THE
SHEEPHERDER

The News Bulletin of the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep

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Alhambra, California 91801
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JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1972

BAKERSFIELD MEETING SET FOR MARCH 11TH

FREDDIES TOWN HOUSE (HILL HOUSE)

700 Truston Avenue

Bakersfield, California

Room: Mardi Gras East

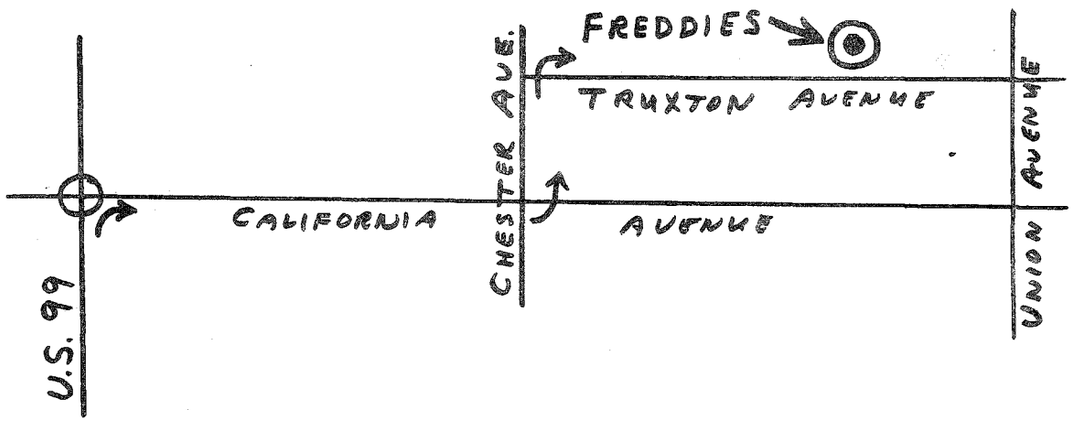
Attitude Adjustment Hour: 7:00 P.M.

Dinner: 8:00 P.M.

Marvin Wood has another fine Bakersfield meeting on tap. Last year this was an excellent, well attended meeting and Marvin assures us the same great $5.50 steak dinner.

Featured speaker will be Dave Dunaway, Wildlife Biologist, Inyo National Forest. Dave is keenly interested in the Bighorn and is quite knowledgeable in regard to the Sierra Nevada herds. He will bring us up to date as to their status and problems as he makes his slide presentation. Earl Lauppe will be there again this year to discuss the Water for Wildlife Program.

To assist Marvin in finalizing plans, will you send him the enclosed card as soon as possible if you can attend?



CADY MOUNTAIN PROJECT

Volunteers are needed for the Cady Mountain Water Improvement Project scheduled for the weekend of February 19th and 20th. You can share your weekend and help out and still have a day at home since Monday the 21st is a national holiday. This project will be under the supervision of John Massie, Region 5 Habitat Improvement Crew Leader and requires at least 20 volunteers.

The project will consist of building a dam to catch run off which will be held in a 1,200 gallon tank. The water will be piped from the catchment to the tank and from there to drinkers. It is hoped that manpower will be sufficient to prepare a site for a second tank for later installation when usage requires.

Complete details, including directions, are available from the Society office. If you can assist, call the Society as soon as possible so that final plans can be made. Try to plan to arrive at the site Friday evening, February 18th if you can possibly do so. Also, a Boy Scout Troop or your older children would be a big help in gathering rocks for the dam and to camouflage and bullet proof the tank.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Society's Annual Meeting was held January 31st at the home of director, Bob Hein. At that meeting Marvin Wood was presented his certificate making him our first Life Member.

Dr. Lutz expressed the need for someone to direct the Society's involvement in the Water for Wildlife Program and for someone to recruit people and raise money. Bill Shirley

agreed to take on the latter; however, someone is still needed to coordinate the water improvement projects. Dr. Lutz, also, stressed the importance of waterhole counts. This is the only source of statistical information, and you can schedule your project at a time that is convenient for you.

LIFE AND CENTURY MEMBERSHIPS

At our 1971 Annual Meeting two new membership categories were adopted. In addition to Annual Membership, Life and Century Memberships are now available. One can become a Life Member by paying onetime dues of $200. Transferable Century Membership is $500.

