

A group of bighorn sheep is the central focus of the image, situated in a desert landscape. The sheep are of various colors, including brown, tan, and white with brown patches. Some have prominent, curved horns. They are surrounded by tall, dry, golden-brown grasses and several green cholla cacti. In the background, there are rocky hills under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is a natural, wild habitat.

The Bighorn

SPRING 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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**A WORKING PARTNER WITH THE TEXAS BIGHORN SOCIETY TO INSURE THE FUTURE OF
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 on a disk and in one of the following formats:

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

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

All other formats must be approved by our production staff

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Spring – February 1st

Summer – April 1st

Fall / Winter – October 1st

DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENT RATES

Location	Rate Per Issue
Inside Front Cover (Supply as full color bleed)	\$270.00
Inside Back Cover (Supply as full color bleed)	\$270.00
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PRODUCTION

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

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BIGHORN

Spring 2019

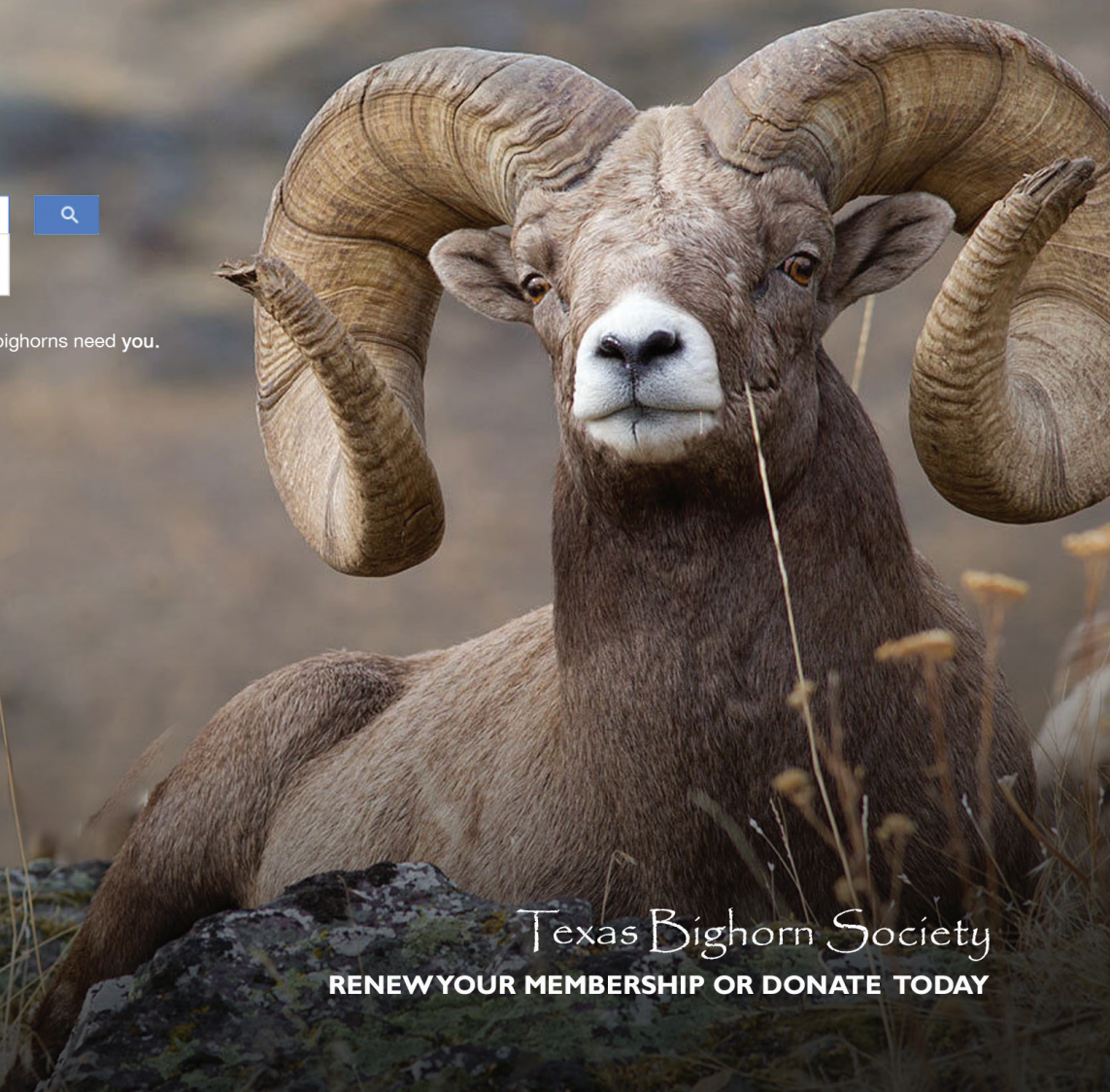
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bighorns don't need the internet. bighorns need you.



Texas Bighorn Society
 RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR DONATE TODAY

4

M. Jones



Texas Bighorn Society

[Spring 2019 Membership Application]

YES! I want to help restore Bighorn Sheep in Texas!

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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

Brian Austin
John Boehm
Jason Brooks
John F. Bucholz
Justin Chambers
Nelson Grimes
Bobby Harrison
Jacob Hatfield
Mike Howard
Scott Kendrix
Hill Krause
Jonathan Langdon

William Martin
Don McMurry
Joel Mooney
Kolton Moore
Robert Oliver
John Perez
Robert Robinette
Ellis Taylor
Matt Troutt
Matthew Waldrip
Nathanael Watson
Greg Young

family

Robert Drinjak
Jeff Wilson

life

Mark A. Cavanaugh
John Hart
Patricia Holloway
Wes Howard
Gregory May

Wes Mundy
Gary Rapa
Scott C. Steger
Jason Vanderbrink

student

Kevin Fuquay
Carson Keys
Keller Mainard
Bryan Spencer

* please,

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

dgregson@texasbighornsociety.org
806-745-7783

This & That

January 2019 Board Meeting Summary *by Curt Brockmann*

The January 2019 Texas Bighorn Society Board meeting was held during the Dallas Safari Club Convention. Twenty-nine people attended the meeting. The minutes of the September 2018 Board meeting were reviewed and approved. Robert Joseph gave a membership report and reported that TBS has 838 members. The Board discussed the 2019 Roundup, which will be held on June 21-23 at the Westin Riverwalk Hotel in San Antonio. Please mark it on your calendar and make your reservations. This year we have the sheep permit, so we are hoping for a good turnout.

