



## President's Message

Spring has arrived in Oregon, have you gotten your applications in for hunts for the coming year? I have spent the winter looking over maps, studying data, talking to friends and biologists trying to find that one special hunt. Often it just comes down to enjoying a certain place and the company that drives my choices.

Usually, spring brings rain and wind season, but this year, at least in my neck of the state, it has been drier although the wind seems stronger and always present. Spring is when I begin looking forward to all the wonderful times with family and friends enjoying the great outdoors and wild places.

Unfortunately, again this spring has been much the same as last year, the COVID pandemic still has many staying home, working from home, waiting for that vaccination or the rules to change. Some of us have lost friends and family. Many businesses are still suffering. Even with this there does seem to be some room for hope. Things do appear to be slowly opening.

The Central Oregon Sportsmen Show did go on and OR FNAWS had a booth to share what we do, sell raffle tickets, and recruit new members. Although our annual banquet in May was going to be a bit too early with the existing COVID rules, we have optimistically moved it to July 17<sup>th</sup>. It will occur the evening after the Bighorn Sheep and Rocky Mountain Goat Orientation and Workshop in The Dalles. We hope to see you there. This is an opportunity to attend both!

This year the Wild Sheep Show, became Sheep Week an online version. OR FNAWS participated with an online booth where we got to share our Oregon activities, advertise our 2021 Rocky Mountain Goat, Grizzly, Black Bear and Wolf raffle hunt with Ultima Thule Outfitters, and recruit new members. I hope you were able to stop by and check it out. Please think about joining us next year at the Sheep Show, January 13-15 in Reno. We are always looking forward to meeting new friends, getting extra help, and enjoying a great time.

We will be auctioning off the Oregon Access and Habitat Rocky Mountain Goat tag this year. Last year there was a new Oregon State record taken in the Wallowa's of 54 6/8. Since the banquet will not occur on May 1<sup>st</sup>, we have been working with ODFW on how to best move forward with an auction. Please stay connected with us on our website and social media sites for additional information as this comes together.

The Oregon, Washington and Idaho Chapters will be hosting the Annual Wild Sheep Foundation's Chapter and Affiliate Meeting, June 24-26<sup>th</sup> in Lewiston, ID. This is an annual meeting where representatives of the multiple Chapters and Affiliates from across North America get together to learn from each other, compare notes, and understand how we can assist each other on issues and opportunities. It is an opportunity for us and our neighboring chapters to show our stuff, eat great food, and have a drink with friends.

Good luck with your tag draws. Thank you everyone and I look forward to seeing you at one of these events or somewhere in the field.

Kevin Martin

President, Oregon FNAWS

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## 2021 HUNT RAFFLE

OREGON FNAWS 2021 HUNT RAFFLE



Mountain Goat & Grizzly Bear Raffle

**2021 MOUNTAIN GOAT/GRIZZLY BEAR/BLACK BEAR/WOLF HUNT**

10 DAY HUNT WITH ULTIMA THULE OUTFITTER FOR MOUNTAIN GOAT, GRIZZLY BEAR, BLACK BEAR, AND WOLF. HUNT DATES: SEPT 23<sup>RD</sup> – OCT 4<sup>TH</sup> 2021. HUNT CAN BE TRANSFERABLE TO NEXT OF KIN ONLY. CANNOT UPGRADE HUNT TO DALL SHEEP.

TICKETS \$50 EACH PURCHASE ONLINE: [OREGONFNAWS.ORG](http://OREGONFNAWS.ORG)

Drawing on May 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2021 at 8pm

For more information please visit our website [www.oregonfnaws.org](http://www.oregonfnaws.org)  
Or email [info@oregonfnaws.org](mailto:info@oregonfnaws.org)

We have officially sold all of the raffle tickets for the Mountain Goat, Grizzly Bear, Wolf and Black Bear hunt with Ultima Thule Outfitters in Alaska. We will be drawing the winner on May 1<sup>st</sup> live through our social media channels (Facebook and Instagram). Be sure to LIKE our Facebook Page and follow us on Instagram in order to see the drawing! Good luck to all of those who have entered.

