out of Van Horn and traveled the short distance to the staging site south of Van Horn. On Thursday, helicopter pilot Earl Waters shuttled all the frames, tin and necessary equipment to the mountain at two sites that had been previously picked for guzzlers.

Board Meeting was Thursday evening and afterwards everyone enjoyed a great meal at El Capitan Restaurant. The winds were picking up and it seemed to be getting colder. The weather forecast wasn't looking very good for the next day (Friday) to begin guzzler construction.

Early the next morning it was bitter cold, windy, cloudy and snowing north of Van Horn. Mother Nature had other plans, winds prevented Earl from flying people to the sites and so we all waited the day out. Friday evening, we had a great meal and everyone had fun catching up with old friends and making new ones. Great to have the student group back again this year.

Saturday morning dawned very cold, with very light winds so everyone hustled through breakfast, grabbed lunches and headed to the staging site. Earl was literally in the air all day flying people to the distant sites on top of the mountain, once he had everyone up on the mountain it was almost time to return and start flying them all back to the staging site. Which he did in great style! Lastly, he flew down all the equipment that had been used in the construction of the guzzlers.

Saturday evening was a festive time, dinner was great and everyone had such a great time visiting and there were two more wildlife water guzzlers on the mountains for desert bighorn sheep. Many thanks to Earl Waters for his great flying skills and the aerial photos he took, and to Dirk Parks for his photos at the staging site and at the convention center. Hope you all enjoy the photos below and are looking forward to another work project next year. We can never have too much water in the desert! The attendee's list is attached and I hope we haven't missed anyone. A huge thank you to everyone that participated!

# WORK PROJECT 2022 ATTENDEES

BILL APPEGATE  
CHARLIE BARNES  
WINONA BARNES  
JIM BRECK BEAN  
BLACKIE  
KATHY BOLNER  
STEVE BOLNER  
DAN BOONE  
KATHY BOONE  
BRADY BOYKIN  
BRYANT BRADSHAW  
CLAY BREWER  
BETTY BROCKMANN  
CARL BROCKMANN  
CURT BROCKMANN  
BILL BROYLES  
KIANNA BURTLE  
CALEB CLARKSON  
CALEB COX  
CHUCK COX  
SAM CUNNINGHAM  
TRACY CUNNINGHAM  
NELSON DOZIER

JOSEPH EDLING  
MATT DUNN  
MATTIE DUNN  
DUANE FREY  
NATALIE FREY  
SARAH FRITTS  
KEN GARCIA  
RICHARD GUTIERREZ  
JOHN GUTZ  
JOHN HABERER  
PARKER HALL  
BOBBY HARRISON  
JOHN HART  
DAVID HERTENBERGER  
JOHN HERTENBERGER  
LACI HERTENBERGER  
ACE HIGH  
LYNTON HOLLOWAY  
TONY HOWARD  
WES HOWARD  
DONALD HUDSON  
GREG HUFFMAN  
RACHEL HUFFMAN

ROBERT JOSEPH  
ALAN JOYCE  
MARILYN JOYCE  
SARA JULIAN  
TED KILCREASE  
HEATH KILCREASE  
JASPER KLEIN  
WHITNEY LEAVELL  
BOB MCCOY  
BILLY PAT MCKINNEY  
BONNIE MCKINNEY  
DOUG MCNEESE  
WES MUNDY  
WALKER NETHERTON  
TIFFANY OSBURN  
DIRK PARKS  
ADRIEL PEREZ  
FRANK REBARCHIK  
MAYA RESSLER  
SABRINA SANCHEZ  
BEA SEGURA  
MELANIE SHEPPARD  
ALLEN SMITH

KEITH SMOTHERMAN  
EMILY STELLING  
RANDY STOLTE  
CRISY STRATTON  
JOSEPH VILLARREAL  
MATT WALDRIP  
SCOTT WALTER  
EARL WATERS  
ROWDY YORDY  
MIKE ZUMAR  
  
TPWD  
BENNY BENAVIDEZ  
TRAVIS BRYAN  
JOSH CROSS  
MARK GARRETT  
FROYLAN HERNANDEZ  
KEVIN LEGROW  
MITCH LOCKWOOD  
DR. HUNTER REED  
ELIAS SALCIDO  
TRAVIS SMIT

