

The Bighorn

FALL 2019



>>> 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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BIGHORN

The official magazine of the Texas Bighorn Society
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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

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- 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

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Summer – April 1st

Fall / Winter – October 1st

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Photo by Jim Breck Bean

BIGHORN

Fall 2019

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 bighorns don't need our help
 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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Texas Bighorn Society

[Fall 2019 Membership Application]

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\$25.00
*must include copy of valid ID
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2 Window Decals
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1-yr membership, 1 yr Bighorn Magazine,
2 Window Decals, 5-yr Wall Plaque
- LIFE
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Life membership, Life Bighorn Magazine,
2 Window Decals, Wall Plaque & Badge

LAST NAME FIRST NAME SPOUSE

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

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| | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|--|
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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

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Dris Abraham | Chester Moore |
| Barney Brandon | Michael Ott |
| Dustin Cavin | Ryan Owen |
| David (Jamey) Dilley | Brian Starcich |
| Clint Ivy | Justin Smoot |
| David Jenkins | Ben Waite |

family

Rex Hinshaw
Warren Monte Family

life

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Kai Buckert | Tim Gafford |
| Caleb Cutis | Jim Stout |

student

Rachel Wiedmeier
Cameron Wilson

* 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
806-745-7783

This & That

June 2019 Board Meeting Summary

by Curt Brockmann

The Texas Bighorn Society Board meeting was held during the Roundup on June 21st in San Antonio. Twenty-two people attended the meeting. The minutes of the March 2019 Board and General Membership meetings were reviewed and approved. The Treasurer's report was also discussed and approved.

Calvin Richardson attended the meeting. Calvin is replacing Billy Tarrant as the Region 1, Regional Director. Calvin previously served with TPWD in the Trans-Pecos region and will return to Alpine after serving in other roles for the past several years. His role will be to

help manage the Wildlife Management Areas and other TPWD programs in the Trans-Pecos and Panhandle regions. Welcome back Calvin, and we look forward to working with you again.

Rachel Wiedmeier and Emily Wright of Texas Tech University presented an update on their research activities. In May, they assisted in the capture, sampling and collaring of desert bighorn sheep, aoudad, and mule deer at the Lado Ranch. They also have been busy collecting sheep tissue samples from herds throughout the western United States. One of their focus areas is to obtain samples from

any sheep taken before 1960 and after 1970 so they can conduct a genetic comparison between the original Texas sheep and the existing herds.

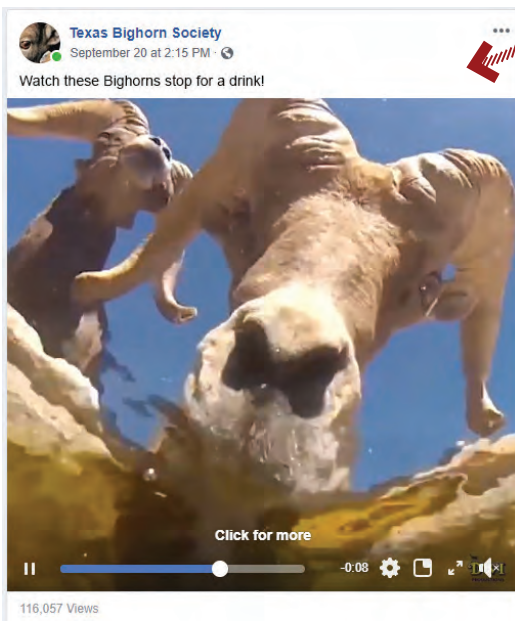
The Board discussed the final preparations for the Roundup. The Board voted to hold the 2020 Roundup at the Tapatio Springs Resort in Boerne. The 2020 Roundup will be held on June 12-13. Please mark it on your calendar.

That is all for now. I hope you all weathered the hot Texas summer and hope you have a great fall.

-Curt Brockmann



BE SURE TO CHECK www.facebook.com/texasbighornsociety for more photos, videos and all things Texas Bighorn!



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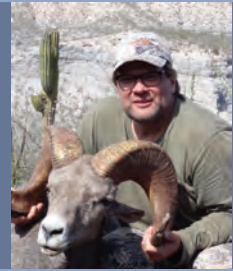
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President's Letter



SAM CUNNINGHAM
TBS President

Dear TBS Members,

I would like to thank everyone that attended the Roundup in San Antonio, those who bid on auction items and who purchased auction items. The Texas Desert Bighorn Sheep tag brought a new record high and we extend a very special thanks to Jim Stout for his most generous support. Check out the photo of the great ram he took on his September hunt.

Next year's Roundup will be held at Tapatio Springs in Boerne, Texas June 12 and 13. Please mark your calendars now. To address membership concerns and in an effort to bolster attendance, the price of registration for the Roundup will be reduced in 2020 and there will be a special rate for children.

Next year's work project will be held again at Black Gap. We will build two, possibly three, guzzlers there. The date of the work project is being coordinated with TPWD and is tentatively set for March 13-15th, 2020 details will be forwarded to members.