We will be running another hunt raffle this year so stay tuned for that as we prepare for that upcoming raffle. Trust us, you won't want to miss this next one!

# 2021 ANNUAL BANQUET UPDATE

Our 2021 banquet was scheduled for May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 and was supposed to be held at Eagle Crest Resort in Redmond, Oregon. As of now the banquet is postponed.

We are working on a later date of July 17<sup>th</sup> at an alternate location in The Dalles, Oregon. We will receive news on gathering restrictions on May 4<sup>th</sup> and make the final call on having the July 17<sup>th</sup> banquet then.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR JULY 17<sup>th</sup> FOR NOW!**

We will be following up as soon as we have more information.

If you would like to keep updated on the banquet please subscribe to our email list through our website and we will be sending out emails to keep all members informed.



## Upcoming Events:

May 1<sup>nd</sup> 2021:

**2021 Raffle Draw & Goat Tag Auction**

Online/Facebook/Instagram

May 1<sup>nd</sup> 2021:

**Spring Board Meeting**

Virtual event

June 24-27 2021:

**Chapter & Affiliates/Tri-State Meeting**

Lewiston, ID

July 17<sup>th</sup> 2021:

**Bighorn Sheep & Mountain Goat Orientation**

The Dalles, OR

July 17<sup>th</sup> 2021:

**21<sup>st</sup> Annual Banquet**

The Dalles, OR

July 18<sup>th</sup> 2021

**Summer Board Meeting**

The Dalles, OR

January 8<sup>th</sup> 2022

**Tentative 2022 Winter Board Meeting**

**Projects**

**Juniper Cut: TBD**

**Guzzler Maintenance: TBD**

**Youth Outdoors Show: TBD**



# Update on Lookout Mtn. & Burnt River

Written By: Scott Peckham

Unfortunately, during the rough year that was 2020, two of our bighorn sheep herds became infected with *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (*Movi*). *Movi* is a bacteria species typically carried by domestic sheep and goats, and when domestic species and bighorn come in contact, it often triggers a pneumonia-related die-off in adult bighorn followed by many years of low lamb recruitment. Sadly, this has occurred in other nearby bighorn populations in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho in past years.

*Movi* was first detected in the Lookout Mountain herd during February of 2020, and in Burnt River the following October. Genetic analysis of *Movi* samples collected from Burnt River matched the strain circulating in Lookout. This suggested that either bighorns from the Lookout and Burnt River herds contacted each other, or they had independently contacted the same group of domestic sheep. Surveys by ODFW biologists found no surviving lambs in Lookout and just a few remaining in Burnt River. About 50-60% of the expected number of adults were observed in aerial surveys this past fall and winter, and symptomatic animals continue to be observed.



Despite this dreary picture I've painted, wildlife managers have kicked off a project aimed at speeding up the clearance of *Movi* and helping to recover both of these herds. Over the next several years, ODFW in collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, will be placing GPS collars on bighorns and testing each collared animal at least twice, with about one year between individual tests. This work is also being supported by grants from OR FNAWS, USFWS, and the Wild Sheep Foundation. Specifically, they're looking for animals, especially ewes, that may be chronically infected with *Movi* and continuing to infect new lambs each year. Any chronic carriers, those that test positive in at least 2 of 3 years, will be removed from the herd. This technique has proven successful in a bighorn herd in South Dakota and has shown promise in Hells Canyon herds as well. However, in Lookout Mountain, this will be the first trial on such a large population of wild sheep. It's an ambitious project, but these bighorn populations are so important to so many.

