SOCIETY FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BIGHORN SHEEP

The Sheepherder

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SHIKAR-SAFARI AWARD GOES TO JOHN MASSIE

John Massie the Wildlife Habitat Supervisor for Region 5, California Department of Fish and Game has been named as the Wildlife Conservation Officer for the year 1974 by the Shikar-Safari Club International and was given an award at a breakfast meeting of the San Diego chapter in that city. Ken Glick, a club official from San Luis Obispo, made the presentation of the certificate emblematic of the award and a $50. check.

Massie has been working out of Region 5 for about six years. He is a very dedicated and hard working young man. In his duties he has the responsibilities for a 10 county area which encompasses nearly one-fourth of the State's area.
The Volunteer Desert Water Program had its beginnings with the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep and with the Southern Council of Conservation Clubs. (see another related article concerning Bob Juergens). There are a number of other organizations which now assist in the various survey, water searches, censuses and development projects. These other groups furnishing man power are Troops of Explorer Scouts, and Boy Scout Troops; Sportsmen's Clubs, mostly from southern California but from as far away as Fresno; there are also menand women from a Los Angeles chapter of the Sierra Club. Since the inauguration of the Program some 4,500 man-days of work have been contributed to improvements to springs and the installation of big game watering devices, during the past six years. A reported 737 man days of labor and time have been reported during 1974. During that year two projects completed were the one in the Chuckawalla Mts. and the one in the Piute Mts. These have both been reported in these columes
The editor does apologize to John for not having a picture of him receiving his well deserved award. The editor did try to get one but was unsuccessful. John is seldom in the office and is constantly on the move--I guess the cameraman couldn't catch up with him. The accompanying picture was taken at Fontana during a dinner meeting of the Society. John and his wife Janis, (at the right in the picture) live in Apple Valley, San Bernardino County and have two daughters. CONGRATULATIONS.

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BAKERSFIELD DINNER A SUCCESS

A telephone report from Dr. Loren Lutz, President of the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep tells us that the dinner meeting of the Society held in Bakersfield the evening of March 15th was, as usual, a very excellent dinner followed by an equally interesting and informative discussion by Dr. Lynn A. Griner, the Pathologist for the San Diego Zoo. Doctor Griner spoke, in part, about the catastrophic die-off in the Tarryall herd of bighorns in the State of Colorado during the winter of 1952 and 1953 which left only about 25 surviving sheep, and which had put an end to the trapping and transplanting program since there were no other suitable herds from which transplant stock could be obtained. The lung worm complex was determined to be the cause of the large die-off at that time. Dr. Griner had recommended that a limited hunting program be inaugurated in an effort to disperse the herds into other areas where infection might be less apt to occur.
NOTE: a few months ago (September-Ocotber 1973) we did an article concerning the lung worm and the small snail which is an intermediate host of the causative agent of the lung worm infestation.

IMPACT OF FERAL BURROS ON THE DEATH VALLEY ECOSYSTEM

Peter G. Sanchez, Resources Management Specialist for the Death Valley National Monument presented a paper before the Wildlife Society in Monterey, California on February 2nd, 1974. The following is taken from this paper.

Feral burros were introduced in the Death Valley region perhaps as early as the 1870's. Later introductions occurred in the late 1800's and continued into the early 1900's. Most of the free-roaming burros were escapes or abandoned burden and pack animals owned by the prospectors and miners during the heyday of mining activities in the desert.

Through the last century burros have successfully occupied their ecological niche. Their numbers grew and they expanded their range into much of the upland areas where suitable forage and sufficient water was available. Death Valley was established in 1933 and by this time burros were well established in the area , and their damage to the forage was already severe. Present population now is not less that 1500 burros, and is increasing

The burros of the Monument are now all, or nearly all, on the western side of the Valley, and comprise some 40% of the burro population of the state---now approximately 3,500+ animals. Terrain utilized by the burros includes broad alluvial fans and bajadas, canyons, intermontane valleys, and rolling uplands....Vegetative cover is diverse as may be expected in an area of great relief.....A diversity of fauna exists in the Monument. There are 51 species of native mammals, 36 reptiles, 3 amphibians, and 6 fishes have been recorded in the Monument.