During this past year the Alice O'Neill Foundation became the Society's first Century Member and Marvin Wood our first Life Member. Other Life Members are Loren Lutz, Thomas Clotfelter, and the Inland Council Of Conservation Clubs. The dedication and contribution of these groups and individuals is invaluable. We certainly hope others join their ranks during 1972. For further information concerning Life and Century Memberships, contact the Society's office.

BILL PHIFER "RETIRES" AS EDITOR

As you noted in the November-December 1971 issue of "The Sheepherder, Bill Phifer resigned as editor. Bill has made an invaluable contribution to the Society these past years as editor, not to mention his other activities. We have looked forward to each issue of "The Sheepherder and appreciated Bill's keeping us up to date as to activities and information. We will certainly miss Bill as editor, but he assures us that we can look forward to his continued involvement in other aspects of the Society.

SANTA ROSA MOUNTAIN LAND ACQUISITION PROJECT PROPOSED

The Santa Rosa Mountains southwest of Palm Springs has one of the best populations of bighorn sheep in California. Land speculation and residential expansion is threatening much of this habitat.

Martinez Canyon, southeast of San Bernardino National Forest and north of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, holds more bighorn than any other canyon in the Santa Rosas. Its vital summer range with many springs and seeps is threatened since the canyon offers the best potential public access route to the southern portion of the mountain range. The checkerboard pattern of land ownership compounds the problem. Every other section in the Martinez Canyon area is BLM land and the alternate parcels are privately owned.

The Society has initiated a project to purchase 3,500 acres in the Martinez Canyon area. This would be a far reaching investment since BLM has placed a high priority on better bighorn habitat and this acquisition would complement future consolidation of public lands through land exchange. Representatives of the Society are currently negotiating with the owners of the sections indicated be the DFG as top priority. They are also coordinating efforts with The Nature Conservency and other interested conservation groups. All are hopeful that negotiations with the land owners will be fruitful so that this proposed project can become a promising opportunity. If successful, we will have a unique opportunity to join with others in contributing time and money necessary to preserve this vital bighorn habitat on a long term basis.

FOREST SERVICE DELAYS TRAIL PEAK SKI PLANS

Plans for a multi-million dollar ski area and recreation development at Trail Peak, in the Sierra Nevada 230 miles north of Los Angeles, have been halted pending reevaluation by the U. S. Forest Service. Everett Towle, supervisor of Inyo National Forest, has announced that the new look at potentials will now include an analysis of land use alternatives.

The development proposed by the Sierra-Inyo Recreation Corp. (SIRC) would have given southern Californians a ski area with reliable snow four months of the year. Originally scheduled to open this year, the ski resort would have been a hundred miles nearer to Los Angeles than Mammoth, closest major ski resort on the High Sierrs's east slope.

The project was stymied last year when The Society For The Conservation Of Bighorn Sheep initiated opposition by various conservation groups, in addition to itself, to the projet and a land exchange between the USFS and the Department of Water and Power which would have made development possible. The DWP owns 1,800 acres in the Trail Peak-Cottonwood Creek area. Also, the project ran into financial difficulty when TI Properties, a subsidiary of TI Corp., the major financial backer of SIRC, withdrew from the project. All this led to the USFS terminating the SIRC special use permit after previously granting two extensions.

The project was originally hailed as offering the best possible use plus protection of the environment. However, now public meeting will be held, one in Lone Pine and another in the Los Angeles area, to determine what the public really wants. According to a recent article

in the Los Angeles Times, Ron McCormick, recreation staff officer for Inyo National Forest, said that they'd "like to see a good turnout by the skiing fraternity as well as the wilderness advocates who always seem to come".

Current estimates indicate that only 225 Bighorn remain in the Sierras. Their future is not assured. The fact that the project is delayed, public meetings will now be held, and that "wilderness advocates...always seem to come" is assuring. However, we must now be certain the Bighorn receive their due consideration at the public meetings since the USFS indicates that a lot of emphasis will be placed on public opinion even though the final decision is theirs.

WES' WEEP NOW WES' POOL

Bill Weaver was out in the Turtle Mountains last summer with his dad, Dick Weaver. They were resting in the shade and talking about what could be done to improve a little seep they had hiked to.

Bill was working on his Eagle Scout rank and decided that improving the seep would make a good scout project. He mustered up the support of his troop and on December 27th, they carried in about 400 pounds of cement and constructed a real nice drinker...so Wes' Weep is now Wes' Pool and appropriately inscribed with their troop's number as shown in the picture to the right with Bill passing final inspection.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Your officers and directors met December 14th at the offices of Bob Hein to consider the activities of the Society. Some of the past and future activities receiving discussion included water hole counts and improvement projects, increasing membership, new legislation needed, future meetings, and proposed projects requiring investigation and continued discussion.