## 2021 GOVERNMENT & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

**Letters to Senator Merkley - January 19<sup>th</sup>, Senator Wyden - January 20<sup>th</sup>, and Newly Elected Congressman Bentz - January 20<sup>th</sup>** requesting an opportunity to meet and share items and issues of interest to us. The first item of business was sharing who we are and what we do. We shared the following list and will cover what we can in the time allotted, those that we do not get to we will share information electronically:

- The history of the private/public partnership in NE Oregon; the Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Initiative. There are several cutting-edge projects such as test and remove, working with small domestic flock owners, and disease issues at Lookout Mtn. Lostine and Burnt River herds that we believe would be of interest.
- Senate Bill 2828 – the Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition and desired adjustments/additions to the bill.
- SE Oregon Bighorn Sheep herds and disease concerns.
- Multi-State partnerships - work closely with WA and ID Chapters and State Wildlife and Fish Agencies on bighorn sheep issues.
- USFWS Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge - ongoing bighorn sheep management plan development.
- Risk of Contact Modeling, Training, and habitat mapping across Federal Lands.
- USDA Forest Service, National Forest Management plans – Species of Conservation Concern.
- USDA National Forest Management Grazing Directives update.
- USDA National Forest National Direction related to Bighorn Sheep.
- USDI BLM Resource Management plans.
- USDI BLM National Direction related to Bighorn Sheep.
- USDA National Forest Full Curl Coordinator position.
- Washington State University disease research and Endowed Chair.

**February 12, 2021 - Letter to ODFW - Bridge Creek Wildlife Management Area Plan Update.** OR FNAWS agreed that the Bridge Creek Wildlife Management Area (BCMA) Plan of April 2009 needs to be updated. We acknowledged and thanked ODFW for the successful reintroduction of California Bighorn Sheep to the BCWA. This action will provide the recreational visitor another iconic species to encounter.

We believe that ODFW needs to monitor the movement of these bighorns as there are small flocks of domestic sheep and goats nearby. We suggested ODFW review the work being done by the Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Initiative. We believe ODFW needs to be proactive, by making contacts with local domestic owners to share the potential disease concerns, then work with them to attempt to get their animals tested and disease free. Help them understand what to do if bighorn sheep encounters do occur. We assume the Bridge Creek bighorn herd will continue to grow and have the potential to interact with the Potamus herd, the risk of disease transmission from domestics in the Ukiah area will increase along with the bighorn population. The updated risk of contact model should be used to gauge relative risk posed by the existing domestic animals within the area. We encouraged ODFW to continue to engage with the USFS, CTUIR and private landowners on managing and modeling risk. A risk of contact modeling was completed prior to the re-introduction on Bridge Creek, and we encouraged ODFW to utilize the best existing and updated data for both the Potamus and Bridge Creek bighorn sheep herds to derive specific parameters for the habitat preference data prior to updated modeling efforts.

**February 17<sup>th</sup> - Meeting with Congressman Bentz's Staff** - OR FNAWS meet with Breanna Connolly and spent time getting to know her and sharing information about OR FNAWS. We discussed the issues around disease management and several of the Federal Agencies ongoing projects. Afterwards, we shared additional information related to our call, some were items we discussed, others were items we are working on that we believe the Congressman's office will likely be engaged in as well:

1. Scoping letter to USFWS Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge – Bighorn Sheep Management Plan and EIS.
2. Letter to the US Forest Service regarding the Full Curl Coordinator position and the need to maintain.
3. Letter from the WSF on the SE Oregon BLM Resource Management Plan revision and Environmental Impact analysis.
4. OR FNAWS's Grant-In-Aid program
5. An article on the Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Initiative
6. BLM's Manual Direction MS 1730 "Management of Domestic Sheep and Goats to sustain Wild Sheep". We indicated we would like to see similar direction from all the Federal Land Management Agencies.
7. An article on the Bighorn Sheep disease work going on as part of the Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Initiative.
8. Comments from the Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition to Oregon Senators Wyden and Merkley on Senate Bill 2828 – "Malheur Community Empowerment Act for the Owyhee" – as requested.
9. Article on bighorn sheep disease issues in SE Oregon.