The desert bighorn sheep ranks high among animals requiring special management attention because their numbers and habitat are declining. Charles G. Hansen indicated a 1972 population of 583; Welles and Welles in 1961 estimated that there were 915 bighorns. Hansen in 1972 in a study of the area placed the pre-pioneer bighorn population at as many as 4,800 animals.....The present area occupied by bighorn in the Monument has shrunk from 1400 square miles to 384 square miles.....The decline of bighorn has been attributed to many factors. Natural causes for decline include predation, respiratory diseases, parasites, natural accidnts and extended periods of drought. The decline has been hastened by man. His large numbers, mining activities, usurpation or occupation of water sources, highway construction, fencing and other barriers, poaching have all had adverse effects. The impact of burros must be added to natural and man-induced causes for the decline of bighorn. It is the sum of all of these factors which has depressed bighorn numbers and their ranges. The presence of burros, however, results in impacts which reach beyond those effecting bighorn. (All forms of wildlife are adversely efffected.)

The fundamental problem is that burros have been introduced into an ecosystem operating since the Pleistocene under nominally natural conditions characterized by normally marginal water supply, low annual forage production, severe climate (even for arid regions), and infrequent but sometimes devastating erosian forces, such as wind deflation and flash-flooding. The system is unable to absorb the addition of a new, large herbivore without large scale adjustments. A new equilibrium has not yet been reached.

The adjustment toward a new equilibrium has been observed for several decades. Four problem areas have been identified: competition with native animals, vegetational changes, damage to soils, and impacts at springs.

Surveys conducted since the 1930's have recorded the changes in bighorn distribution and have shown that competition exists between burros and bighorn for forage, water, and space. Field observations show that there is an adverse effect on rodents and the various reptiles through trampling of their habitat.

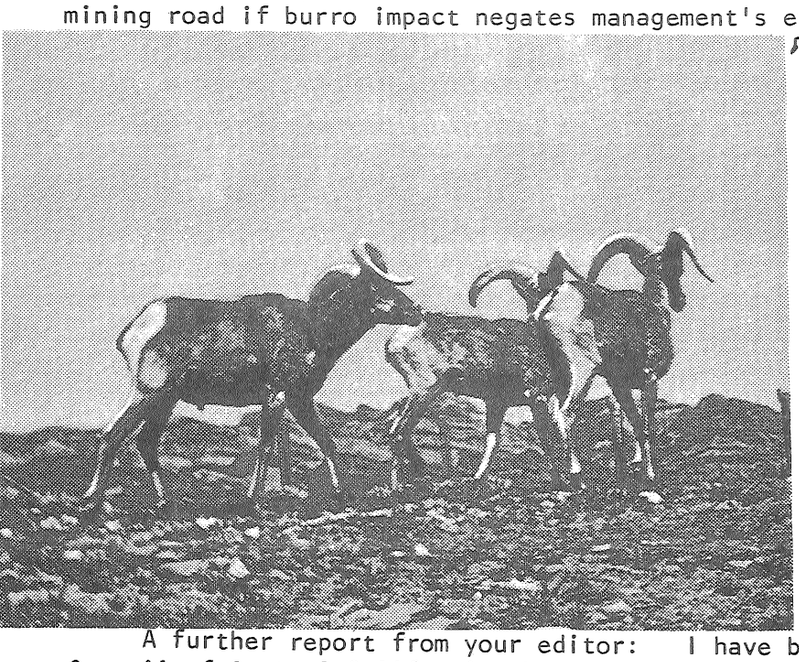
Desert shrub-grassland associations support a greater number of burros than do other habitats. Both browse and grass species are utilized by burros, but where equally available, grasses are preferred. NOTE: this is the same type of vegetative association preferred by the bighorns).