There have been two recent Board of Directors meetings held at the home of Lynton and Wendy Holloway. Several new opportunities are in the works for membership participation including reduced pricing for Roundup, membership and social gatherings (look for upcoming dates and locations), more opportunities to contribute with guzzler repair, social media sharing within the membership, updated website and many others. We will also be requesting updated membership contact information to better keep you informed and up to date with all the happenings in the Texas Bighorn Society.

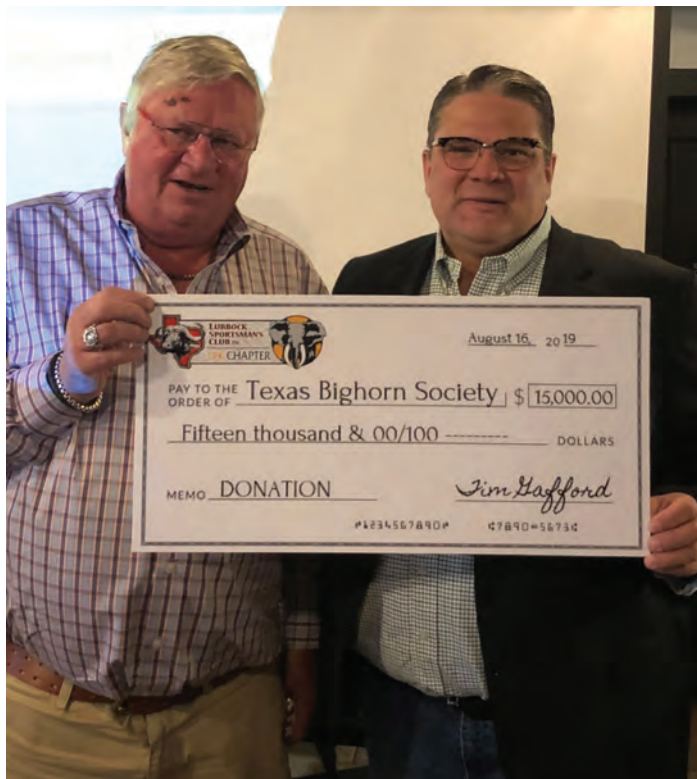
Thanks!

Sam Cunningham

President, Texas Bighorn Society

TBS Receives Check from Lubbock Sportsman's Club

By: Kathy Boone



August 2019 - The Texas Bighorn Society received a \$15,000 check from the Lubbock Sportsman's Club-Dallas Safari Club Chapter recently. Over the past ten years they have awarded over \$100,000 to TBS to further goals in the TBS Mission Statement. Many thanks for helping keep bighorns on the mountains in Texas!

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Mark Your Calendar!



January 9-12, 2020 | Dallas, TX



January 16-18, 2020 | Reno, NV



2020 WORK PROJECT

March 13-15, 2020 | TBD

From the Editor



Bonnie McKinney
Editor, *The Bighorn*

A little hint of fall is finally in the air, after the long hot summer west Texas has seen it is more than welcome. It has been a busy summer with Roundup in San Antonio in June, where old friends and new had a great time. The auction was a big hit, and the TBS Bighorn Tag auctioned on Saturday night and sold to Mr. Jim Stout, and was a new state record. The bidding was furious and the excitement could be felt all over the room. Congratulations to Mr. Stout for taking a great trophy ram in early September at Elephant Mtn. WMA.

Plans are being made for the spring work project which is tentatively set for March 13-15th with details to follow. Make your plans to be there early to help build guzzlers.

Please check out all the great hunts in this issue, and mark your calendars for the annual Dallas Safari Club (January 9-12, 2020) and Wild Sheep Foundation in Reno (January 16-18, 2020). TBS will have booths at both shows and volunteers are always needed to help with the booth and spread the message about all the good work that TBS does for desert bighorns.

It is with great sadness that we mourn the passing of long time member and friend to many of us, Mr. Harvey Smith Jr. passed away earlier this year, a tribute to him is included in this issue and his family will be donating funds for the upcoming March 2020 guzzler project on Black Gap and downriver near Regan Canyon Ranch, which is owned by the Smith family. Harvey and wife Norma were true champions helping bighorns every way they could.

The Trans-Pecos received some good rainfall in many areas, a few areas were less fortunate but going into fall the bighorn ranges look good down here along the Rio Grande on Black Gap WMA and adjacent mountains.

Here at the El Carmen Land & Conservation Co. we just finished up a two guzzler project in early October, many thanks to all the students, TBS members, WSF members, DSC members, landowners, that came down and worked in really hot weather. This project was funded by a very generous grant from the Dallas Safari Club Foundation and we appreciate it very much. Two more guzzlers for wildlife and birds in the desert country of the lower Trans Pecos.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the work project this March and in the meantime I hope everyone has a great fall and winter. Send your stories, and news anytime to me for inclusion in the "Bighorn."

Saludos,

Bonnie McKinney

Wildlife Coordinator

El Carmen Land Conservation Co.