### **March 3, 2021 - Letter to ODFW -Lower Deschutes Wildlife Management Area Plan Update.**

OR FNAWS agreed that the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Management Area (LDWA) Plan of April 2009 needs to be updated. The management of the Woosley Tract, added in 2017, is important to upland species, including California bighorn sheep, and needed to be included in the plan.

We acknowledged ODFW for the successful management of California Bighorn Sheep in the LDWA. This has provided a high likelihood of encountering this iconic species in the wild. The LDWA has been an area in which OR FNAWS has made specific investments in the management of the California bighorn sheep populations, both in direct trapping and transplanting, disease management, as well as in habitat improvement.

OR FNAWS supports the ongoing efforts to protect, enhance and manage riparian and upland habitats to benefit wildlife. The diverse habitats provide cover and forage for a wide variety of species including mule deer and California bighorn sheep.

The upland habitats which comprise the majority of the LDWA have suffered from impacts associated with past grazing from domestic livestock, clearing for agriculture, and more recently, impacts due to the altered fire regimes in the region. Frequent, repeated high intensity fires have increased the threat and invasion of annual grasses and reduced native shrubs and riparian vegetation. Due to these actions many of the plant communities on the LDWA have been altered from their natural state. Since the last planning effort there have been multiple wildfires, and a continued upland conversion to grassland or non-natives.

Non-native invasive plants continue to occur across the landscape and there is an active partnership to control many of them. The current invasive plant control work is coordinated through the Lower Deschutes Cooperative Weed Management Area, a collaborative effort between ODFW, Sherman County, Wasco County, BLM, OPRD, and adjoining private landowners. This collaboration has allowed work to occur regardless of ownership, focusing invasive control efforts to areas with the greatest potential for restoration. OR FNAWS initiated efforts to control invasive plants in the lower canyon nearly 15 years ago through volunteers, grants through the Oregon State Weed Board and chapter funding. This is important work for the continued vegetative health of the LDWA, the surrounding landscapes and the species that live there. Because the impact and spread of non-native invasive plants is exacerbated by motorized vehicles, OR FNAWS recommended that the current restrictions on non-motorized travel be retained in the plan update.



Wildlife diseases have the potential to impact species on the area. *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (Movi) is a disease of particular concern for California bighorn sheep. ODFW staff monitoring in the area, and sampling of potentially infected individuals should continue as opportunity and need arises. Actively monitoring the movement of these bighorns is essential because the interspersed of private and public lands around the LDWA could potentially expose them to domestic sheep and goats. The potential use of pack goats for recreational use is of concern and we believe they should be prohibited in the area. We encouraged ODFW to continue to engage with the BLM and private landowners on managing and modeling risk. The updated risk of contact model should be used to gauge relative risk posed by any existing domestic animals within the area, as well as the risk of contact with Mouflon sheep known to occur in the vicinity of Spray, OR. We encouraged ODFW to utilize the best existing and updated data to derive specific parameters for the habitat preference data prior to modeling efforts.

OR FNAWS understands the policy of ODFW to only acquire land or interests in lands from willing sellers. Because LDWA is comprised of multiple past acquisitions, the boundaries are somewhat irregular in shape, which can increase confusion and the potential for trespass on neighboring private lands, as well as make it difficult to access. We believe ODFW should be monitoring the potential for additional acquisitions and or adjustments to boundary lines. Additional potential California bighorn sheep habitat and/or additional public access opportunities should be considered.

**Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition - January 8<sup>th</sup> - Meeting with Senator Wyden.** OR FNAWS along with multiple members of the Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition had a call with Senator Ron Wyden to discuss Senate Bill 2828. Senator Wyden was interested in our support, what we were thinking and what our organizations were hearing. He also discussed the likelihood of a companion bill in the House. The Senator indicated that he expected the bill would be on the Senate floor in the near future.