We also discussed the 2019 Work Project, which is scheduled for March 15-17. We will be staying at the CEMEX- El Carmen Land & Conservation Co. area which is adjacent to Black Gap WMA. We plan to construct two new guzzlers in the Black Gap Wildlife Management area and check and repair, if needed, some of the existing guzzlers.

Mark Garrett and Froylan Hernandez provided the Board an overview of their management efforts and, an update on the sheep herds at the various TPWD wildlife management

areas. They stated that a sheep, mule deer and aoudad capture was conducted at the Lado Ranch in late December 2018. They captured, sampled and collared 31 desert bighorn sheep, 42 mule deer and 9 aoudad. Dr. Warren Conway, Rachel Wiedmeier and Emily Wright also gave an update on the Texas Tech University bighorn research collaboration efforts.

That is all for now. I hope you all have a great spring and I hope to see you at the Roundup.

-Curt Brockmann



Photo by Mike Pittman

Walter Othello Ford Jr. (1928-2019)

Walter Ford, 90 of Kerrville, Texas, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, slipped into God's loving arms on April 11, 2019, at this home in Kerrville with his wife and daughters at his side.

His grand accomplishment was his North American Wild Sheep Grand Slam, which he achieved at age 79. He was a lifetime member of the Texas Bighorn Society.

See full obituary on Page 9



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

President's Letter



SAM CUNNINGHAM
TBS President

*We thank you for
your service, Jim!*



Jim Payne
Outgoing TBS President

Dear TBS Members,

Congratulations on another successful Work Project. After some unavoidable delays, we were able to complete two new guzzlers and repair several others at Black Gap WMA. Thanks to everyone that volunteered, cooked, bought auction items and helped to make the project a success. A special thanks to Bonnie and Billy Pat and CEMEX for hosting TBS and allowing the use of El Carmen Land & Conservation Co. headquarters.

During our membership meeting, the appointment of board members Kathy Boone, Lynton Holloway, Steve Bolner, Terry Rathert and Jim Payne was approved. Also approved was a change in our bylaws, expanding our Board of Directors from eleven members to twelve. Following the membership meeting, the Board appointed the following officers:

Sam Cunningham as President

Ace High as Vice President

Curt Brockmann as Secretary

Kathy Boone as Treasurer

Please keep in mind and on your calendars our yearly Roundup that will be held at the Westin Riverwalk in San Antonio on June 21 and 22. You can register on our website texasbighornsociety.org and keep up with all the latest on our Facebook page.

Thanks!

Sam Cunningham

President, Texas Bighorn Society

This & That

Welcome Back Calvin!

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE



With great pleasure we welcome Calvin Richardson back to the Trans-Pecos as Regional Director, Region I, Texas Parks & Wildlife. We look forward to working with Calvin on a variety of projects within TBS and the private lands sector.

Calvin attended Texas A&M University where he obtained both his B.S. and M.S. Calvin began his career working for the Extension Service in South Carolina and Texas on various range and wildlife projects. During the past twenty-six years he worked at TPWD as a Biologist, Technical Guidance Biologist, and was Program Leader for Big Game in the Trans-Pecos (desert bighorns, mule deer and pronghorn). He also served as District Leader in the Panhandle, which is part of Region I.

Calvin has a wealth of knowledge and experience on the many aspects of wildlife and land management and has worked with private landowners as well as other entities in the Trans-Pecos and Panhandle. Calvin began his new job position as Regional Director on April 1, 2019 and he and his wife will be moving to Alpine soon. Welcome back Calvin!

Be sure to check out the Texas Parks & Wildlife YouTube Channel to learn about some of Calvin's previous work with Texas Parks & Wildlife! Just go to www.youtube.com and search "Texas Parks & Wildlife Calvin Richardson."



Remembering Walter Othello Ford Jr. 1928-2019

Walter Ford, 90 of Kerrville, Texas, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, slipped into God's loving arms on April 11, 2019, at this home in Kerrville with his wife and daughters at his side.

Walter was born on November 28, 1928, in El Paso to Walter O. Ford Sr. and Marguerite Burkhead Ford. His family soon moved to Dallas where he later attended Woodrow Wilson High School, Class of 1946. Walter attended Baylor, SMU and graduated from Oklahoma University as a Petroleum Engineer in 1950. Shortly thereafter, he started his family and business, Ford Well Logging Company, in Wichita Falls. In 1970 Walter moved his business (now Injection Engineering Services) and his family to Midland. Walter worked in the oil fields of Texas, Oklahoma, Utah, Montana, and Michigan until retiring to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1995.

Walter was a man of many interests, talents and friends who had a passion for knowledge. He was an avid reader of non-fiction and a lifelong learner who throughout his life collected and extensive library on the many topics that captured his interest. Walker will be best remembered by many as an avid outdoorsman, expert marksman, and hunter. His grand accomplishment was his North American Wild Sheep Grand Slam, which he achieved at age 79. He was a lifetime member of the Texas Bighorn Society, Wild Sheep Foundation, and National Rifle Association, and was also an Official Measurer for the Boone and Crockett Club for many years.

In addition to hunting, Walter loved boating and sailing and being on the water at both Friday Harbor in the San Juan Islands and Lake Powell. He enjoyed fly fishing on the American West's best trout streams and studying archeology and the history of early man along the way. Walter was a passionate student of history, particularly Native American, WWII, and Civil War history, and he loved the 1940s big band jazz and the Santa Fe Opera. With such varied interests, it is no wonder that he enjoyed his years of traveling the world with his wife, Laura, at his side.