BURROS OR BIGHORNS?

The following is an editorial by Bill Sizer, Chief of the Information-Education Division, Arizona Game and Fish Department, from the September-October 1971 issue of Wildlife Views:

Recently in this country there has been a great deal of sentiment advanced for the welfare of the wild horses and wild burros which roam on various ranges throughout the West. This sentiment has been evidenced in a number of bills introduced in the U. S. Congress, to extend total protection over wild horses and burros wherever they happen to roam.

It's interesting to note that support for this legislation is not coming from the various state game and fish departments, which have the responsibility of protecting the wildlife of the West. In fact, the Western Association of State Game and Fish Commissioners has voted to oppose such legislation.

The reasons for this stem from the fact that wild horses and wild burros are serious competitors with native wildlife populations on ranges where they occur. In Arizona, for example, as far back as 12 years ago, the Game and Fish Department published an article entitled "Burros or Bighorns?" and put the proposition to the public to make up its collective mind whether it preferred the "picturesque" burros or the native bighorn sheep.

One of the notions being promoted in support of the proposed legislation is that wild horses and burros are 'endangered'. This is ridiculous! For one thing, the native stock from which they came exists in plentiful supply. They are, after all, simply domestic animals gone wild, and if the day should ever come when these animals are, indeed, in danger of extinction, it would be a relatively simple matter to replenish their numbers from domestic sources.

The point of view taken by game and fish agencies is that, first, feral horses and burros are not wildlife. More important, though, is the consideration that they are serious competitors with native wildlife species. The deer, the antelope, the elk, and the bighorn sheep were placed here first, and wildlife administrators are deeply concerned over the fact that encroachments by these feral animals have, in some cases, seriously depleted the carrying capacity of rangelands for the native wildlife.

As one spokesman put it: "It seems incongruous that domestic animals introduced through the carelessness of man should endanger the populations of wild species placed here by an all-knowing Creator."

Equally incongruous is the notion that a $2000 fine should be imposed against someone who "poaches" a wild horse or burro, while the maximum penalty for poaching a bighorn sheep, an elk or any other big game species in Arizona is a mere $300."

Editor's Note: After reading this editorial it is apparent that Congress did not have all wildlife in proper perspective when it passed wild horse legislation and included burro protection. Inclusion of burro protection can only be attributed to misinformation and uninformed emotional concern. We can only hope that the facts concerning burros will continue to be presented and we must each do our part. The editorial reprinted above is a good summary to share with others. If enough people become acquainted with all the facts surely sufficient support can be generated for a measure that will limit the burro's destructive competition with bighorn shepp and other native wildlife.

DESERT NATIONAL WILDLIFE RANGE

"A rugged desert wilderness area embracing 1.5 million acres of souther Nevada's scenic terrain is home for the largest concentration of desert bighorn sheep in the United States. This vast and unique area is know as the Desert National Wildlife Range and is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior. The Wildlife Range, established in 1936, is the largest federal refuge in the contiguous 48 states; yet its southern boundry is only one-half mile from the Las Vegas city limits. The purpose of the Wildlife Range as stated in the establishing authority is "for protection, enhancement and maintenance of wildlife resources, including bighorn sheep."

Elevation of the area ranges from about 2,500 feet to nearly 10,000 feet above sea level---hence a great variety of plant and animal life can be found. Five well defined life zones characterized by dominant plant species are creosote bush-salt bush, yucca-JOSHUA tree, pinyon pine-juniper, Ponderosa pine-white fir, and bristlecone pine.

In addition to an estimated 800 desert bighorns, an interesting variety of other wildlife may be observed by the inquisitive visitor with a sharp eye. Mule deer, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, a sidewinder and speckled rattlesnakes, desert tortoises, antelope ground squirrels, a host of lizards, and 245 species of birds are only some of the animals that may be seen.

Since the advent of the Wildlife Range and the protection it has afforded, sheep numbers have increased from an estimated 300 to a present population of about 800.