# TBS WORK PROJECT 2022



# TBS WORK PROJECT 2022



# TBS WORK PROJECT 2022





# The Fall and Rise of Texas Bighorns

by Jim Heffelfinger

The desert bighorn sheep in West Texas are simply a smaller and lighter-colored version of the same species that roams throughout the Rocky Mountains and western Canada. Desert bighorn are well-adapted to the arid rocky southwestern landscape where they often exist in clusters of populations occupying several mountain ranges. Through time, populations of bighorn may die out in one mountain range, only to be re-populated via immigrants from nearby habitat. Sometimes they never come back on their own and sometimes conditions change and they pioneer to ranges they haven't occupied before. Unlike their flatlander cousins, bighorn thrive in rugged and cliffy habitat called "escape terrain" because it offers them the opportunity to escape from predators that are not so adept at bouncing along the cliffs. Desert bighorn generally do well in remote areas as long as they have enough forage, water, and protection from disease and predation.

## Those Who Came Before

We know desert bighorn have been in West Texas for a long time because we have evidence in the form of petroglyphs in remote rocky areas. These depictions of bighorn were made long before our recent advances in wildlife management, but they attest to the fact that Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) were not the first ones to count bighorn in the Trans-Pecos. Petroglyphs identified in El Paso and Hudspeth counties and in the Sierra Diablo mountains illustrate just how important these animals have been to local residents for hundreds and possibly thousands of years. These animals were important through the eons for meat, tool material, leather, and ceremonial uses.



*Elephant Mountain WMA has provided excellent habitat for bighorn and is instrumental in the restoration throughout the Trans-Pecos. Photo by Froylán Hernández/TPWD.*



*A band of brothers lounging on Elephant Mountain. Photo by Scott Lerich.*

## **The Fall of the West Texas Mountain Monarch**

Early salt miners needed meat and in the arid mountain ranges of West Texas, bighorn contributed to their supply. Later, the Hazel Mine (1882-96), a profitable silver mine between the Beach, Baylor, and Sierra Diablos ranges, no doubt resulted in heavy local pressure on those bighorn populations.

Various people estimated between 500 and 1500 bighorn present in about 17 mountain ranges in West Texas in the 1880s. By that time, most people knowledgeable about the bighorn predicted their demise forever from all the scattered mountain ranges in the Trans-Pecos. Hunting bighorn was specifically outlawed in 1903 in an attempt to curb the over-exploitation of local populations, but that law did not assure the persistence of this native desert mountain dweller.

By 1939, William Davis and Walter Taylor published a “The Status of Bighorn Sheep in Texas,” and their best guess was that Texas had about 300 bighorn left, most of them in Culberson County. Later estimates put the total at 150 bighorn in 1941 and then 75 in 1945, which seemed to confirm dire predictions that Texas would lose her bighorns. Early bighorn enthusiasts, like Burch Carson in the 1940s, spent days and weeks in the mountains documenting bighorn abundance and distribution. Some of these notes and observations from Carson were included in Bob Cook's 1994 historical review of Texas desert bighorn.

Although enforcing the closed season for bighorns was difficult in this remote region, it was the high numbers of domestic sheep that came in and trampled any hopes of the native bighorn populations recovering. According to an overview of bighorn in the Chihuahuan Desert by Scott Lerich, the price of domestic wool doubled between 1939 and 1943 and that drove a dramatic increase in domestic sheep raising. The number of domestic sheep in Culberson County alone increased from 19 sheep to 20,000 during



*Texas bighorns are a great example of the successful use of translocations to restore native wildlife populations. Photo by Froylán Hernández/TPWD.*

that time. High numbers of domestic sheep brought not only more grazing on the same forage, but diseases from the Old World that wild bighorns had not ever been exposed to and did not carry any immunity for. Domestic sheep were controlled and contained by stringing miles and miles of net-wire fences across the landscape. This new barrier kept bighorns from moving freely to water, green patches that received the first rainfall, finding mates, and generally just travel from mountain range to mountain range.