Email: bonnie2mckinney@gmail.com

Mr. Stout's "Ghost Ram"

*by Mark Garrett, Texas Parks & Wildlife
and Bonnie McKinney, ECLCC*

Whew, the auction at the Roundup was incredible, tension built with several bidders upping the price for a chance at the TBS auction tag for a bighorn ram. The room literally erupted in excitement as Mr. Jim Stout bid the final amount, the hammer fell and a new Texas record for a bighorn hunt was in the books. Congratulations to Mr. Stout on a great ram.

Mr. Stout didn't waste any time and shortly he was at Elephant Mountain for his hunt. Jim Breck Bean-High West Outfitters was there to scout with TPWD and also guided on his hunt. Ryan Olsen of Whitebone Creations was there to video and Mr. Stout's friend Bobby Theis lent support, and James Barton-guide for High West Outfitters were there to assist as well. Please go to YouTube for a look at the video: "*Ghost*" *Giant Free Range Texas Desert Bighorn*.

- Bonnie McKinney

The following is a note from Mark Garrett, TPWD Project Leader Trans-Pecos WMAs.

"We have successfully completed another desert bighorn sheep hunt at Elephant Mountain WMA (EMWMA). This permit was purchased at auction this past June at the Texas Bighorn Society Roundup by Jim Stout. Jim was only needing his desert bighorn to complete his "slam," and really wanted to do so in Texas. Several of the staff at EMWMA had seen a really nice, mature ram on a few occasions over the last year. The only problem was that he would essentially vanish after being spotted for months at a time. Due to his uncanny ability to seemingly disappear, he became known as "Ghost." With Jim expected to arrive on Saturday, the staff at EMWMA began scouting on Thursday. They located one ram that looked really good, but were unable to get close enough to determine if it was in fact "Ghost." Friday, however their luck changed. They were able to get in

close on the ram and knew it was "Ghost." For the next day and a half, they tried to keep an eye on the big ram. Jim arrived on Saturday around two in the afternoon. Once he was issued the permit and unpacked the group set out in search of "Ghost." He was located in an open area at the north end of the mountain; making a stalk in on him that was much more difficult. After a short wait he dropped off the edge, allowing the hunt party to move in without being seen. Once in position they knew they only had one shot. One shot at approximately 350 yards. When the time came Jim did not disappoint. "Ghost" was down. The 12 year-old ram scored 178 7/8 green. I would like to thank the Texas Bighorn Society once again for providing all the meals for the hunt. I would also like to thank the following staff members that helped make this hunt the huge success it was: Dewey Stockbridge, Cody McEntire, Benny Benavidez, Brandon White, Travis Smith, Shorey Hamon, and Travis Bryan".

- Mark Garrett

"He would essentially vanish after being spotted for months at a time. Due to his uncanny ability to seemingly disappear, he became known as 'Ghost.'"



Photos by Jim Breck Bean

A Tribute to **HARVEY SMITH**

It was such a sad note to hear of the passing of a long-time friend, Harvey Smith, whom I have known since the early 1980s. We had become good friends over our mutual interest in desert bighorn sheep and mule deer. The Regan Canyon Ranch owned and operated by the Smith Family bordered Texas Parks & Wildlife's Black Gap WMA on the east boundary. I spent countless nights in his "sheep camp," over in Big Canyon doing predator control work around bighorns and great evenings enjoying steak dinners and drinks with Harvey at his headquarters at Regan Canyon having endless conversations about hunts, wildlife management, water projects and desert bighorns. Harvey was a man of his word and a gentleman of the first order. He was admired and respected by his peers, friends and family. He loved the great outdoors and it loved him. The stars in the desert night sky are a little softer, the call of the night hawk a little sadder as an old friend passes.

-Billy Pat McKinney Jr.

I have many fond memories of Harvey but one in particular. Harvey would call every month or two to "check in" and see how things were going. We would visit about the sheep program, rainfall, habitat conditions, Regan Canyon Ranch, Trans-Pecos WMAs and other current topics. Harvey rarely talked about himself unless asked, but always inquired about my family and others. Our conversations always ended with, "Mike, is there anything the program needs or is there anything I can do for you." He always wanted to help others. Harvey Smith was a special person and I am grateful and privileged to have known him.

-Mike Pittman

Sometimes it seems like there are precious few "good" people in this world. You know those folks that always seem to be smiling. People that make you feel like what you are saying is important, and that they want to hear what is on your mind. Harvey Smith was surely one of those rare people! Soft spoken and gentle natured, he was the epitome of a gentleman, and in reality, it was he who I always felt should be listened to carefully, as he could speak volumes by saying little. It was always an honor to cross paths with this giant of a man. I had the opportunity to share some time with Harvey on Elephant Mountain WMA many years back, and he taught me something very important without ever uttering a word, that I hope to carry with me forever. We were in Alpine for a Desert Bighorn Council meeting which Harvey attended I am sure because of his deep interest in desert bighorns. On the second day of the conference we had the opportunity to visit Elephant Mountain under the guise of checking on the TBS web cameras. Harvey asked to tag along with me. As is often the case, once we were on the mountain it wasn't long before we spotted a small group of rams several hundred yards distant. My first instinct was to start scheming a way to get closer for a better photograph. After a few steps I noticed Harvey had taken a seat on some nearby boulders, and was sitting there with a coy smile on his face. He didn't want the proffered binoculars and, I think he probably knew that there was no way I was going to get within good camera range of those bighorn rams, but more importantly he was content just watching those magnificent creatures where they belonged. No photos were needed other than the image in his mind, no affirmation from others required to prove he was there, just an almost glowing peace of mind in knowing that he was part of the

moment. That kind of selfless adulation of nature at its finest made Mr. Harvey Smith one of the most important people in the Texas desert bighorn sheep restoration story, and has no doubt influenced scores of other folks along his way! He will be sorely missed!