**January 10<sup>th</sup> - meeting with Congressman Bentz's Office.** OR FNAWS with multiple members of the Owyhee Sportsmen Coalition meet with Congressman Bentz's Staff to discuss Senate Bill 2828, Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act. At this time the Congressman was not ready to bring forth a companion bill to SB 2828 in the House but has been reviewing the existing senate bill and collaborative documentation.

**Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Domestic Sheep Grazing EIS - January 10<sup>th</sup>** - OR FNAWS participated in a conference call with the Wild Sheep Foundation to discuss the ongoing situation on the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF Domestic Sheep Grazing EIS, the ongoing litigation and the potential for other options.

**Stop Poaching Stakeholders** - Due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, there has been a reduction related to the activities of ODFW and the Stakeholders. During this time the budget has been uncertain, and meetings have been sporadic. There has only been a few shared emails and phone calls. I do expect activity of this stakeholder group to increase once these uncertainties work out.

**March 11<sup>th</sup> - Letter to Representative Peter DiFazio - Support for Wildlife Crossing Pilot project** - multiple representatives of wildlife organizations sent a letter stating continued support for the Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program included in the Senate version of the American Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA). As the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee continues its work to pass a highway bill, we urged them to include the following components for any future bill:

- Create a need based, competitive wildlife crossing pilot program to provide competitive grants to states, tribes, local governments for wildlife infrastructure projects that reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity.
- Increase the dedicated funding for wildlife crossing and connectivity projects to \$500 million.
- Update language in existing funding streams, including the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects, to ensure wildlife crossing and coastal connectivity projects are recognized as eligible for funding.

**March 29<sup>th</sup> - Meeting with Amira Streeter and Jasen Miner of Governor Brown's Office** - This was our first meeting with the Governor's Office in quite a while and it went very well. Amira's position is Natural Resource Policy Advisor and Jasen's is Natural Resource Policy Director. We started off sharing who OR FNAWS is, what we do and how we interact with State, Federal agencies and elected officials. We followed with a discussion on the issue of disease (sharing the ongoing issues in Lookout Mtn., Burnt River, Owyhee country, and some Hells Canyon disease history). We shared how we have assisted during these disease outbreaks and some of the ongoing actions that are being attempted. We had a quick conversation related to the Western Governors Association, their correspondence, and the relationship with Congressional direction, BLM Directives and the updates proposed to Forest Service Directives. We discussed the desire to continue communications, sharing of pertinent information and future meetings. We will share the 2021 Letter from the Western Governors Association with Jasen and Amira as requested.

## Grant-In-Aid

Written By: Don South

The Oregon FNAWS Grant-in-Aid committee received and reviewed three applications requesting funding in 2020. The committee recommended that all three be approved, and the board agreed. All of these projects were partially funded by Oregon FNAWS in conjunction with other organizations and/or agencies, which helps to stretch our dollars.

**Project #20-134:** \$15,000 went to continue to support the Tri State (Oregon, Washington, and Idaho) domestic sheep outreach program. These funds were used to do disease testing on domestic sheep and goat flocks for *Mycoplasma Ovipneumoniae* (MOVI). Infected animals were removed from the flocks and replaced with disease free animals, eliminating risk of contact with wild sheep.

**Project 20-135:** \$15,000 was used to purchase radio collars to be used to monitor the Lookout Mountain Bighorn disease outbreak that occurred in 2020. This will allow ODF&W staff to recapture sheep for subsequent testing, in hopes of finding intermediate shedders for removal. This would also allow for speedy retrievals of mortalities in order to successfully recapture and monitor individuals for MOVI throughout the herd range.

**Project #20-136:** \$2,500 was applied to the purchase of a snowmobile trailer to be used in the monitoring of the Lostine sheep corral. The trailer will also be used for conducting various captures and surveys throughout the Enterprise District.

Funding by Oregon FNWS for these projects totals \$32,500. We continue to fulfill our goal of putting and keeping Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goats on the mountain.