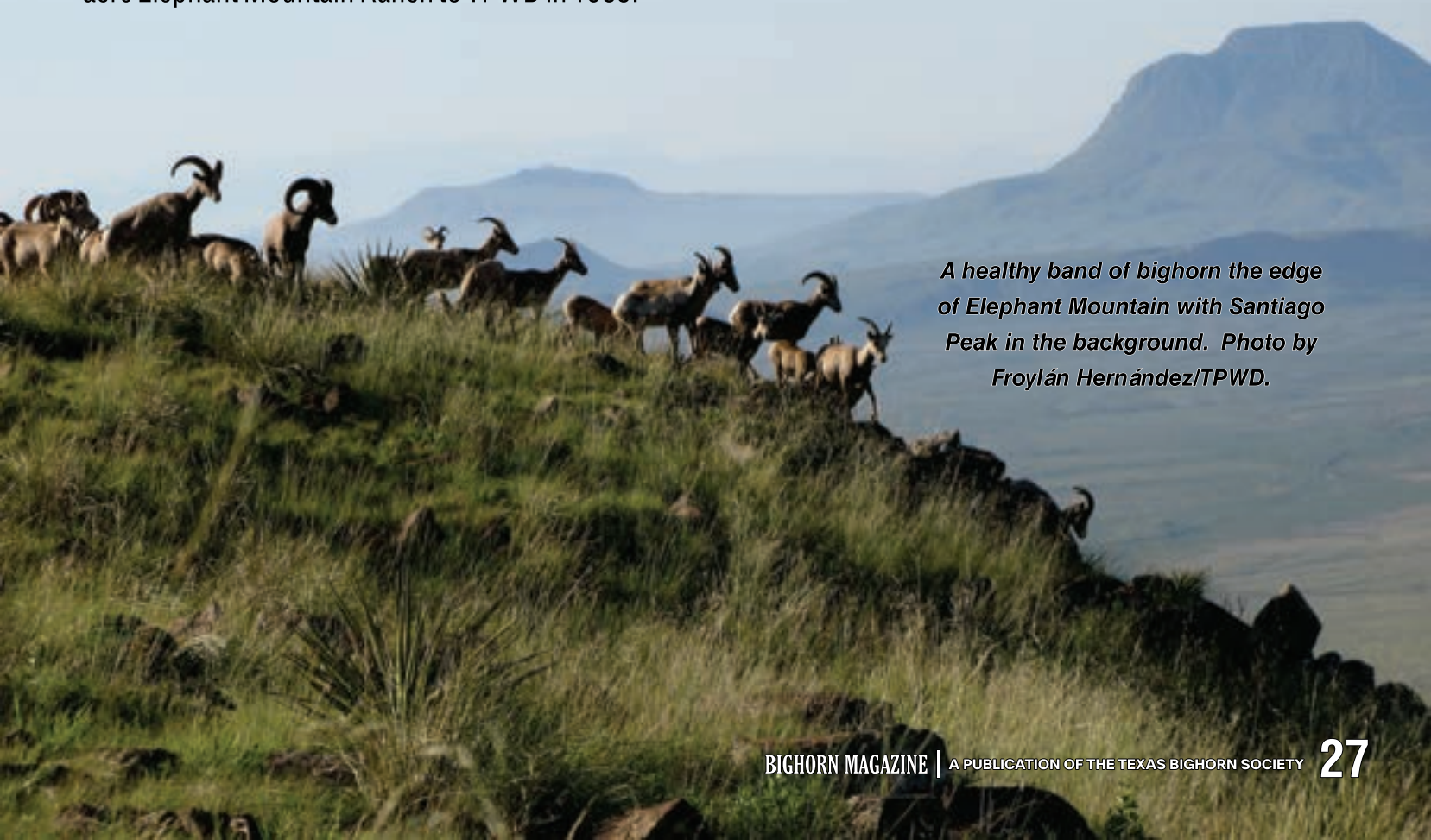
In the end, forage competition, diseases, net-wire fencing, and unregulated killing was too much for them. The last known sighting of native bighorn in Texas occurred in the summer of 1960 when two ewes were sighted in Victoria Canyon in the Sierra Diablo Mountains north of Van Horn by TPWD personnel. Desert bighorn persisted in the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Coahuila until at least the 1970s.