- David Wetzel

Harvey Smith was a great man and he was totally dedicated to helping in any way he could to restore desert bighorns to former ranges in west Texas. He was on hand at the Black Gap WMA back in the 1990s along with his lovely wife Norma, to see the release of the bighorn ewes that were captured in Nevada and hauled back to the Gap for release. Harvey and Norma both of generous nature thought of other people, they would be traveling somewhere and see a bird book or a sheep book they thought I would like, once home they would mail it to me. The last book I received from Harvey and Norma came in the mail around 2007, they were traveling and saw a book in the Denver airport they thought I would enjoy. It is a book I cherish, and I actually read it every year. The book is called "Eating Stone" by the late Ellen Meloy, and is about her watching a band of bighorns that had disappeared and returned years later. Harvey's sheep camp in Big Canyon was one of the places that Billy Pat and I enjoyed very much, and Harvey was always delighted to know that we had been over there staying for several days using the "sheep camp" while we conducted bighorn field work. Harvey, I hope you are looking down on all of us and your beloved desert bighorns here in the west Texas desert, you are missed my friend

-Bonnie McKinney



Harvey Smith, Jr. 1931-2019

Harvey Smith at Regan Canyon, 1980s. Photo Courtesy of Allen Smith

Harvey W. Smith Jr., 87, passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family on Tuesday, the 14th of May 2019. A beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather. He was born in September 1931 to Marguerite and Harvey Smith Sr. in Houston. Harvey spent many rewarding years in the Boy Scouts of America, achieving the status of Eagle Scout. He attended Lamar High School where he was an all-state tackle for the Redskins. This is where he met the love of his life, Norma Brooks. Married for 66 years, they saw the world together many times over. He graduated from the University of Texas and then joined the Army, where he was stationed in Newport News, Virginia. A very successful businessman, rancher and outdoorsman. A longtime member of the Houston Country Club, The Mansfield Club, The Texas Bighorn Society

and a past President of the Texas Oil Marketers Association. Harvey is survived by his two sons, James Link Smith, Brooks Smith and his wife Kathleen; daughter, Diane Smith, nine grandchildren, twelve great-grandchildren and his brother Ford Smith Sr., who was at his side until the end. A memorial service is to be conducted at one o'clock in the afternoon on Tuesday the 4th of June, in the Sanctuary of The Church of St. John the Divine, 2450 River Oaks Blvd. in Houston, where the Rev. Dr. Doug Richnow is to officiate. Immediately following, all are invited to greet the family during a reception in the Summer Hall.

Obituary courtesy and permission from the Smith Family, Houston, Texas. Published in the Houston Chronicle from May 29 to June 2, 2019

2019 Roundup

JUNE 21-22 | SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Photos by Dirk Parks



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What a great time we all had in San Antonio at the annual "Roundup," lots of old friends and new ones, lots of visiting and good times. The auction went great, and congrats to Mr. Jim Stout for his purchase of the desert sheep tag, a new state record. Hope you enjoy all the photos Dirk Parks took of everyone having a great time. See y'all next year!















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Bighorn Survey Results

Froylan Hernandez



Due to an increase in allotted flight time (survey hours) this year, the 2019 DBS surveys began earlier than usual. It began with Aerial Gunning Training at Elephant Mountain WMA in mid-July. Immediately following the 2-day training, the survey crew relocated to Van Horn and helicopter surveys began in the Quitman Mountains, which are located west of Sierra Blanca in Hudspeth County.

Though there were several mechanical delays and setbacks, the surveys were completed on time. It is TPWD's goal to fly additional hours approximately every 3 years to include mountain ranges typically not surveyed in efforts to document expanding bighorn populations. Additionally, in conjunction with annual bighorn surveys, aoudad counts will also be conducted to help better understanding aoudad densities within bighorn habitat.

Following is a bulleted summary of the 2019 DBS Surveys:

- The 2019 DBS Surveys totaled 206.8 hours flight time on 13 mountain ranges and 1,112 bighorns observed. The overall 2019 count was up from 2018 (n=1013), Table 1.
- Nearly 80 hrs more than typically flown. Additional hours were flown to expand survey efforts to include Quitman, Christmas and Rosillo mountains, as well additional hours at Sierra Diablo, Black Gap and Big Bend NP, 9 Point and BBRSP.