Walter will be remembered as a strong presence. Kind. Generous. Witty. A good joke teller. He was passionate about things he liked, and that included Texas barbecue, Blue Bell Vanilla Bean ice cream, green chili chicken enchiladas with ketchup on top, and hot fudge sundaes. He was a One-of-a-Kind man and will be greatly missed by all who loved him.

Walter is preceded in death by his son, Walter O. (Trey) Ford, III. He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Laura Cox Ford, ex-wife and mother of his children, Barbara Ford; daughters, Sharon Ford Graves (Rick) of Fischer, Karen Ford of San Marcos, stepdaughter Julie Porter (Carl); grandsons, Ford Pierson (Lindy), Chase Pierson (Jenna), Jake Lynch; step-grandchildren, Mackenzie and Mitchel Porter; and great-grandchildren, Oliver Trey Pierson, Emory June Pierson, and Presley Jordyn Pierson.

*Printed in "The Bighorn" by special permission from the family of Walter Ford.

From the Editor



Bonnie McKinney
Editor, *The Bighorn*

Late summer, fall and even some winter rains in west Texas made for an incredible spring bloom. Big Bend blue bonnets were knee high all over the lower Big Bend area, as well as hundreds of wildflowers in bloom. Lots of food sources for bighorn sheep as well as other native wildlife and birds. Everyone is hoping for a great summer filled with rains.

This past winter was a busy time with Dallas Safari Club Convention and Wild Sheep Foundation show, where TBS was well represented. Reaching out to the public at these venue's is a great way to show off what TBS does for bighorns in west Texas.

The annual work project was just completed in March, many volunteers were on hand to help build two new guzzlers and repair many of the existing guzzlers on the Black Gap WMA. Base camp was at Cemex- El Carmen Land & Conservation Co. headquarters. Weather was not perfect but all work was completed and everyone had a great time.

Be sure to check out the bighorn tag information that TBS will auction in June at the Roundup in San Antonio, a great chance to hunt a trophy sheep in Texas.

A huge welcome to Dr. Sam Cunningham, new president of TBS. Sam and Tracy have been an integral part of TBS for a number of years and we all look forward to his leadership as president.

Many thanks to all the contributor's for this issue of "Bighorn," there are great articles ranging from scientific work to hunts. I hope you enjoy this issue and please send your articles and information to me for inclusion in the next issue. Hope to see everyone at San Antonio for Roundup on the Riverwalk.

Saludos,

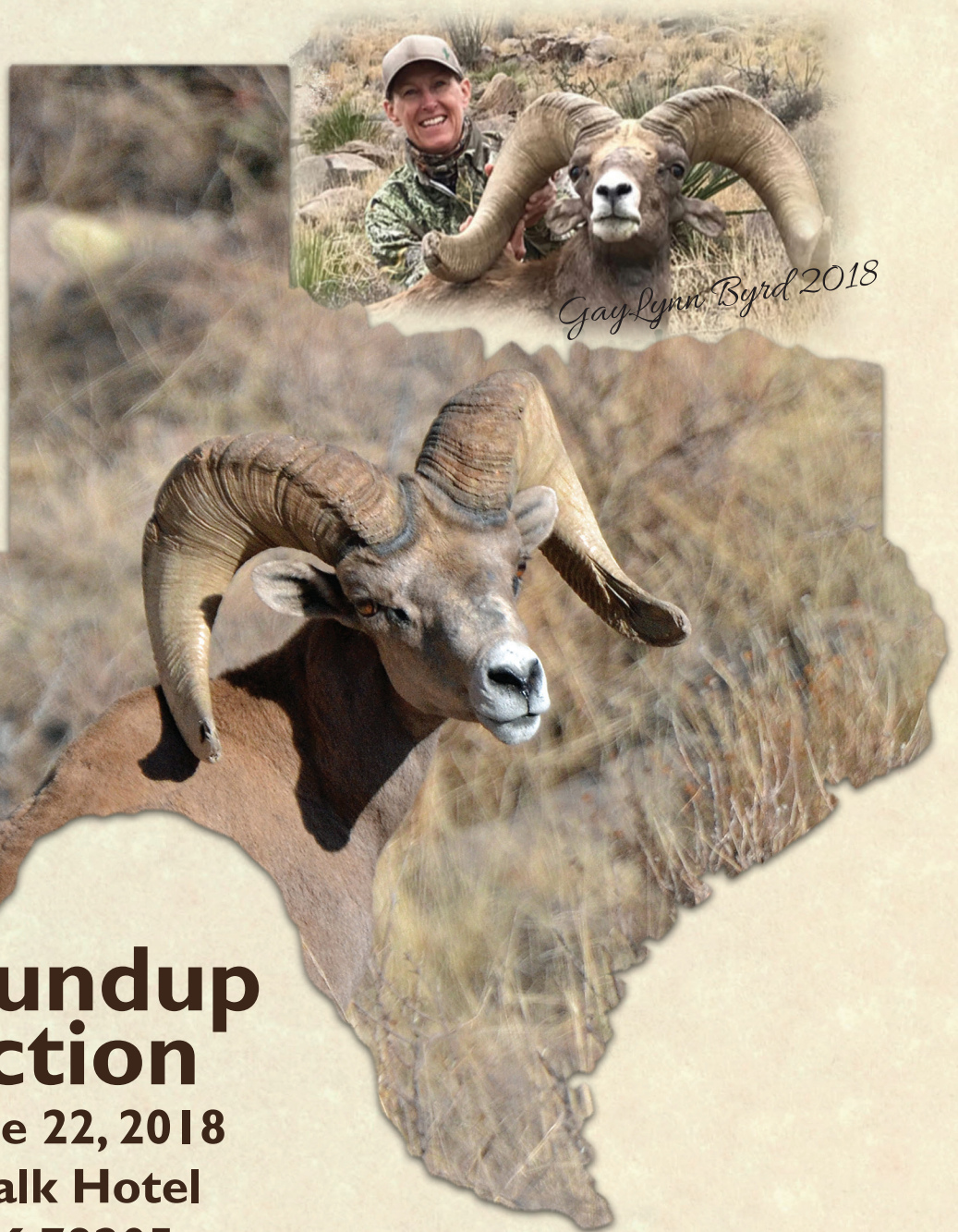
Bonnie McKinney

Wildlife Coordinator

El Carmen Land Conservation Co.