## The Rise of the Texas Bighorn

Following the initial research on bighorn distribution and abundance by Walter Taylor, William Davis, and Burch Carson, the Sierra Diablo mountains were designated as a refuge for bighorn in 1945, but that was too little, too late at that point – active management was needed. In 1954 an agreement between the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Management Institute, Boone and Crockett Club, and the states of Arizona and Texas paved the way for the trapping of desert bighorn from the Kofa Game Range in southwestern Arizona to put them in a 427-acre enclosure at the Black Gap Wildlife Management Area (WMA). By 1959, 16 Arizona bighorn were captured and placed in the enclosure.

This began a long history of restoration based on translocating bighorns back to their historical range. The restoration made slow progress initially and was mostly unsuccessful until 1983 when a renewed effort kick-started the program. Bighorn were translocated first from captive populations, but then from wild free-ranging bighorn populations once those herds started increasing. More than half of the bighorn released had radio collars to learn more about their survival and movements.

To date, more than 900 bighorn have been translocated as part of a conservation success story funded primarily by hunters. Thanks to the contribution of sportsmen and women, bighorn have been restored to an abundance similar to their levels in the early 1900s. The Texas Bighorn Society has been the corner stone of the restoration of desert bighorn in Texas. Their advocacy, money, and influence helped drive initial successful restoration efforts in the 1980s and evolved into on-going support for proper management. The successful efforts cascaded into additional support from landowners including the donation of the 23,147-acre Elephant Mountain Ranch to TPWD in 1985.



*A healthy band of bighorn the edge of Elephant Mountain with Santiago Peak in the background. Photo by Froylán Hernández/TPWD.*

## Current status

Currently there are about 1,500 wild free-ranging desert bighorns in 11 populations, including: Elephant Mountain WMA, Black Gap WMA, Sierra Diablo Mountains, Beach Mountains, Baylor Mountains, Bofecillos Mountains in Big Bend Ranch State Park, Nine Point Mesa, Sierra Vieja Mountains, Van Horn Mountains, and Capote Peak. The ability to hunt a recovered species is always a sure sign of conservation success and that is certainly true with the Texas bighorn. Contrary to the dire predictions made by



*Desert Bighorn. Photo by George Andrejko.*

many, Texas offered the first bighorn tag in 1988. Annual fall helicopter surveys were initiated by TPWD in 1990 and continue to guide proper management. Currently the permit system allows about 15-17 permits for private landowners and three for the general public. Since most bighorn habitat in Texas is privately owned, this successful restoration has been a collaboration between TPWD, Texas Bighorn Society, Wild Sheep Foundation, Dallas Safari Club, private landowners and neighboring states using money mostly from sportsmen and women and their organizations. Their interest, money, and advocacy for healthy native bighorn populations has returned this mountain monarch to the Trans-Pecos for everyone to enjoy.

*This article is dedicated to Dr. Bob Dittmar, Dewey Stockbridge, and Brandon White who made the ultimate sacrifice during their efforts to continue to monitor, manage, and build the Texas bighorn population.*

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Photos Courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife.



***Desert bighorn have been in West Texas for a long time as evidenced by petroglyphs in remote rocky areas. Photo by DyeClan and in the public domain from Wikimedia Commons.***

Jim Heffelfinger is a Certified Wildlife Biologist who has worked as a biologist for the federal government, state wildlife agencies, universities, and in the private sector in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Jim has authored or coauthored more than 220 magazine articles, scientific papers, and book chapters in regional, national, and international publications. He is a full research scientist at the University of Arizona, Professional Member of the Boone & Crockett Club. Instagram: @Jim.Deere