2019 AOUDAD SURVEY

| LOCATION | AOUDAD | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| | OBSERVED | REMOVED | TISSUE SAMPLE |
| BAYLOR MOUNTAINS | 12 | 12 | - |
| BEACH MOUNTAINS | 7 | 7 | - |
| BLACK GAP / BREWSTER COUNTY | 323 | 173 | 6 |
| BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK | 291 | 212 | - |
| CARRIZO MOUNTAINS** | 237 | 0 | - |
| EAGLE MOUNTAINS | 54 | 8 | - |
| EMWMA * | 54 | 8 | - |
| SIERRA DIABLO MOUNTAINS | 6 | 6 | - |
| SIERRA VIEJA MOUNTAINS | 1549 | 0 | - |
| VAN HORN MOUNTAINS | 173 | 0 | - |
| 9 POINT MESA | no data | no data | no data |
| CHRISTMAS* | 374 | 0 | - |
| QUITMAN* | 446 | 25 | 25 |
| ROSILLO* | 156 | 0 | - |
| TOTALS | 3628 | 443 | 31 |

2018 DBS SUMMARY

| LOCATION | RAM AGE CLASS | | | | TOTAL | | | TOTAL | RATIOS | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----|-----|----|-------|------|------|-------|--------|-----------|-------|
| | I | II | III | IV | RAMS | EWES | LAMS | SHEEP | M | : 100 F : | L |
| BAYLOR MOUNTAINS | 3 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 17 | 45 | 13 | 75 | 37.78 | 100 | 28.89 |
| BEACH MOUNTAINS | 6 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 22 | 34 | 17 | 73 | 64.71 | 100 | 50.00 |
| BLACK GAP / BREWSTER COUNTY | 9 | 13 | 24 | 15 | 61 | 91 | 23 | 175 | 67.03 | 100 | 25.27 |
| BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 10 | 3 | 22 | 90.00 | 100 | 30.00 |
| CARRIZO MOUNTAINS** | 0 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 16 | 22 | 16 | 54 | 72.73 | 100 | 72.73 |
| EAGLE MOUNTAINS | 3 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 12 | 21 | 13 | 46 | 57.14 | 100 | 61.90 |
| EMWMA * | 8 | 11 | 18 | 21 | 58 | 51 | 25 | 134 | 113.73 | 100 | 49.02 |
| SIERRA DIABLO MOUNTAINS | 21 | 29 | 22 | 15 | 87 | 141 | 60 | 288 | 61.70 | 100 | 42.55 |
| SIERRA VIEJA MOUNTAINS | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 16 | 44.44 | 100 | 33.33 |
| VAN HORN MOUNTAINS | 1 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 29 | 5 | 46 | 41.38 | 100 | 17.24 |
| 9 POINT MESA | 2 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 25 | 43 | 16 | 84 | 58.14 | 100 | 37.21 |
| TOTALS | 60 | 83 | 103 | 77 | 323 | 496 | 194 | 1013 | 65.12 | 100 | 39.11 |

2019 DBS SUMMARY

| LOCATION | RAM AGE CLASS | | | | TOTAL | | | TOTAL | RATIOS | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----|-----|----|-------|------|------|-------|--------|-----------|-------|
| | I | II | III | IV | RAMS | EWES | LAMS | SHEEP | M | : 100 F : | L |
| BAYLOR MOUNTAINS | 2 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 23 | 55 | 31 | 109 | 41.82 | 100 | 56.36 |
| BEACH MOUNTAINS | 3 | 11 | 6 | 10 | 30 | 40 | 28 | 98 | 75.00 | 100 | 70.00 |
| BLACK GAP / BREWSTER COUNTY | 7 | 10 | 14 | 10 | 41 | 86 | 27 | 154 | 47.67 | 100 | 31.40 |
| BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 14 | 5 | 22 | 21.43 | 100 | 35.71 |
| CARRIZO MOUNTAINS** | 1 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 31 | 92.31 | 100 | 46.15 |
| EAGLE MOUNTAINS | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 23 | 10 | 41 | 34.78 | 100 | 43.48 |
| EMWMA * | 10 | 26 | 25 | 19 | 80 | 65 | 41 | 186 | 123.08 | 100 | 63.08 |
| SIERRA DIABLO MOUNTAINS | 26 | 24 | 37 | 2 | 89 | 158 | 79 | 326 | 56.33 | 100 | 50.00 |
| SIERRA VIEJA MOUNTAINS | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 6 | 19 | 18.18 | 100 | 54.55 |
| VAN HORN MOUNTAINS | 2 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 21 | 37 | 15 | 73 | 56.76 | 100 | 40.54 |
| 9 POINT MESA | 0 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 19 | 29 | 5 | 53 | 65.52 | 100 | 17.24 |
| TOTALS | 51 | 99 | 107 | 71 | 328 | 531 | 253 | 1112 | 61.77 | 100 | 47.65 |

This year's higher count is not a result of the increase in flight hours. There were no documented bighorn observations outside of the core areas surveyed annually. It is the Department's goal to survey these additional mountain ranges and areas about every 3 yrs in efforts to document DBS natural expansion, as well as assess exotic ungulate populations.