Email: bonnie2mckinney@gmail.com

Texas Bighorn Society Sheep Tag



TBS Roundup Live Auction

Saturday | June 22, 2018

Westin Riverwalk Hotel

San Antonio, TX 78205

-FOR MORE INFORMATION-

Sam Cunningham, TBS

806-282-6889

Froylan Hernandez, TPWD

732-837-0666 x277

www.TEXASBIGHORNSOCIETY.org

The Texas Bighorn Society is a 501(c)3 Organization



TEXAS BIGHORN SOCIETY

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Lubbock, TX 79416-5124
Office: 806-745-7783
Fax: 806-745-8475
Email: information@texasbighornsociety.org

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

The Texas Bighorn Society will auction a Texas Parks & Wildlife Governor's Desert Bighorn Sheep Tag on Saturday, June 22, 2019. This auction is part of our annual 2019 Roundup Fundraiser that will be held at the Westin Riverwalk Hotel, San Antonio, Texas. The hunt will take place on Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

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

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

Sam Cunningham, V.P.
Phone: 806-282-6889
scunningham@quailcreekent.com

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

www.texasbighornsociety.org
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2018 Roundup
WAS A BLAST IN AUSTIN! COME JOIN US FOR ALL THE
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June 21 -22, 2019
San Antonio, Texas

This year's Roundup will be at the
Westin Riverwalk Hotel.

This elegant hotel, 420 West Market Street,
is situated on the scenic San Antonio Riverwalk.





Back to the Gap

14

by Bonnie McKinney, ECLCC & Kathy Boone, TBS

What a whirlwind weekend the 2019 Work Project was, everyone began arriving on Thursday and all were able to enjoy the millions of Big Bend bluebonnets in full bloom along the highway and down to the headquarters at El Carmen Land & Conservation Co. (Cemex USA & J. Austin) which hosted the base camp site for the annual work project that entailed building two new guzzlers and repairing many of the old ones on the adjacent Black Gap Wildlife Management Area. Weather was not very cooperative, and the message came in that the helicopter and pilot were stuck in Denver in blizzard conditions no less! Spring was not in the air, in fact it was not your typical lower Big Bend area March

weekend, which is usually hot and dry; not this time, cold weather, clouds and wind but nothing dampened the many volunteer's spirits and once the helicopter arrived on Friday morning it was full steam ahead. Meals were terrific with the BBQ pits at ECLCC getting a real work-out. Many thanks to all the members that cooked all those meals, made lunches for the mountain, and early morning breakfasts. Last but not least by any means, thanks to all the donors and members that contributed to the auction items. Teamwork by TBS is always amazing! Saturday evening found everyone tired but secure in the knowledge that two more guzzlers would provide bighorns needed water as well as a host of other species that benefit from guzzlers, and that almost

all of the guzzlers in need of repair had been fixed. A great work project by a great bunch of people all working toward keeping desert bighorns on the mountains of west Texas!

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE WONDERFUL FOLKS THAT PROVIDED AND SERVED FOOD AND DONATED MATERIALS TO THE WORK PROJECT:

Dan & Kathy Boone
 Steve & Kathy Bolner
 Curt, Carl & Betty Brockmann
 Charlie Butler
 Sam & Tracy Cunningham
 Terry Franks
 Ken Garcia
 John Gutz
 John Hart
 Ace & Karen High

SITE B



Lynton, Gene & Wendy
Holloway
Robert Joseph
Forres Meadows
Dirk Parks
Carlton Turner
Gandy's Dairy

WORK PROJECT VOLUNTEERS

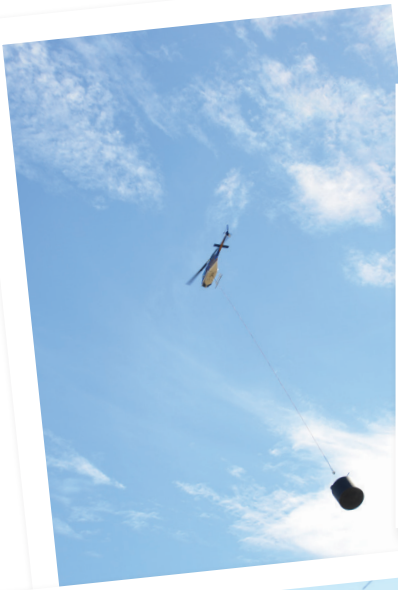
Charlie Barnes
Winona Barnes
Benjamin Benavidez
Kathy Bolner
Steve Bolner
J.D. Bolner
Dan Boone
Kathy Boone
Betty Brockmann
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Curt Brockmann
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John Bucholz
Charlie Butler
Ben Carter
Mark Cavanaugh
Patricia Cavanaugh
Chuck Cox
Caleb Cox
Sam Cunningham
Bob Drinjak
Kenneth Garcia
Mark Garrett
Bryan Giles
David Goss
Nelson Grimes
Richard Gutierrez
John Gutz
Parker Hall