The Wildlife Range is currently being valuated for inclusion in the National Wilderness System. This study is being conducted in accordance with provisions of the Wilderness Act (Public Law 88-577), which states that any roadless or undeveloped area of 5,000 or more contiguous acres, where earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man and where the land retains its primeval character and influence, will be protected and managed so to preserve its natural conditions. If considered to be suitable for wilderness status, all areas of the refuge so designated will be given additional protection under authority of the act.

Conflict between man's activities and desert bighorns in their native wilderness habitat has contributed to the decline of sheep numbers. Natural primitive conditions must be maintained to stabilize and expand the remaining herds. Inclusion of the Wildlife Range in the Wilderness System would serve this need."

(Nevada Outdoors and Wildlife Review, Fall 1971)

According to Roger D. Johnson, Refuge Manager, Desert National Wildlife Range, the proposal for wilderness designation of the Wildlife Range was presented at a public hearing in Las Vegas, Nevada on October 23, 1971. A summary of the testimonies received before the end of the 30 day waiting period is as follows:

> 53 oral and written statements were received at the hearing. In addition 535 written testimonies were submitted. 10 duplicates were deleted. Statements were received from people in 33 states.
>
> 41 organizations supported the proposal. 6 organizations opposed the proposal including mining interests and the California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs.
>
> If 222 additional signatures on joint letters and petitions are counted, the total is: 783 for, 11 against, and 6 uncommitted.

The Desert Wilderness Proposal is currently being reviewed at the Secretarial level prior to referral to the Office of Management and Budget. Congressional action on the proposal is anticipated early this year.

PROPOSED SHEEP MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS AREA

An area of some 60,000 acres that encompasses the principal drainages of Mt. San Antonio (Mt. Baldy) in the San Gabriel Mountains is being proposed for inclusion in the National Wilderness System. This natural area within an hour's drive of congested urbanization would be protected and managed to enable its survival as a wilderness if included in the System. The dominant peaks within the proposed Sheep Mountain Wilderness Area are Mt. San Antonio, Dawson Peak, Pine Mountain, Mt. Baden-Powell, and Iron Mountain (Sheep Mountain).

This is rugged, precipitous country. It contains unique alpine vegetation, ancient limber pines, and remnat bands of Bighorn Sheep. Some of the canyons, notably the Fish Fork of the San Gabriel River, are rugged and almost inaccessible, and support the best wild fishery in southern California. There are beautiful waterfalls and deep pools which provide habitat for substantial numbers of rainbow trout. The limber pines are of great antiquity.

The unique resourse that must be protected is the Bighorn Sheep. Approximately 400 of them are making a determined stand on the higher slopes of the mountains within the boundries of the proposed Sheep Mountain Wilderness. Our assistance or lack thereof will determine if it is a last stand. They need wilderness for their survival. Such areas must be maintained for them or they will join other unfortunates on the list of endangered or extinct animals.

The Mt. Baldy area is a precious resource and offers the public an opportunity for hiking, fishing, photography, nature study, and the enjoyment of scenic grandeur. Certain commercial interests have their eyes on portions of the area. It is the last significant portion of unprotected wilderness in the mountains in close proximity to Los Angeles and certainly deserves preservation. Many environmental organizations, both local and national, are working for the Sheep Mountain Wilderness. Will you join their ranks by contacting your Senators and Congressmen as well as enlisting the support of others?

DICK WEAVER

We will certainly miss Dick Weaver as he moves north to undertake a mountain lion survey. His sincere dedication to bighorn sheep preservation and his knowledge of the Desert Bighorn is of the highest order. It was fortunate that state bighorn sheep investigation was assigned to him. The following January 28,1972 Los Angeles Times article is an excellent summary of Dick and his recent work:

BIGHORN SURVEY

Sheep at Crossroads, Says State Expert

BY LUPI SALDANA
Times Staff Writer

"The bighorn sheep," said Dick Weaver, "are at the crossroads. They aren't endangered and they aren't rare. But what happens to them in the next few years will determine if they survive."

For more than half of his 46 years, Weaver has, more or less, been the State Department of Fish and Game's caretaker of the bighorns that range through the vast Southern California desert.

His desert career ended, at least temporarily, Thursday when he moved from Riverside to Northern California to tackle a new assignment—surveying the mountain lion population.

A short (5-7), muscular (190 pounds), gentle man with a neatly trimmed full beard, Weaver has just completed the most extensive study ever made of the desert bighorns in California. It took 3 years and 4 months.