Be sure to Like our Facebook Page and Follow us on Instagram to keep up with the latest events and news from Oregon FNAWS

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Instagram: @OregonFNAWS



# Once In A Lifetime Billy by Ben Titus

For many of us in Oregon, the controlled hunt draw date is one that can define the rest of our year. I had expected to draw a couple tags I had points for, but I never thought I would see SUCCESSFUL accompanying my mountain goat application! Immediately the research and planning began. There were many folks that helped me on this hunt throughout the preseason and season, and I thank all of you.

With a once-in-a-lifetime tag, I wanted something to emphasize the once-in-a-lifetime experience. I decided to use my late grandmother's Winchester Model 94 .30-30 lever-action, a family heirloom that hadn't seen much love in recent years. The .30-30 also fit the bill of being the "light-weight mountain rifle" everyone is always chasing. Additionally, I wanted to share this hunt with good friends and family as it would be an experience few ever get to be a part of.

Unfortunately, as a wildland firefighter, summer of 2020 did not allow for any time to scout for this hunt with one of the largest fire seasons we've ever seen. Luckily, the tag I had drawn was for the entire month of October. I worked my last shift on October 7th, quickly filled a deer tag, and headed to the mountains with seven days to hunt. The plan was to spend a few days looking over as many goats as I could in order to get a feel on how to determine billies vs nannies, and then decipher what class of billy I was looking at. My cousin Gus, my dad, and good friends Beau and Brian were all going to join throughout the week.

My cousin and dad joined me on the second and fourth days on the mountain. We used both a base camp and spike camps as we scoured the peaks and cliffs. My best estimate is that we looked over nearly 150 different mountain goats during those four days and they certainly proved exceptionally difficult to judge. In order to really evaluate these animals, you need to close the distance to within a few hundred yards and you'll still need to use a quality spotting scope. Most of the goats were in areas that required a significant physical and time commitment in order to close the distance. Many pictures were sent to friends for their input on size and age. We were told to focus on the body and head size, don't worry about the horns because they tend to come with age and size. As much as we tried to scrutinize each billy into a monster, we just weren't able to find one that was the "next level".



On the afternoon of day 4, we were 7 miles in when we finally found the type of goat we thought checked all the boxes. There was a problem though- we were 2.5 miles away across a valley and nothing but vertical cliff below us on either side. The goat was on a timber covered bench, and there were at least 6 other Billies living there as well. The logistics would be almost too much to handle- none of us were very confident that we could recognize that goat again tomorrow, we couldn't shuttle all of us into the trailhead we needed to get to, the terrain did not lend itself to spotting and picking out the right Billy once we were over there, the hike would be too demanding for my dad, and more. It was the first Billy that I really thought was in that next class and the odds did not appear to be in our favor. With Beau and Brian coming that evening, we decided we would meet back at base camp and come up with a plan.

## Once In A Lifetime Billy Continued

As it tends to happen, another wrench got thrown into our plan on our way out- although this was a quality problem to have. Right before dark we spotted a group of four billies below the trail. There was one billy in the group that stood out from the others with a bigger body and horns that seemed to carry the mass better than anything we had seen before. Compared to the other goats, he was definitely a step above. However, he really didn't seem to have the old horse-head we had been told about. We ran out of light. Back at camp we went back and forth on the goat in the tough spot and this new billy. It was a perfect situation to misjudge an animal because we knew the other billies were smaller and we had been repeatedly warned to not judge just based off of horn size. On the other hand, it was the best billy we had seen up close, he was in a huntable location, and everyone could be there to watch the stalk. We decided to take another look.

Morning of day 5, we found him in the same spot. We watched the billy feed below us about 400 yards away for an hour. During that time, I was just taking it all in. The weather was wonderful, the billy had the longest, stark-white fur I'd ever seen, everyone was there cutting up and having a good time, and I couldn't think of a more perfect opportunity. The billy was ultimately everything I had really wanted, my goal was to take the best billy I could, and I knew that even our smallest guesses on size would still make me happy. And so the stalk began.