It is significant that areas heavily grazed by burros are now shrubland instead of shrub-grassland. Un-utilized portions of unit 3 are shrub-grassland, believed to be remnants of the native vegetative cover--according to Hansen.....In areas of heavy burro occupation the density and sizes of plants, especially shrubs, are much reduced. Damage is greatest in the vicinity of water sources.

Relict plant communities may be effected by burros. Recent studies suggest burro damage principally by trampling, as probable cause for the low reproduction of bristlecone pine above 10,000 feet on Telescope Peak in the central Panamint Range.....Some areas even below sea level have been so heavily browsed by burro as to now be dead.....Tracking and trampling diminishes vegetative cover and hastens erosian especially during the infrequent and often severe storms. Bare soil between plants is normally protected from wind deflation and water erosion by the development of a gravel cover of desert pavement often one pebble thick. which retards movement of underlying silt and sand-sized fractions

Tracking disturbs the pavement and exposes the finer soil particles--these are then subjected to wind and/or water erosian.
Burros can and do usurp available water at the expense of native wildlife. Many springs in the Monument do not have flow volumes large enough to supply the needs of both burros and native animals. Flow of many springs are measured in gallons per day. (Perhaps even in 2 to 3 drops per minute).....Small potholes (tinajas) may store a few gallons or perhaps a few hundred gallons. Temperatures however are extreme in the desert--the air is very dry, therefore, evaporation of exposed waters is very rapid, and when these exposed waters are most needed by wildlife they have evaporated.
Burro control in the Monument was begun in 1939. At that time the population was about 1500 animals and their range included both the east and western sides of the Monument. By 1942 all burro were removed from the eastern side of the valley. This reduced the population to about 700. Between 1939 and 1968 recods show that 3,578 burros were trapped out of the MOnument---there probably were another 300 to 400 trapped and not recoorded. However, by 1972 the population had again climbed to 1500--all on the west side.

Damage by feral burros is one of a number of man-caused problems affecting the integrity of a natural ecosystem in Death Valley. To be effective, other habitat management projects such as restoration of former wildlife habitat, rehabilitation of old mining scars, relief of human impact by recreational activities, and others, cannot be successful if destructive influences remain. For example, it is of no benefit to bighorn to rehabilitate a spring formerly used by them if burros will move in. It is impractical to revegetate anabandoned mining road if burro impact negates management's efforts.



"IF BURRO CONTROL IS UNACCEPTABLE, THE PUBLIC MUST ACCEPT THE ECOLOGICAL FACT OF LIFE THAT THE DEATH VALLEY ECOSYSTEM WILL CONTINUE TO ALTER UNTIL A NEW EQUILIBRIUM IS REACHED AND NATIVE POPULATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO DECLINE SIGNIFICANTLY. IN THE LONG TERM, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF SOME NATIVE SPECIES CAN BE EXPECTED."

NOTE by editor: My wife, Marguerite and I were in the Johnson and Hanapauh Canyons of the Monument this past Christmas-New Years vacation and saw many burros and found no signs of bighorns. We had last been in these areas in 1963, at which time sheep sign was everywhere and no burros or burro sign noted.

