THE
SHEEPHERDER

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

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Senator Richardson Honored

Honored at the March 11th Society dinner in Bakersfield was State Senator H. L. "Bill" Richardson. On behalf of the Society, President Loren Lutz presented Senator Richardson an engraved plaque "for dedication to wildlife conservation".

Senator Richardson has represented the 19th Senatorial District (Alhambra) since 1966. The Senator serves on the Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee among others and has authored many wildlife conservation and environmental bills. Some important bills of recent years introduced and supported by Senator Bill include the bighorn census and management program, proposed burro management, and the legislation to post important water holes. In presenting the award, President Lutz cited the numerous side benefits resulting from the Senator's legislative leadership which have had a tremendous influence on bighorn conservation interest and programs. Dutch Doornbos served as master of ceremonies and presented Senator Richardson with a certificate of recognition on behalf of The Southern Council Of Conservation Clubs.

Dave Dunaway, Inyo National Forest wildlife biologist, was featured speaker. His presentation, Bighorn Sheep On Inyo National Forest, was interesting and informative. Dave described the original bighorn range in the Sierras, the range utilized by an estimated 390 sheep in 1948, and the habitat now used by some 230 sheep. Of all the possible limiting factors, Dave feels that human disturbance is responsible for decline of the Sierra herd. He stated that the recreational areas in California absorb twice the use load of all others and that Inyo National Forest is among the top 10 in the U.S. in usage. Dave is hopeful that the creation of two zoological areas totaling 42,000 acres and holding the two largest concentrations in the Sierras will sufficiently restrict human use to curb the decline. He hopes that habitat can be improved with more grass areas and that the Lava Beds transplant will serve as the nucleus to regain previously used sheep habitat. By establishing such priorities, Dave feels that the Sierra decline can be reversed.

Pictured from left to right, Dave Dunaway, Loren Lutz, Senator H. L. Richardson, Dutch Doornbos, and Earl Lauppe.

Earl Lauppe reviewed water improvement projects undertaken in recent years and reported on the recent Cady Mountain project. Earl stated that 210 springs have received investigation and stressed the need for volunteer efforts since his staff had only been able to work on 78 of that total. He showed slides of the 11 water holes receiving physical development.

This meeting was very well attended and highly informative and we are certainly indebted to Marvin Wood for his fine organizational efforts to make it so.

CALIFORNIA DFG TO ACQUIRE BIGHORN HABITAT

In the January/February 1972 issue of Outdoor California, DFG deputy director E. C. Fullerton discussed the department's new and augmented services to be funded by license fee increases. In regard to bighorn habitat Mr. Fullerton stated, "Another planned program is a capital outlay project to acquire critically important bighorn sheep areas that are presently in private ownership".

The license fee increases were broadly supported as sportsmen endorsed the new and augmented DFG programs and again were more than willing to increase their license fee contributions. It is certainly encouraging that bighorn will benefit from a broadly supported and financed habitat acquisition program as outlined by Mr. Fullerton. The Society fully supports such a program and is acutely aware of the need to preserve critical areas. The proposed Santa Rosa Mountain land acquisition program described in the last issue of The Sheepherder points out such a need for habitat preservation as well as the need for funds to bring it to fruition.

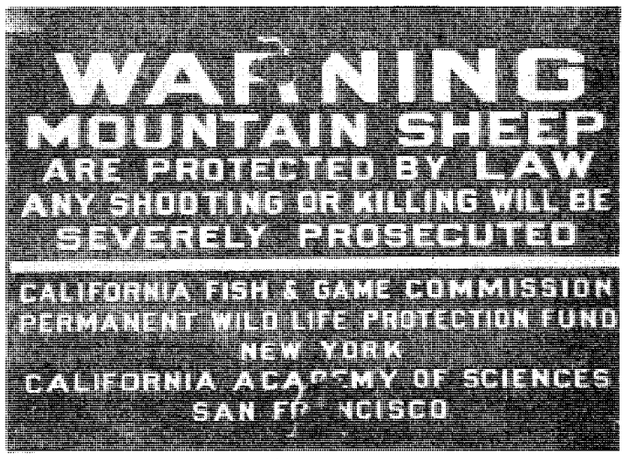
HABITAT FUNDS NEEDED

Representatives of the Society are proceeding with the Santa Rosa Mountain habitat purchase proposal. Bighorn can only be conserved so long as suitable habitat is available and the Santa Rosas are threatened. This project is of immediate concern and requires prompt financial action. President Lutz has asked that those who can express their concern by making a financial contribution contact the Society office. Such a contridution is tax deductible and will be far reaching in preserving this vital area.