I gave Beau my camera to try to film the kill shot, and we left the other three up on the ridge to watch. We had the billy bedded in a small stand of fir trees and had a good landmark. I racked the lever on the Model 94 and softly let down the hammer. Beau and I shimmed our way down a chute and slipped along the backside of the small finger the goat was on. The other goats we had seen with him had moved off and we figured we had a good route to stay undetected. We hit 100 yards from the landmark, but just couldn't lay eyes on the goat. We moved in even further, still nothing. Backing off, we came over more directly above where we thought the billy still was. By now we were only 60 yards from the tree and unbelievably still couldn't pick out a tuft of white. The wind was good so we sat and waited. About 20 minutes went by before I finally saw white.

"Beau! The goat is up!"

"\$%^# there's two of them! Where'd that second goat come from??"

Suddenly, the stress level spiked. As hard as these animals are to judge, I did not want to have the option of shooting the wrong goat! Their white bodies flashed through the trees as they circled each other and postured. There was no way to slip a bullet in there and be sure of my target. A goat began to come into an opening through some limbs, I immediately had my binos on him and just wasn't sure he was the one. Then, the bigger billy circled behind him in the same opening and stepped up above on a rock perch. Recognizing this may be my only opportunity, the binos fell as I shouldered the old Winchester. The hammer clicked back and I lined the bead up against the white body; I mustered up every ounce of self-control I had as I tried not to rip the trigger...

The hammer dropped to the firing pin and the slug spiraled into the shoulder of my billy. He dropped on the spot, rolling off of the rock outcropping and thankfully stopped piling into a tree below. It was an unreal moment. Everyone up top was able to watch it all go down and we could hear them cheering up above. We all walked down to him together and admired a hunt none of us had experienced before. The billy was 6.5 years old with an exceptionally long, full coat of hair and he sported a heavy set of horns that pushed him just over the 50" All-Time B&C mark. More importantly, he represents everything I love about hunting- new country, unique challenges, intense moments, good friends, and lifelong memories.



# Feral Hogs: Hidden Threat to Sheep and Sheep Hunters

By Chester Moore

As a light north wind blew from the Oregon side of the Klamath Mountains just across the border into California, a familiar aroma filled my nostrils. I stopped in my tracks as it was the unmistakable smell of a feral hog. Living in Texas, I have hunted hogs my whole life and wasn't planning on encountering one in the Pacific Northwest. But just as I decided to press on, a black sow walked out from behind a rock outcropping.

With the wind in my favor, she never smelled me, and since only 30 yards separated us, I stayed still. The only weakness hogs have is relatively poor eyesight, so motionless objects are not threatening.

Following closely behind mom were six striped babies, so once they made their way into a thicket, I made a long trek around the path. Hell hath no fury like a feral sow with young.

When discussing issues impacting bighorn sheep in the United States, three main topics dominate the conversation.

1. Domestic Sheep Disease Transference
2. Predation
3. Habitat Loss/Degradation

And those should be the three primary concerns hogs are a growing threat in the Western United States, including in Oregon. Initially brought over by Spanish explorers in the 1500s, feral hogs have taken a foothold in 31 states, and there is no question they will eventually move into all of the Lower 48. According to officials with the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, there are between 3,000 and 5,000 hogs in the Beaver State. That's small compared to the 3 and 5 million population in my native Texas, but sheep conservationists should not overlook hogs.

According to an article published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), feral hogs are a significant threat to wildlife through water pollution. "Water polluted from feral swine wallowing can be contaminated with parasites and bacteria such as giardia, salmonella, and pathogenic *E. coli* that could be transmitted to humans and other animals. This can happen when feral swine use an agricultural water source, such as an irrigation pond..."

They noted since hogs lack sweat glands, wallowing in mud and Water is an instinctual behavior necessary for them to maintain a healthy body temperature. "Unfortunately, this behavior has cascading impacts, not only to water quality in individual streams, ponds, and wetlands but to entire watersheds and ecosystems."