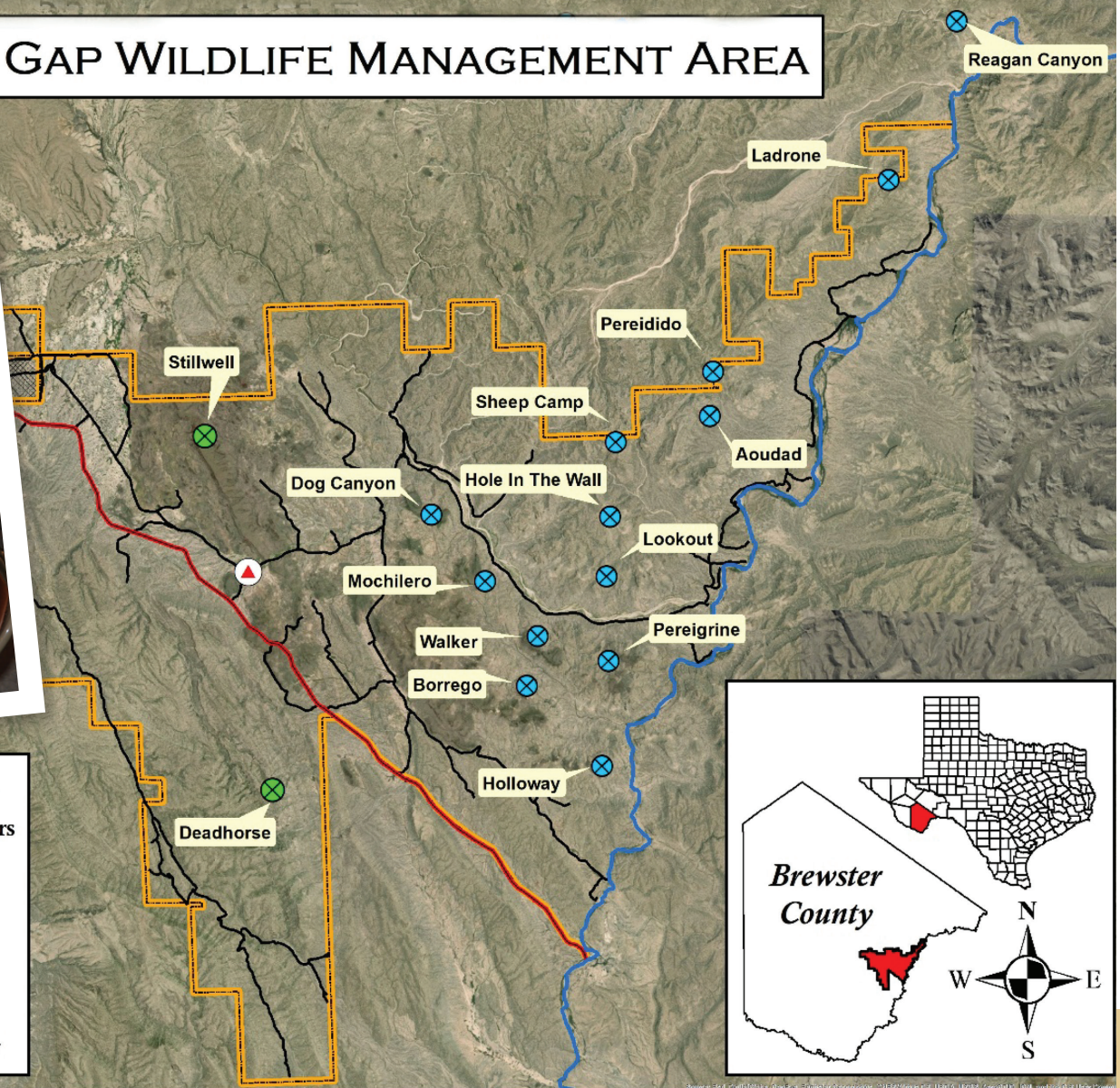
Shorey Harmon
John Hart
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Lynton Holloway
Gene Holloway
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Kevin Fuquay
Robert Joseph
Pat Kirk
Scott Lacina
Keller Mainard
Bob McCoy
Cody McEntire
Billy Pat McKinney
Bonnie McKinney
Forres Meadows
Wes Mundy
John Meyer
Walker Netherton

Robert Walker
Dirk Parks
Travis Smith
Dewey Stockbridge
Randall Stolte
Carleton Turner
Brandon White
Jeff Wilson
Emily Wright
Kat Hunter
Bobby Harrison
Jason Brooks
Jane Dickerson
David Price
Clay Roberts
Terry Franks
Taylor Daily

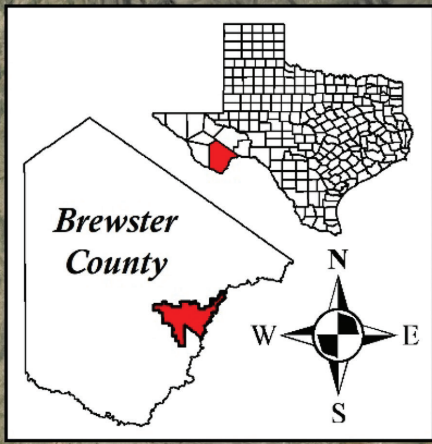
SEE Y'ALL NEXT YEAR!



BLACK GAP WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA



- Present Guzzlers
- Proposed Guzzlers
- Headquarters
- Rio Grande
- WMA Roads
- FM 2627 Hwy
- WMA Boundary



BACK TO THE GAP



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Photos by Dirk Parks, John Meyer and Forres Meadows



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2019 WORK

MARCH 15-16 | BLACK GAP WIL





PROJECT

LIFE MANAGEMENT AREA



19



BIGHORN

Triple Species Capture

at the Lado Ranch

It was an unbelievable sight to see the helicopter

ferrying wild animals off the mountain! The whole week was a blur of activity during the first radio collaring and data collection of desert bighorn, mule deer and aoudad on the Lado Ranch southeast of Van Horn.

For five days at the end of December 2018, Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD), Borderlands Research Institute (BRI), Sul Ross State University (SRSU), Texas Tech University (TTU), the Wexford Ranch and a film crew gathered for the radio collaring and sample collection project, which was funded by TPWD.

Initially the project was postponed due to bad weather, but once rescheduled a total of 82 animals were net gunned in the wild. Up to three animals could be net gunned at once. After they were netted, they were carefully taken from the net, hobbled and blind-folded, put in a sling and flown back to the sampling and collection station. Once at the station each animal was fitted with a radio collar, nasal and tonsil swabs were taken, an ear notch was collected for DNA, and blood samples were drawn

by Kai Buckert, Lado Ranch Manager





for analysis. During the sampling each animal's temperature was constantly monitored and the animal held still by several people. This process was fast and furious taking about 10 minutes total. The animals were released from the collection station and were monitored to quickly return to where they had been captured. Radio collars were programmed to transmit for 104 weeks from activation. GPS data is recorded every two to four hours and is updated for tracking once daily.