DESERT BIGHORN COUNCIL

The 1972 annual meeting of the Desert Bighorn Council will be April 5 and 6 at Tucson, Arizona. Lew Carpenter has again consented to furnish summaries of the reports to be presented at that meeting by those professionally engaged in management, protection, or scientific study of the desert bighorn. Lew's summaries will be printed in the next issue of The Sheepherder. Proceedings of these meetings and published in their entirety and are entitled TRANSACTIONS. TRANSACTIONS for 1970 as well as the years back through 1964 are available at $2.00 each. They can be obtained by writing: Desert Bighorn Council, 1500 N. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, Nevada 89108.

Dick Weaver finds old warning sign



Section 308.5 of the Fish and Game Code, a 1970 amendment, enables the Fish and Game Commission to authorize the posting of wildlife watering places to prohibit camping and other activities. But don't think warning signs are new to the DFG.

I found this sign (see photo) at Sheephead Spring -- a place beyond the reach of four-wheeled vehicles. A deep trail leading to the spring indicates that old burro-using prospectors once visited the site frequently. But Sheephead Spring isn't very "sheepy" now -- at least I haven't been able to find many indications of their presence.

I estimate the sign is at least 40 years old. It's endured remarkably well because of its blue porcelain surface. And what may be even more remarkable is the fact that it has only four bullet holes.

I know of only two other signs like this. One was discovered by Gene Gerdes in a cabin in the White Mountains, and I found the second along a trail in the Santa Rosa Mountains.

Anyway, after nearly a half century we are still trying to inform desert visitors that the bighorn sheep is a protected animal in California.

...Dick Weaver
Associate Wildlife Manager/Biologist

CADY MOUNTAIN WATER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Cady Mountain project is now operational. On the weekend of February 19th and 20th, the dam to catch run off, the drinker, the tank base, and the pipe was installed. The tank itself had to be jettisoned by the helicopter so its installation had to be delayed, however the rocks were gathered to camouflage and bullet proof it. Since then the lower half of the tank was carried into place by helicopter and rocked up. DFG personnel will now truck in water to check it for leaks and will repair any that might have resulted from the drop. They will also determine if the top half of the tank is still functional so that it can be placed on top of the lower half if future usage warrants. If the damage is unrepairable a second tank can be added which was the original plan until Marvin Wood secured the two part 3,000 gallon tank. Some 200 man days were utilized to complete this vital project.

NEW MEXICO TRADE WITH MEXICO COMPLETE

William S. Huey, assistant director of wildlife operations, New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish reports that their international wildlife trade with Mexico was completed with the release of five desert bighorn in the Red Rock Wildlife Area. A crew of 10 captured the five sheep about 250 miles deep in the state of Sonora, Mexico and transported them to the wildlife area by trailer. All animals were in good shape when released. The five were all ewes since they planned to make later arrangements for a breeding ram. The five consisted of a yearling, a two year old, 2 four year olds, and 1 four plus.

The sheep were placed in a corral at Red Rock and will soon be released into a 600 acre holding pasture upon its completion. All the ewes were bred and have since lambed. One died shortly after birth but the surviving four lambs, 3 rams and 1 ewe, were doing well at the time of our last report from Bill. These sheep will be held as the nucleus of a captive herd from which to re-establish desert bighorn in several areas of their historic habitat.

To effect the trade New Mexico personnel trapped 50 antelope which they transported to and released in the state of San Luis Potosi, approx. 1,000 miles into the interior of Mexico.

New Mexico has had good success in introducing Rocky Mountain bighorn to their state and their efforts to reintroduce desert bighorn is certainly to be commended. Bill has furnished some pictures of the transplant operation shown to the left.