In particular, in drought years, hogs will impact ponds, stock tanks, streams, and guzzlers. These, of course, are crucial to bighorns and other wildlife.

Feral hogs can also carry pseudorabies. According to USDA officials, pseudorabies is a disease of swine that can also affect cattle, dogs, cats, sheep, and goats. "Pseudorabies virus (PRV) is a contagious herpes virus that causes reproductive problems (abortion, stillbirths), respiratory problems, and occasional deaths in breeding and finishing hogs. Infected newborn pigs may exhibit central nervous system clinical signs." It is typically spread through direct contact, but there are other ways transmission can occur.



## Feral Hogs: Hidden Threat to Sheep and Sheep Hunters

"If present on inanimate objects, such as boots, clothing, feed, trucks, and equipment, the virus can also spread from herd to herd and farm to farm." Could hogs transfer PRV to domestic sheep that in turn transfer to bighorns? Maybe. And that's a frightening prospect for animals already facing great challenges. Another potential threat from hogs is predation. According to officials with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, "wild hogs may prey on fawns, young lambs, and kid goats."

There is no question hogs could prey on bighorn lambs. I have found no concrete evidence of hog/wild sheep predation, but it remains a possibility. Hogs are also a potential threat to sheep hunters.

The element of surprise and hogs is a bad combination. Like any, these animals are typically not out to get people, but they absolutely will attack. This writer's top concern is hunters unprepared for hogs in the backcountry coming across lone, mature boars that love solitude and don't like surprise visitors.

According to an exhaustive study, these are the man-killers. A study by Dr. Jack Mayer documents 412 wild hog attacks worldwide, impacting 665 people. During this time, there were four fatal hog attacks in the United States. In his study, hogs that attack are described as solitary (82 percent), large (87 percent), and male (81 percent), and most attacks occurred when there was no hunting involved. In other words, they were unprovoked.

A large boar charged my cousin Frank Moore and me while walking into a cedar thicket in Edwards County, TX, to scout deer in the mid-1990s. Thankfully we were able to grab tree limbs and pull ourselves from danger, but there was no question this hog meant to hurt us as it came right for us as soon as we spooked it just a few yard away from us.

And while boars are the most likely to kill people, according to Mayer's study, sows are, in my opinion, the most likely to attack. They are highly defensive of their piglets, and although most don't have long tusks, they will bite with sharp teeth and gouge with their noses.

Hunters should be aware of the possibility of hog encounters in Oregon and California and in a growing number of western states. Hogs are not out to get people, but if cornered, they can and will attack. My hog encounter near the Oregon-California border was nearly 20 years ago, and officials in Oregon have put severe pressure on hogs and deemed them an invasive exotic. That's good management.

Will hogs ever be a major threat to bighorns? If populations stay near current levels, the answer is no. But if they grow as they have in the eastern United States, it's very much possible. Hogs are always an x-factor in wildlife management, and with all of the other threats wild sheep face, we need to keep hogs in mind and, more importantly, in our crosshairs.

(Chester Moore is an award-winning wildlife journalist, hunter and conservationist from Orange, TX. You can follow his work at [www.highercalling.net](http://www.highercalling.net).)



# Members & Membership Renewal

Navigating through many trying times we want to take a moment to thank all of our current annual and life members. Without your support we would not be able to assist and advocate for wild sheep in the state of Oregon. As most of you may know we have changed the way we accept new memberships and renew annual members. If you are an annual member and you have not renewed through our website we would urge you to go through the renewal process there. We are working away from paper renewals and increasing our active members through the website. Online renewals ensures we have up to date information for all members and assists in the ability to contact members to inform them on upcoming events, newsletters, and our annual banquet.

## Board Members and Volunteers

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Membership: Marcus Gores

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### Contact:

[Info@OregonFNAWS.org](mailto:Info@OregonFNAWS.org)

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

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