There has been minimal loss of collared animals. Originally, 31 desert bighorns (15 rams, 16 ewes) were radio collared with one ewe collar currently not working, and with the intentions of deploying another 10 collars. Forty-two mule deer (20 bucks, 22 does) were collared but, seven collars had to be removed and there have been two

mountain lion kills. Lastly, 9 aoudad (7 rams, 2 ewes) were collared with the hopes of collaring another 20-30 individuals. In the two months of tracking only two animals have left the boundaries of the Lado Ranch and interestingly, there has been minimal movement of the animals.

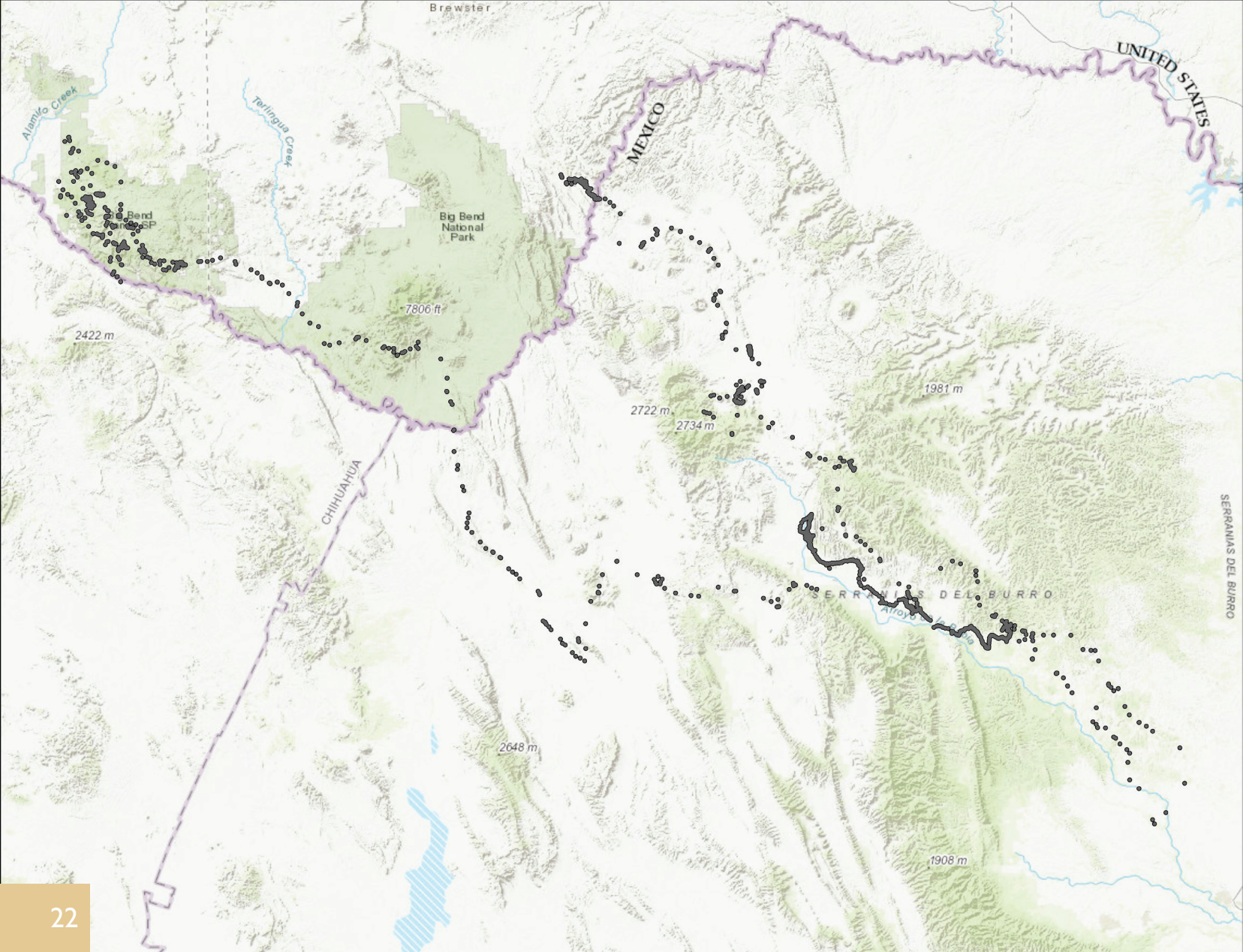
By conducting this triple capture project TPWD seeks to "determine habitat use/preference of each species, identify potential areas for resource competition, conduct disease surveillance for each species, identify areas where frequent contact is occurring from a disease standpoint, map seasonal travel corridors, and develop bighorn sheep survey sightability correction factor."

As part of this historic research the Lado Ranch, Texas Bighorn Society, and Mule Deer Foundation have

collaborated to collect footage from the five days of data collection to produce a promotional video. Videographers from Heartland Bowhunters flew out to the Lado to work as part of the team.

For now, animals will continue to be monitored with the hope of adding more data to this research. Aoudad, especially have had very little information collected, these findings will add significantly to the knowledge base of all three species. It will be interesting to see how many animals move throughout the year in relation to weather, water, and more. For now, things have calmed down at the Lado and the vegetation is greening up showing off soring colors, but it may not be long before you see another helicopter flying over with a sling full of animals.





The Rambling Ram by Bonnie McKinney, ECLCC

Billy Pat, Taylor Daily, Thomas Janke and I were sitting on the porch at El Carmen Land & Conservation CO. (ECLCC) one hot afternoon in early fall talking about the bighorn ram that had been released on Black Gap WMA last year and just how far he had traveled.