- There were several areas of interest:
 - a) Sierra Diablo Mtns – though the count was up from the 2018 survey, hardly any Class IV rams (mature 7-8+ yrs old) were observed. Also, a few “fresh” carcasses were seen on surveys. Tissue samples were collected, but the carcasses were too decomposed for TVMDL to perform diagnostic tests.
 - b) BBRSP – count has been down for the past 2 years from previous years, but count for 2019 was similar to 2018, with only 22 animals observed on both years. No carcasses were seen during the survey. Bighorn core area was surveyed adequately. All animals appeared in good condition. Additional staffing is allowing us to

renew predator management efforts, which could have a positive impact on bighorn numbers.

c) Elephant Mountain – EMWMA was not surveyed during this year's flights. However, a foot survey was conducted in Jun 2019 and a total of 186 bighorns were counted. A capture is being planned for Dec 2019.

- Even though the priority is counting bighorns, we counted aoudad this year as well. A location was also recorded for all aoudad observed. In areas where lethal removal is allowed, “aoudad observed” and “aoudad removed” was also recorded. This information will be collected from all areas flown during yearly bighorn surveys from this point forward.
- A total of 3,628 aoudad were observed during surveys on 13 mountain ranges and/or areas. Of those, only 443 were removed. Table 2.
- Of the 443 aoudad lethally removed, 31 were sampled for disease monitoring purpose (25 from the Quitman Mtns and 6 from Black Gap).



The Unexpected Quest By: Ace High

Around Christmas in 1988 Marilyn (Mo) and Kennon (KC) Cantley asked me if I would like to go out to west Texas and volunteer to build a wildlife water guzzler. The project was to be in the Beach Mountains in March of 1989. Of course, I didn't know what a water guzzler was, I had no clue! But back then I had never been further than Junction so I said sure! Little did I know what was coming my way. So, the time rolled around and I packed accordingly (which was everything because I had no idea what to bring) then drove eight hours to Van Horn, Texas. When I finally got to Van Horn, I was introduced to other volunteers and people that would become lifelong friends.

After that first guzzler project, I was hooked! I could not believe that after two long hard days of work we had created a water source that could last for decades. The site manager was a task master, he saw me and demanded that I drive t-posts until they were only a few inches above ground, then they welded another t-post to it and back to driving until only a few inches showed above ground. Thanks Dan B. (I was young then)!!!

Then a few years later we were rebuilding Molcajete Springs on Elephant Mountain WMA and we finished very early, we still had a chopper and man power available for another days' work, so we asked the TPWD guys what we could do? They had material for two guzzlers that needed to be built. So, early the next morning we showed up and were sent to two



sites and began building guzzlers. But there was a problem, during the separation of personnel one site had a number of people who had worked on numerous guzzlers and the other site had four people. So, I cry for help on the radio to Art K. asking who was to be in charge of the site with greenhorns? The reply back was, "I'll get back to you!" A few minutes later I answered the radio and he informed me that I was in charge (big mistake)! But we got it done!

Over the years of many work projects, captures, and Roundup's I met many more people from all walks of life, but the one thing I was the most impressed with was that everyone had the same motivation to help put desert bighorns up on the mountains of west Texas again!!! Everyone put their labor, hearts, and/or money into these projects to make this miracle happen. I can't say enough about the members of TBS and TPWD people that come together each year to support these simple life-giving projects and make them a reality.

In 2012, we did a project on the Lado Ranch and I met Kai Buckert. He, his wife Janet, and family hosted the workers to a great meal after a long workday where we had built two water guzzlers and did repairs on the first water guzzler built by TBS on the Lado Ranch. Then, in 2017 we did a second work project where we built water guzzlers and removed old

fencing that hindered wildlife movement on the ranch. I got to know Kai a little better. I don't remember when I asked him about the desert bighorn population and permits, but I did tell him I was interested in having the opportunity to hunt one someday. I think he just laughed that off, but every time after that I hawked him again that I wanted that chance.

Out of the blue I get a call from Kai asking me if I was really interested in hunting a desert bighorn on the Lado, I asked what I had to do to make that opportunity happen? He told me that he would be in touch, but another year went by and no information on that opportunity. I was on the road one day going to look at a couple of bulls to purchase and I got a call from Kai, he gives me the opportunity to hunt my twenty nine year quest and after talking to my wife and she gave me the thumbs up, I JUMP ALL OVER IT! We set a couple of dates, but they fell through for one reason or another. Then we had a set date for March 22, 2018 as the day to be at the Lado Ranch and hunt until we got a 10-year old desert bighorn ram.