# BIGHORN TRANSLOCATION CHART

## 1957 - 2019

Year	Total	Capture Site	Release Site
1957	1	Arizona	Black Gap WMA enclosure
1957	14	Arizona	Black Gap WMA enclosure
1958	1	Arizona	Black Gap WMA enclosure
1958	3	Arizona	Black Gap WMA enclosure
1959	1	Arizona	Black Gap WMA enclosure
1959	10	Arizona	Black Gap WMA enclosure
1971	20	Black Gap enclosure	Black Gap WMA
1971	8	Black Gap enclosure	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosure
1973	7	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Sierra Diablo Mountains
1977	6	Punta Prieta, Baja, Mexico	Black Gap WMA enclosure
1978	7	Black Gap enclosure	Chilicote Ranch enclosure
1979	5	Arizona	Black Gap WMA
1979	5	Arizona	Black Gap WMA
1979	7	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Sierra Diablo Mountains
1980	8	Arizona	Kerrville, Texas
1983	15	Nevada	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosure
1983	10	Arizona	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosure
1983	2	Sierra Diablo Mountains	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosure
1984	2	Canyonlands NP	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosure
1984	2	Nevada	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosure
1985	3	Canyonlands NP	Kerrville, Texas
1987	25	Nevada	Van Horn Mountains
1987	5	Chilicote Ranch enclosure	Sierra Vieja Mountains
1987	20	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Elephant Mountain WMA
1988	10	Nevada	Baylor Mountains
1988	15	Nevada	Van Horn Mountains
1988	11	Chilicote Ranch enclosure	Baylor Mountains
1988	3	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Elephant Mountain WMA
1988	3	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Sierra Diablo Mountains
1990	25	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Beach Mts Holding Facility
1991	28	Beach Mts. Holding Facility	Beach Mountains
1992	1	Elephant Mountain WMA	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosure
1992	10	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosure
1992	11	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Sierra Diablo Mountains
1992	12	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Beach Mts Holding Facility
1993	21	Beach Mts Holding Facility	Beach Mountains
1994	20	Nevada	Black Gap WMA
1995	3	Elephant Mountain WMA	Black Gap WMA
1996	10	Elephant Mountain WMA	Black Gap WMA
1997	43	Sierra Diablo WMA enclosures	Sierra Diablo Mountains
1998	20	Nevada	Black Gap WMA
2000	45	Elephant Mountain WMA	Black Gap WMA
2010	46	Elephant Mountain WMA	Big Bend Ranch State Park
2011	9	Beach Mountains	Big Bend Ranch State Park
2011	22	Baylor Mountains	Big Bend Ranch State Park
2011	64	Sierra Diablo Mountains	Big Bend Ranch State Park
2012	44	Elephant Mountain WMA	9 Point Mesa
2014	61	Elephant Mountain WMA	Capote Peak
2015	20	Beach Mountains	Big Bend Ranch State Park
2015	40	Sierra Diablo Mountains	Big Bend Ranch State Park
2015	15	Sierra Diablo Mountains	Capote Peak
2017	82	Elephant Mountain WMA	Black Gap WMA
2019	74	Elephant Mountain WMA	Black Gap WMA
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>955</b>		

# WHITNEY LEAVELL TELLS HIS STORY

“The Beginning” was 60 years ago. We had cousins who lived in Arizona, one cousin was a person of note. He was the youngest person to serve as Arizona's Attorney General. He and his family sent my Kentucky grandmother *Arizona Highways* magazine. I was instantly fascinated by the articles of that desert. The photos of their canyons, the wildlife, and the flora were utterly amazing. I wanted more! In my early 20s I visited those cousins. They sent me on camping trips into Canyon de Chelly, it was wonderful.

I moved to Houston about 40 years ago, and Thanksgiving was coming up, someone offered me a trip to Big Bend National Park. I was all in! We went to the Window and assorted other hikes. We also traveled down to Boquillas and crossed the Rio Grande. Little boys offered to sell us rocks, and there was a nearly empty cantina. It was early in the day so we declined.

In 1998 I found myself reading Theodore Roosevelt's books. He was an extraordinary writer who chronicled his youth on a ranch in North Dakota. I remarked to one of my high school teachers who had taken us to the Wind River mountains in Wyoming and on canoeing trips to the Quetico of south Canada about how beautiful his writing was, he remarked “if you are that interested in the wilderness and hunting, you should call a person I know who is a big game guide in the Brooks Range of Alaska.” I made the

call. Turns out it was one of the most expensive calls of my life. My first hunt for wild sheep was in the Joe Creek area of the Brooks in 2000. It was a fantastic trip! In four short days I killed a wolf, a Dall sheep and a grizzly bear. Since then, I have been on many sheep hunts and now have the Grand Slam plus a Dall and a Desert.

In about 2006 I arranged a desert survival course for our Boy Scout troop with David Alloway of Alpine. We met at a ranch near Terlingua, Texas. It was fantastic! We ate lechuguilla and sotol. We learned how to make bow drills and start fires. We also learned how to make a compass with three sticks, plus many other skills. There were jack bunnies as big as German shepherds and we were visited by mule deer. It was another experience that endeared me to the desert. It was pure enchantment.