When you capture wildlife for a transplant no matter how much thought and planning goes into the release you are never assured the wildlife will stay in the general area they are released in. Most of the time there are a number of animals that will leave the release site and travel around before settling down in an area. This particular ram decided to leave the Black Gap WMA and take a very long roundabout tour of northern Coahuila, Mexico. What was really unusual about this ram's travel was not only how far he traveled but the country he traveled through including going from Chihuahuan Desert habitat into Tamaulipan thorn scrub country, then turning around and retracing his steps for many miles.

Billy Pat and I were looking at the map Taylor had of all the points from the GPS collar this ram was wearing. Having lived in the Carmen Mountains since 2001 working for Cemex we were quite familiar with the area the ram had traveled in. So, the "Rambling Ram" leaves the Black Gap WMA, crosses the Rio Grande into Mexico, heads toward the Pico Etero area, then



Hello, my name is Taylor Daily and I am a graduate student pursuing a M.S. degree at Sul Ross State University. For my thesis project I am comparing survival and movements between release methods of desert bighorn sheep at the Black Gap Wildlife Management Area. I am focusing on 3 main objectives:

- 1) compare resident, hard, and soft release survival and cause specific mortality,
- 2) compare resident, hard, and soft release movements and home ranges, and
- 3) analyze the spatial distribution of the landscape with respect to movements and home ranges.

The goal of this study is to provide Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and private landowners with information about factors affecting desert bighorn survival and how landscape distribution affects their movements.

heads further south into the Carmen Mountains crossing a well used road, a mining area and up into the pine-oak woodland at El Jardin. He stayed there several days then headed south traveling along the fringes of the main highway that leads some 100 miles to the town of Muzquiz, Coahuila. The habitat changes dramatically from Chihuahuan Desert scrub habitat in the lower elevations, which is where this ram chose to travel, to Tamaulipan thorn scrub habitat consisting of mostly brush species. Even though there was good bighorn habitat in the surrounding mountains the ram stuck to the brush-covered foothills and went almost into the town of Muzquiz. Apparently he had a change in plans, turned around and basically retraced his travel route back toward the high Carmen Mountains, however, once he reached the pass near the Cuesta Malena which is a natural pass between the Sierra La Encantada and the Sierra del Carmen, he decides to head southwest across some very low harsh desert country, passing through several ejidos and ranches.

Not satisfied with this country he heads due west toward Big Bend National Park, and that day in September he was directly across the Rio Grande in Mexico from Mariscal Mountain in the park. Later he moved further west, re-crossed the Rio Grande and ended up on Big Bend Ranch State Park.

Please check out the map of the “Rambling Ram’s” travels. This bighorn ram moved many miles and traveled through private ranches, ejidos, and some habitat that you would not imagine a bighorn sheep using.

Taylor Daily has kept up with this ram as part of his Master’s degree project at Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University. Hopefully the our ram will continue to have good luck in his travels, he may well go back to Elephant Mountain where he was originally captured for the transplant to Black Gap WMA. May your travels be as safe and far-reaching as our adventuring Rambling Ram.

New Blood at the Gap

by Travis Smith, TPWD

NEW BLOOD AT THE GAP

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Shorey Harmon

My name is Shorey Harmon, I am currently the new Fish and Wildlife Technician at Black Gap WMA or Texas Parks and Wildlife. I served 4 years in the U.S. Navy right out of high school which gave me the discipline, mindset, and motivation to achieve my education and to further my career goals. I have always had passion for the outdoors, wildlife, and bettering our natural world. These things eventually led me to study Natural Resources Management at Colorado State University. During my time in college I worked summer seasonal positions with Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The combination of having a passion for wildlife, military experience, seasonal experience, and my education has led me to a great position with Texas Parks and Wildlife here at Black Gap.



volunteer with us!

Black Gap Wildlife Management Area has recently filled two job vacancies, both wildlife technician positions. Although we are happy for the former black gap technicians who have now moved on to bigger and better things, it left Black Gap on the search for “new blood”. After several months of paperwork, interviews, and a little more paperwork we were able to hire two new employees. Meet Shorey Harmon and Travis Bryan:



TRAVIS SMITH, TPWD

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Travis Bryan

My name is Travis Bryan. I grew up in Denton, Texas and began hunting and fishing at a young age. As I grew older, I decided that I wanted to work with wildlife as a career, and I enrolled in the Natural Resource Management program at Sul Ross State University in 2008. As a student, I worked as a field technician for multiple graduate students and I earned a Bachelor's degree in May 2011. After graduating, I worked as a seasonal field technician for Colorado Parks & Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management, Texas Parks & Wildlife, and the University of Wyoming. During that time, I worked on various projects studying mule deer, pronghorn, predators, sage grouse, spotted owls and eagles. I began attending graduate school at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point in 2015 where I studied the home range and resource selection of translocated elk. I earned a Master's degree in May 2018 and returned to Texas shortly after. This past October, I began working for Texas Parks & Wildlife as a Chronic Wasting Disease technician, and several months later, I was hired as a wildlife technician at Black Gap WMA.

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The Littlest White-tail

by Terry Rathert

THE LITTLEST WHITE TAIL

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I had researched my security concerns

thoroughly before bidding on a Carmen Mountain White-tailed deer hunt in Mexico. No “good buy” would be good enough if my safety had even a chance of being compromised. A harrowing experience years earlier taught me that. Several days into the hunt, my risk antennae perked up.

As dinner conversation was winding down, the departing guests said they needed to get their wallets out of the office safe. Hugo volunteered to do that. Billy Pat jokingly said, “Hugo, one of the downsides in your job is knowing the combination to the safe should the bad guys show up.” Surely, we were off the radar at the El Carmen Nature Area in Coahuila, Mexico. Now I wasn’t sure! I wanted to ask, but I really didn’t want to know the answer. I learned with children years ago, not to ask a question to which you’re not prepared to hear any answer. I was already in Mexico. Regardless of the

answer, we’d continue hunting and our return plans would be dictated by hunting success and good flying weather.

Recently, I added the SCI recognized North American species of deer to my bucket list; excluding those found only south of the border. While researching different species, I became familiar with the Carmen Mountain white-tailed deer.