The day I arrived I met several people that would help during the hunt, Poncho, PR and Dave. Along with Kai and Chef Janet we all sat down to a wonderful meal and began the round table of what was to happen the next day. We did get side-tracked occasionally on other issues that had underlying



meanings that I was not aware of at the time, but later found out the hard way. So, the night lasted forever, and I did manage to get a few winks of sleep and yes, I was nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. When the time finally arrived, we all met in the kitchen to discuss how the day was expected to unfold and we all know what happens when you make a plan, right? We left the headquarters and went to an area where we could glass the face of the mountain for sheep. Now the plan was to identify the position of the ram and work from the top of the mountain down to be above the ram. We were to walk on well established trails to points that I could take the shot. When the sun was high enough to show the bowl of the mountain, we started to spot groups of rams. After what seemed an eternity, the final count was TWENTY FOUR! Of which there were three that were ten years old. I was in awe of the number of rams, their size and how they were in groups of four to eight. Well the one that they wanted me to shoot was not seen, so we started off toward another

ram. Well, guess what, we did not go to the top of the mountain, we started walking and stalking from the bottom. Oh, and we never walked on any easy trails unless you were a sheep, deer or something indigenous to that part of the country. We stalked up, down, parallel, every way we could, but we never got to a point where I could take a shot at a mature ram. We did however cover a lot of territory and saw a lot of rams. So, the first day was coming to a close and I was exhausted, but what a great day. So Kai thought we ought to have lunch at 4:30 p.m., under a shade tree with cold water, BBQ, etc., at that point he could have fed me grass and I would

have been happy. Then we came down off the mountain and had a wonderful meal and talked about the day. Now, the underlying meanings had all been answered and I will call them Kai'isms. The first Kai'ism is, "there is a better trail just over that ridge," I nicknamed these Pinocchio comments. The next Kai'ism was named by Janet as the Death March (walk until you crater). The next is Kai's weight loss camp, where you don't get food until the day is done. There were others but I am keeping those to myself. That night I slept very well thanks to the day's events.

Early the next morning we had breakfast and left a little before daylight to scout the hillsides to see what was moving. We glassed the mountain and we did not see the number of sheep that we saw the previous day, but I think it was Poncho that spotted a ram that they had not seen before. He said it was darker and just a ways over there in a group of six rams. After Dave and Kai looked the ram over, they thought it met the criteria and that we should take a better look. Then there was this comment about why don't I go ahead and shoot from here, "it's





only 1350 yards over a ridge." I said no thanks and let's get closer. Kai then mentioned that we have to be done in time to go to Van Horn to the Mule Deer Foundation banquet this evening, "do go ahead and shoot." I declined again and we headed to the ridge between us and the group of rams. We reached the ridge and took a better look and this was indeed a shooter. But we were still 650 yards out and I was not comfortable with that shot. So, we made plans to go down the mountain and onto the other side and come in from behind them and I would be in a better position to make the shot. After about 2.5 hours we got into position above them, but not in a good position to shoot. Kai suggested that he and I make our way down the slope and take a position behind some rocks to make the shot. We did our best to quietly move down over the shale and rocks sliding underfoot (not real

quiet) and take a better position. The problem was the group of rams were now so close that it would have been unethical to shoot as close to us as they were. So, we had to wait and hold a shooting position for them to move. Problem, I couldn't sit, kneel or stand so I was in a squatted position waiting for the opportunity to take a shot. The rams were in no big hurry and I was getting locked up staying in one position, then when the shooter looked like he was going to move, Kai sees me shaking and decides to make a comment to break the tension so I can make a good shot. But the comment he made had us on our knees laughing and Dave who was behind us was looking at both of us like we were crazy and why in the heck I wasn't taking the shot. Well, I went back to my squatting position and made a successful shot. At that point I was overwhelmed with emotion and at what I

had the opportunity to do. After the ram was down, Kai walked over to him and Dave and I followed, Poncho and PR came over from the ridge where they had been glassing before and we processed the meat, cape and horns. We walked down the mountain and called TPWD to come process the ram for what they needed. The day was coming to an end and we all went to the MDF Banquet in Van Horn.

I never knew that the circle of what started for me some 30 years ago would lead me to this point and yet in some form the quest has ended but yet it still goes on for me. I want to thank the people that were with me on this hunt, all of the people that have helped put sheep back on the mountains in west Texas, TPWD and others. But I would be remiss if I did not thank Ms. Louise S. O'Connor, Wexford Ranches and their belief in wildlife conservation.

Photo by S. Cunningham



PLAYING CAT & MOUSE WITH A KUDU

By: Tracy Cunningham

This past June, I had the great experience of traveling to South Africa with my husband on safari. This was my second trip over and my second time hunting. Growing up the middle of three girls, hunting was not something that we did. Not that we were opposed to hunting, but there were just other things to fill our time. To my husband's shock... how are there other things to fill your time? That is a whole separate article! With both trips to South Africa, the same sentiment comes to mind. It is such a beautiful place with game running around, it's as if Noah's ark has wrecked somewhere in the distance and the animals are running loose. So many species to see that I never even imagined, it really is like a dream.