Texas Bighorn Society came into my consciousness around twenty years ago. I joined and read every word of the periodical. Over the years I met Dan, Kathy, Clay and others. I think it was at the 2017 Dallas Safari Club convention that I met Froylan (TPWD). Every year I felt guilt for not participating in the work weekend. That is, until 2021. I retired at the end of 2019 and no longer had an excuse. Concurrently I began to consider the raffle for the “Desert Bighorn Hunt.” Participating in that seemed like a great idea. I can be extremely willful. We know how it worked out!

My trip to Van Horn for the 2021 work project was filled with anticipation and excitement. I met a lot of really great people. The more time I spent with them, the more I realized I was little more than a chipmunk among these titans of wilderness, habitat and wildlife. You know who you are, and I am here to tell you that you are fantastic. All of you! I loved all of the time we all spent on the Red Rock. It was another case of my falling in love with the mystery and majesty of God's creation. I was a certified boilermaker as a young person. This led me to be Randy Stolte's helper at the guzzler

project. It was fun being around welding after so many years being away from it. It gave me a chance to tell some funny stories I accumulated as a welder. Randy and I were instantly drawn to each other. As we finished the second guzzler, I chose to walk out of the staging area. This gave me a chance to soak up as much of the desert as I could. A sense of melancholy came over me for the possibility that I would never return to the ranch I had fallen in love with.

The Desert Bighorn raffle was coming up shortly at the TBS Roundup, my wife Harriet and I could not attend the roundup. About a week before the raffle, I received a text from Randy asking if I was going. We had other things on the calendar. On Saturday night of the Roundup, we were at a party and came home well past my bedtime. Before crashing for the night, I checked my phone. There was a text from Randy, it said- "you lucky dog!" My hand started shaking, and in spite of the



late hour I called Randy immediately. He only said, "I will let them tell you." Hilarious! Sam Cunningham called the following morning, I was half crying, half shaking. Obviously, it was hard to believe. I was going back to the Red Rock.

I began working immediately, I spent a lot of time at the rifle range. I never tire from spending time at the range, and have developed many friends there. Marksmanship does not come natural to me. It is a lot of time and work.

My desert bighorn hunt was set for the first five days of February. We met on February 1, for lunch. Jim Breck Bean and Jasper Klein were the outfitter and guide combo. The first afternoon was pure scouting. We saw a few ewes and lambs. The next day was for real. Jim Breck dropped Jasper and I off at the mine. We climbed the mountain and walked the ridges and saddles often stopping along the way for a half an hour or so. It was glorious walking. The sky was clear, the wind was cranked and the vistas were fantastic. It was very obvious from the start that Jim Breck and Jasper had superior guide skills and eyesight. I love being around people who have such raw talent and know so much about the area they are guiding in.

We all knew that weather was coming in. There was a sense that it would be great if we were able to wrap up prior to the weather's arrival. The third day was similar to the second. We hiked a different area and saw more animals but no mature rams. We had just finished dinner when there was a pounding on the roof. Sleet was pouring down and the temperature had dropped below freezing. We awoke the following morning to two inches of sleet and snow and 16 degrees F. Out we went hunting. We were in the truck about a quarter of the way to the mountain when tracks appeared in the snow on the road. I struggled identifying them. Then it dawned on me, they were boot tracks. Someone other than the three of us were on the ranch- illegal aliens. They heard us coming and scattered in the brush. I am still haunted by the exposure they would have suffered from. It was very cold and the forecast was for 6 degrees F the next morning.

Jasper and I hiked the mountain at the mine. The wind was still blowing and the temperature never improved. We found no animals anywhere save about six javelina at a feeder. Late in the day I witnessed the most amazing feat I expect to ever see. We came over a saddle on the southern part of the ranch and Jasper spotted a ram on a shaded slope at a range we estimated to be six miles. Let that sink in!

The fifth day began with the forecasted temperature of 6 degrees. Jasper walked the most southern mountain on the ranch. It was another day of no animals. I imagined they knew of the location of geothermal vent and were all huddled there waiting for the temperature to recover. I was ready to stay on it but Jim Breck and Jasper had another hunt. We would reconvene upon good results of occasional scouting trips to the ranch by Jim Breck's team.