The Carmen Mountain white-tailed deer is small, with adult males weighing an average of about 100 pounds. Their antlers typically form small baskets and the beams curve tightly inward. An important factor in their geographic distribution is water, and the Sierra del Carmens have abundant springs.

El Carmen donated the hunt to the Texas Bighorn Society for its 2018 Roundup. I was intrigued by the possibility of hunting these deer after discussing the hunt, travel options and security with Billy Pat McKinney.

Billy Pat grew up in a ranching

family in Alpine, Texas. He spent over 20 years with Texas Parks & Wildlife in Wildlife Management before moving to Mexico to lead El Carmen’s program. He’s a legend amongst the Texas desert sheep community, fluent in Spanish and had been with El Carmen for eighteen years. I got comfortable with his plans for the trip. Weather permitting, I’d fly with Billy Pat from Del Rio to the Los Pilaes Camp, or we’d drive across the border together.

The El Carmen Nature Area is an extension of CEMEX Corporation’s vision to be a global corporate leader in ecological stewardship. CEMEX assembled more than 200,000 hectares in Coahuila, Mexico in the heart of the Sierra del Carmen. Land that was once devastated by grazing, mining and timber operations has become a flourishing landscape inhabited by deer, bear, bighorn sheep and lions. Endemic species are no longer threatened through abusive land practice, but studied and fostered. After lunch on the day of arrival, we

Wildlife Water Drinker with Clean Water, Bighorn Society, and El Carmen

checked the Sako 30.06 caliber rifle at the range and headed out to find Carmen Mountain white-tailed deer. We located several young bucks in San Isidro Canyon before turning back for dinner. The next morning, we would go into Mariposa Canyon and attempt to locate a heavy buck seen by guides Jonás and Beto days earlier. Mariposa Canyon and the adjacent canyons would yield several dozen white-tailed and mule deer sightings, but no mature bucks during my hunt. The small stature of the Carmen Mountain white-tailed deer allows them to dissolve into their environment. They are especially difficult for a rookie to spot. Beto on the other hand, found them regularly.

One day began earlier than the others. We went 'up on top', climbing 4,000' above Los Pilaes into the heart of the Carmen Mountains. The vegetation changed from sage and succulents on the desert floor to oak and pine forests in the mountain tops. The road to the

top was as a steep, rugged four-wheel-drive only passage. The long wheel base Dodge Power Wagon crew cab handled the challenge well. It was an exciting ride in the high rack.

On top, we stopped in a meadow that previously was an old logging site, and Jonás rattled up a young white-tailed buck. I was encouraged that we'd see more deer than might otherwise be expected since visibility in the forests and rugged terrain was limited. The white-tailed deer didn't seem to be in the rut as expected. In a meadow further on, Jonás rattled up two more bucks. I began feeling confident we'd see many more.

We spotted a large boar black bear perched atop a pinnacle of rocks surveying his territory below. I was surprised by how plump he was in the dead of winter. The big boars don't hibernate hard here. The mountains had received good rains, and the food supply was rich and abundant. Midday,

Beto, Jonás and I walked a trail to still hunt and rattle while Billy Pat made calls on the satellite phone. Jonás rattled in a dozen Rio Grande wild turkey hens and we watched them do what wild turkeys do - they are always entertaining. I do so love wild turkeys, and this was a special treat. We turned back so we'd be in Mariposa Canyon for the last of shooting light to search for that heavy buck.

On the return, we encountered the bear again. He scrambled thirty yards up the hillside above the road, sat and watched us pass by. A magnificent big black bear. As we approached the meadow where Jonás had rattled up the last bucks, we saw several does drinking from the spring fed stream. What appeared to be the first buck we encountered earlier was with them. They climbed a trail above us and looked back.

Billy Pat had a feeling and eased the truck forward into the stream, then



Terry Rathert with his trophy. Photo by J. Delgadillo

exclaimed, "There's a good buck!" I hadn't yet noticed the deer in front of us in the meadow. His shoulder barely shown above the grass and he dissolved into the landscape when he lowered his head to feed. Asking if he was a shooter, I heard a "Yes". Billy Pat started to ask, "Are you going to shoot?" so he could cover his ears. His question was answered before it was fully asked as the shot rang out. I'd seen the deer through the scope and knew instantly from his mass that he was head and shoulders above anything we'd seen. There would be no question on my part if BP said he was good! These little deer are gone gone when they decide to go. Neither Jonás nor Beto had seen the buck while he had his head up. They carried on a conversation between themselves as they walked toward the buck; likely asking each other if Billy Pat had gotten a good look at the buck before speaking since my hunt

was now over. I had, and I was happy although I'd not yet put my hands on him! The guides pulled the buck out of the tall grass to the edge of the road, and a smile came over my face. When Billy Pat and I got there, everyone was smiling. I had hoped to harvest an old buck, and this buck met that qualification. His teeth were all but gone. He was a fighter too. One ear was split in five places, his neck and back scarred. On his left side was an infected wound from one of this year's battles. His body was frail, and I wondered aloud if he'd have made it through the rest of the winter in the mountains. After field photos, we loaded the deer and started the trek down the mountain. We weren't in a hurry; our prior 'appointment' with Mariposa Canyon had been canceled. It was a beautiful evening. The Chisos Mountains of Big Bend National Park were silhouetted on the horizon under colorful skies as the

sun set. The day before I left the Sierra del Carmens, Hugo and I searched the mountains frequently inhabited by Desert Bighorn sheep. A sheep hunter at heart, the only ram needed for my Four North American Wild Sheep, "FNAWS" or "Grand Slam", was a Desert Bighorn. Early that morning, I observed my first Desert Bighorn ram. I was mesmerized. I couldn't put the binoculars down, nor walk away from the spotting scope for more than a moment or two. Before the day was over, I'd watched a total of ten rams. And with each, a higher high. The speed with which I shouldered the Sako, chambered a round and harvested my Carmen Mountain White-tailed deer is still talked about today at Los Pilares. Billy Pat made sure the Sako stayed behind when we went glassing for Desert Bighorn rams. And, I'm still short one ram for my FNAWS.

DESERT TAXIDERMY



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