Fascinated by Sheep

Weaver became fascinated by the bighorns after hearing mystery-tinged stories about them when he went to work for the DFG in 1948.

"The stories made it sound like the sheep were a myth. When I finally saw a bighorn, I was impressed by what a magnificent animal it was," recalled Weaver.

"So it became a challenge to do something for them—and I feel I've accomplished something along that line."

The biggest impact on the desert and its wildlife is being made by man and drought, says Weaver.

Uncontrolled use of motorcycles and other recreational vehicles are creating serious erosion problems, because they're "damaging the thin desert soil."

This encroachment into areas once inaccessible to motorized vehicles is pushing the animals deeper and deeper into the barren mountains.

Drought, which has existed since Weaver arrived, has had a detrimental effect on vegetation. This has resulted in population declines in some bands of sheep and a complete loss in others.

Burros a Problem

Another problem for the bighorn is the wild burro, an aggressive animal which has extended its range over most of the desert. The burros have taken over water and feed once used by the sheep.

Weaver, who wore out three pairs of boots making the bighorn study, will write a final report before tackling the lion survey.

He offered these recommendations for saving the sheep.

—A water development program.

—Acquisition of land with good sheep habitat.

—Control of the burro population.

—Transplanting sheep into areas with good habitat.

CALIFORNIA BIGHORN SHEEP SURVEY

Dick Weaver has given us the following status report concerning California Bighorn population estimates:

"We have now completed feild investigations in all of the study areas except the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. Our present refined estimate is approximately 3500 bighorn in the state. This figure is very close to the rough approximate that the state has been using since about

1955. However, some areas were found to be better than expected and other large mountain ranges had a much lower population than expected. Some populations are definitely down from the recent past. Summerized below are population estimates for each study area.

Report Area	Estimate	Previous Estimate	Comment
I San Diego Co.	391	130	Thrifty
II Eastern Imperial Co.	162	100	Holding
III Southern Riverside Co.	620	445	Thrifty
IV Joshua Tree	100	200	Declining
V Northeastern Riverside Co.	15	24	Declining
VI Southwestern San Bernardino Co.	15	55	Declining
VII Southeastern San Bernardino Co.	175	90	Holding
VIII Northeastern San Bernardino Co.	310	200	Declining
IX Northwestern San Bernardino and Southern Inyo Co.	54	97	Declining
X Clark/Kingston Mountains	80	55	Holding
XI Death Valley	500	915	Declining
XII Northern Inyo and Southern Mono Co's.	165	199	Declining
XIII San Gabriel	625	585	Thrifty
XIV Sierra	250	390	Declining
Lava Beds	10	0	Reintroduction 10/29/71
Total	3,472	3,485	

Previous estimates were made by various field people and compiled in Sacramento by Fred Jones in 1955. Generally speaking in most areas of California, sheep have been declining for many years, but particularly in the past quarter century because of prolonged drought conditions. In the area where our estimate is larger than the previous estimate, it reflects a more thorough investigation and refined survey techniques, and not an increase in the bighorn population."

(Picture source: Nevada Outdoors and Wildlife Review, Fall)

MISCELLANEOUS

Dick Weaver reports that a white ewe has been seen and photographed on Clark Mountain.

Suggested reading: Who Owns America, by Walter J. Hickel, Prentice-Hall, 1971.

If you have any news, articles, and pictures, etc., please do not hesitate to send them in or contact the Society office so they can be published in The Sheepherder.

Have you marked your calendar for the Cady Mountain project and the Bakersfield meeting?

A new brouchure is available from the Society office if you need some for prospective members. Bob Johnson did an excellent job of revising our old one to include recent accomplishments.

MUCH TO BE DONE IN 1972

You can see that there is much to be done. With the state survey nearing completion, we will have a better basis for establishing priorities. The recommendations resulting from that investigation must be implemented for that project to be considered a complete success. An organization such as ours must assume much of the responsibility in that regard.

With so much to be accomplished every member has the opportunity to make a vital contribution. We can make great strides in 1972 is each of us will take on just one additional task. There is a good selection of jobs to chose from. Water improvement projects, both large and small... water hole counts...researching potential transplant areas...attending environmental impact hearings...educational programs, speaking and writing...legislation, new and revised...fund raising...committees to serve on...land requiring acquisition...enlisting new members...and the list goes on. Won't you call the Society office regardless of the amount of time you can share and do your part in making 1972 "a very good year"?

Richard C. Thompson, Editor