This trip, as with the last, I had an idea of what I wanted to hunt. I also knew that Sam had things on his list as well which would afford me the opportunity to take some (in my opinion) great pictures. Once we arrived and performed our firearm check, we were off. Our good friend Stix, with John X Safaris, tells me that he has seen a decent Kudu. Fabulous... that's on the list. We drive around the first day to just get a look at things. Late afternoon, early evening, Stix and his wonderful

tracker Jimmy both spot something. We get out and start to glass. Stix tells me where to look thru the spotting scope and as I take a peek, I tell him that I see nothing but branches. He tells me to keep watching, the "branches" will move. Sure enough, they did move, and this beautiful Kudu shows himself to us. He takes off on a nice leisurely pace walking through some thick brush. We played cat and mouse with him for the better part of the sunlight we had left, got within 160 yards and just could not get where I would have a great shot. We decide to call it a night and come back tomorrow.

Breakfast the next morning could not come fast enough. We ate quickly and then headed out to where we left him the night before, figuring that he had bedded down close by. We glass and glass and glassed some more. About 2 hours in and a few miles away, we spot him. There he was, sunning himself in the thick bright aloe plants, he shows himself, full body and all. We range, and he is just over 1000 yards. So again, we play a little cat and mouse, trying to get close enough to him. He has no idea we are watching him and he just strolls around the aloe plants in the warm morning sun. The

stalk and range take a few hours as we just follow him around, each time we stop, we are closer and closer to him. Finally, he stops and stands for a bit giving me a nice view of his broad side as well as those "branches" I was looking at the day before. We get set up, Sam ranges for me and we are 506 yards with a very mild wind, if any. Stix tells me to shoot whenever I am ready. I take a few deep breaths, make sure my crosshairs are positioned where they need to be and pull the trigger. Boom... he's hit! He stands there, and Stix tells me to keep my scope on him. As I look, I see where I got him, right behind his left shoulder. He stands a bit longer and then drops. My heart is beating out of my chest as I can't wait to see him up close. As we approach, we see his horns sticking up from some of the tall grass around the aloe and I get to see this beautiful creature that I was able to harvest. Needless to say, I was very pleased with my Kudu, the hunt that day and the rest of our trip.

As a newbie hunter, I would say to the ladies reading this, if you have never been hunting, I recommend trying it. You just might find something new to fill your time!

The Luck of the Draw

By: Johnny Bunsen



Photos by L&S Altimus

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Check out this beautiful Arizona Rocky Mountain bighorn ram I harvested November 17, 2018. I have been applying in the western states for sheep since 1985. About 10 years ago I met Larry and Stephanie Altimus, owners of Hunter Application Service (HAS) at a sheep show and we became immediate friends. I signed up to use their service for all of my hunting applications. Larry's knowledge of states, units, areas, populations and just general sheep expertise are second to none. He also helped me secure and guide me on a Texas Desert Bighorn Sheep hunt in 2015 so I could complete my

grand slam. This summer, my wife Kim and I were on a family vacation in Europe when Larry called me to let me know that I had drawn the Arizona Rocky tag. Kim's support through the years has been amazing and it was awesome hearing the news with her. As the hunt dates got closer, Larry and I decided to scout the area a full 4 days before the season opened. We drove hundreds of miles, climbed to many high points and glassed for hours. One day we would see a lot of sheep, the next day zero. On the 4th day of scouting, Larry spotted a group of 9-10 sheep, 7 miles away. We had no idea at the time, that the

ram we wanted was in this group.

I had also contacted the Arizona Desert Sheep Society and they were very helpful giving me information about the area and the previous years successful hunters for me to contact. One of these 2017 successful hunters is Guy Bryant. We also became instant friends through many phone conversations and texts. Guy helped us out immensely with his personal knowledge of the area, so Larry and I were able to narrow down our possibilities.

On opening day, we saw a lot of sheep but not one Larry thought I should take. He had to call me off a



very nice ram at about 275 yards, that was very hard for me! That afternoon, we found the group of sheep that Larry had spotted and a distance of 7 miles while we were scouting, now they were 1400 yards away and there was a very nice ram in the bunch. The problem was accessibility, we were in the bottom of the canyon and they were on top, it was going to be a very difficult, steep climb to the top and we were not even sure we could make it. So, on the second day of the season, we made our way from the bottom to the top, only to find out that there was no way to get over to the ridge where we had spotted the sheep. We made our way back down the steep slope

and had to take a long break in the shade.

It's a good thing we could not get over to the ridge where we thought the sheep were. On the afternoon of day 2, after our break, we headed down the canyon to glass for more sheep, we had not gone far when Larry decided to we should turn around and go look for rams in the head of the canyon that we had spotted a few days earlier. As we were headed back up the canyon, I spotted our group of sheep, off the ridge about 200 yards away. The group had come straight down a sheer cliff and the rams were fighting, the sounds echoing through the canyon on a very steep bench,

a real sight to see. We watched these guys for about 2 hours as they moved to a lower area where I could take a shot. It was an unbelievable experience!

By the way, I was Larry's 140 successful sheep hunt in his 50+ year career and Stephanie has been there by his side all the way, she is an amazing person and an incredible cook. There are always people to thank after a hunt like this, but there were many small events that happened this week that I cannot explain. Larry and I agreed that my ram was a gift from God. He arranged things His way, His timing and made it all work out.

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