DESERT BIGHORN AT THE PHOENIX ZOO

During the past four years the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Arizona Zoological Society, and the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society has been cooperating on a project to establish a breeding herd exhibit of desert bighorn at the Phoenix Zoo. The DGF has agreed to secure two rams and two ewes to establish a herd of four to be located on the Northeast Mountain Butte on the zoo grounds. The first ram has already arrived at the zoo after being captured in the area of Imperial Dam on the Colorado River. This exhibit will be the only one of its kind in the world. The Arizona Society has agreed to finance and build the necessary fences and water devices.

NEVADA HUNTING REDUCED

"Bighorn quotas were cut drastically last year from previous quotas for good reason. The Department of Fish and Game in recent years through more intensive inventory and survey techniques and a more critical evaluation of this resource has determined that previous population estimates were much higher than actually was the case.

The Nelson bighorn sheep population, though smaller than originally thought, produces surplus rams each year, and when hunted under Nevada's unique trophy ram regulation is producing hunting recreation by the harvest of only the age class rams. Thus the population is being sustained at habitat carrying capacity while being utilized, and the biological data that is acquired from hunter-killed sheep is being put to use for more effective management of this prized species."

(Nevada Outdoors and Wildlife Review, Fall 1971)

ARIZONA ANNUAL REPORT

The Arizona GFD summarized their July 1970 through June 1971 activities in the January/ February 1972 issue of Wildlife Views. In regard to bighorn it was reported that 569 sheep were classified throughout the state by aerial, boat, vehicle and foot surveys. Bighorn in the Aravaipa pasture totaled 13. Three yearling ewes were captured in western Arizona during Februaty and released into that pasture. During the December 5-20 hunting season, 76 hunters harvested 39 bighorn. In Region III desert bighorn populations were reported as fairly stable with one exception: the Aubrey Hills sheep populations near Lake Havasu seems to be declining, perhaps due to the tremendous increase in human activity. Consequently that area was closed to sheep hunting in 1971. During the year five potholes were improved with the aid of the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society in addition to the drilling of one horizontal well and the construction of 14 rainwater catchments. 411,000 gallons of water was hauled to 271 deficient catchments.

MATURE RAMS NECESSARY

Dick Weaver forwarded the October 1971 issue of The Wildlife Society News that carried a letter from Dr. Valerius Geist of the University of Calgary. That letter was summarized in the January 1972 issue of Wyoming Wildlife as follows: "One of the major premises of game management is that removal (hunting) of older males does not reduce or affect the overall animal population. This may not be true in the case of mountain sheep.

It is Geist's opinion, based on his personal observations and studies, that 7-9 year old rams are necessary for sheep survival and social order. The most important role of the large rams seems to be in reducing conflicts, thus conserving necessary energy reserves. Without them the young rams continually molest ewes or fight among themselves, resulting in higher mortality.

"The absence of large-horned rams with estrus ewes," he states, "leads to frequent challenges, and much chasing around of the female as well as excessive exercise by the rams. Such excessive activity should lead to a high fat loss in rams as well as ewes...in three days of harassment by young rams an estrous female may lose anywhere from 10-20 percent of her body stores."

Geist also feels that the veteran rams insure a better dispersal of the bands over the range. With less overlapping and bunching together there is less competition and better utilization of the habitat."

MISCELLANEOUS

Mountain Sheep, A Study in Behavior and Evolution, by Valerius Geist, The University Of Chicago Press, 1971, is now available and is must reading for anyone that is a serious student of bighorn sheep.

Dick Weaver reports, "A road killed ram from the Kingston Mountains was found to have scabies. The scabies were not fatal; an ore truck at the Standard Slag Mine was. This is a first in California desert bighorn to my knowledge".

It's about that time of year for Bob Hein to send out 1972 dues notices. Since this is the most important source of revenue for the Society, please "watch the mail" so we can all send our 1972 dues in as soon as possible and make Bob's job a little easier. This is also a good time to consider Life and Century memberships as a means to never have to pay annual dues again while making a long term tax deductible contribution.