The second hunt would be after TBS Adopt A Guzzler work project in west Texas. Cemex-El Carmen Conservation Co. and Black Gap Wildlife Management Area were the two sites where the project was being conducted. El Carmen hosted the site for everyone to stay so I headed down to the work project. Jim Breck sent me a text saying we would roll on the Monday after the work project at El Carmen. High winds pushed it back another day. Someone spotted three rams, one was too small, one was mature and the third ram was a good one. We met at the ranch house and headed to the mine area. Jasper and I climbed the mountain and set up at the saddle. On the adjacent mountain at a range of about 1,000 yards were two rams. The little one and the mature one. The bigger ram they had seen was not there. The wind was strong and hit us from the mine area leaving us leery of an approach. The top of that mountain was a dome shape leaving us with a struggle of how to gain a downwind approach and a good shooting angle. Eventually Jim Breck and I spoke. He asked, "would you be happy with that ram?" My answer was, "if you tell me there is a 180 ram around here, I would like to go after him." Jasper



went on a hike to cover the area to the east looking for the big ram. He returned after about two hours without any success.

Jasper and I checked the wind forecast. It was not particularly helpful. At one point the wind shifted about 120 degrees in our favor. I walked along the ridge toward the mine and found the wind to be manipulated by the mine itself. The mountain where the rams were had two minor peaks attached to it. They were each on a tangent to the wind direction leaving us with an opportunity to get closer. The most extreme peak appeared to form an equilateral triangle between us and the rams. The middle one cut the distance in half. Jasper went out to the middle peak to check the wind. It was good enough so he waved me over. We set up behind an ocotillo at the tangent of the peak to the rams. The shooting position was only marginal. There were rocks lining the place where I lay that kept me from being at a proper angle to my rifle and I never got comfortable in that position, but it proved to be good enough! The rams were laying down-not surprising. After about an hour they got up. The larger of the two eventually turned broadside, but the smaller one was directly behind it. Eventually they moved around enough to separate from each other. Jasper's instructions to me were the following: "If the ram is facing to the left, put the vertical crosshair on his nose. If he faces to the right, put the vertical crosshair at the end of his rump. When he turns broadside, I will call the shot at a point in

time when the wind abates."

The ram eventually turned broadside and a few seconds later the wind laid a bit. Jasper said, "shoot" and the bullet left my rifle. My rifle offers a lot of recoil and muzzle jump. I am always in a state of delirium when it goes off. The next thing I remember was Jasper saying, "reload!" My heart sank. I thought I had missed the ram. So, I chambered another round and was about to get the rifle lined up when Jasper said, "nope, he's dead!" I jumped up from the shooting place and embraced Jasper. It was a wonderful moment. We collected our gear and began the walk to the ram. As I approach a ram I have killed, I always have to fight back tears. This one was no different. We took pictures and Jim Breck arrived. The ram was butchered and samples of tissue taken for TPWD. As we were loading up three ravens flew by. It seemed appropriate that they would arrive at that moment. It was time to leave the remainder of the ram for nature.

In appreciation for the years of genius, work, money and time that has gone into desert bighorn restoration in west Texas, I offer my thanks to everyone who has been involved in the Texas Bighorn Society, Wild Sheep Foundation, landowners, hunters, sportsmen, outdoorsmen and women, and conservationists.

*My handwritten letter of thanks to Louise and Ernie Davis is below.*

*Dear Louise & Ernie,*

*It was easy for me to fall in love with your Red Rock Ranch. It may have only taken my first view of it from the road. That first bluff which guards the northern series of the Beech Mountains is fantastic. As I walked out from the guzzler project's Saturday construction in 2021, I prolonged it thinking I would never see this place again. Good fortune of the raffle interceded and a hunt for a Texas desert bighorn took shape. I loved hunting with Jim Breck and Jasper. They were extremely gifted guides. February's weather ran us out. Then March and a successful finality of a hunt I never thought I would have. Thank you so much. You are immensely generous and gracious hosts. God Bless you both.*

*Whitney*

*"In conclusion," May God bless this glorious world with all its mysteries and may all people show respect for the miracle of creation.*

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