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A further report from your editor: I have been the Secretary of the Sportsmen's Council of Central California the past five years. (until March 15, 1975). During much of this time I have corressponded with the Honorable G. William Whitehurst, Congressman from the State of Virginia concerning the burro-bighorn conflict all across the California deserts. Congressman Whitehurst has sought the assistance of the USFish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of the Interior in an effort to get some management of burro population presently precluded by the enactment on December 15, 1971 of PL 92-195 -- The Wild Horse and Burro Act. As a result of efforts by the Congressman; the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Wild Horses and Burros; and other concerned people interested in the well-being of the native wildlife; the Bureau of Land Management did suggest language that might be used in an amendment to PL 92-195.
On February 5, 1975 Congressman did introduce H.R. 2935 which would amend PL 92-195 and would permit some management practices presently not available. I did then, as Secretary of the Sportsmen's Council seek further advice from the Departments of Fish and Game of California and Nevada and from Peter G. Sanchez of the Death Valley National Monument. As a result I drafted the following resolution which has been adopted by the Council and by the Fresno County Sportsmen's Club. I have hopes that the local chapters of the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club will follow suit as both have expressed their concerns for the wellbeing of the bighorns and have asked "What can we do?"
The Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep is a US Tax Exempt institution under provision of IRS section 501 (c) (3) and as such can not seek passage of any legislation. However, in an advisory capacity the Society can and does urge enactment of HR 2935.
I AM IN HOPE THAT EVERY PERSON WHO READS THIS WILL respond by writing letters to : Congressman John Melcher,Chairman, Subcommittee on Public Lands and in addition to Congressman Haley, Chairman of the full Committee. A copy should be sent to Congressman Whitehurst as well. Their addresses are: The House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515. The committees mentioned are under the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.
A letter from the U.S. Forest Service in San Francisco, says in part,:" H.R. 2935, introduced by Congressman G. William Whitehurst of Virginia, reflects needed changes in PL 92-195 in the management of wild free-roaming horses and burros. We concur with your resolution to use aircraft in management as is done with wildlife, and to sell or donate without restriction excess animals."
The "RANGE CONDITION REPORT" --January 1975--prepared by the Bureau of Land Management says: page III-10 , QUOTE: " Wild horse and Burro Habitat. Under the current management

level and restrictions on use of equipment for capture, populations cannot be controlled by removal of excess animals and numbers will increase causing serious overstocking problems on the National Resource Lands and adjacent private lands. Numbers could increase very dramatically if disease and availability of forage would not become limiting factors. The land resource base itself will be placed in jeopardy of being destroyed if an ecological balance cannot be maintained. Efforts to protect wild horses and burros without acceptable and practical management controls may be effective for a short time, but will result intheir demise over the long term due to the reduction in the productivity of the rangeland due to abuse. Most of the critical bighorn sheep habitat in the United States is presently endangered by excess burro numbers and it is only a matter of time before it is destroyed and the sheep eliminated.
Under the intermediate management level some control of numbers is possible but the results are not fully adequate to protect the range resource from abuse or the destruction of critical wildlife habitat such as for bighorn sheep." end quote..... A chart shows that the present population of horses is about 42,000 and that of burros is about 14,000. The projected populations for 1990 is for horses some 300,000 and burros about 200,000---these are of course based upon present rates of increase---sufficient forage and lack of disease and no predation.

Sportsmen's Council of Central California

REPRESENTING THE COUNTIES OF:
FRESNO - KERN - KINGS - MADERA - MARIPOSA - MERCED - MONTEREY - SAN BENITO - TULARE - STANISLAUS
SAN LUIS OBISPO - SANTA BARBARA - SANTA CRUZ

AFFILIATED WITH:
CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

RESOLUTION CONCERNING MANAGEMENT OF FREE-ROAMING HORSES AND BURROS

WHEREAS, the feral free-roaming horses and burros are neither a rare, threatened or an endangered species, and

WHEREAS, these animals are rapidly increasing in numbers and are causing ever increasing competition between themselves, domestic livestock and native wildlife for the scarse available forage and water of the lands they occupy, and are damaging such habitat, and

WHEREAS, the land management agencies, (the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the States' Departments of Fish and Wildlife)have determined the areas where such competition and damage to wildlife habitat is presently occurring, and

WHEREAS, in order to protect the habitat of the native wildlife it is essential that the numbers of such feral free-roaming horses and burros be reduced in numbers to permit the habitat of the native wildlife to recover, and

WHEREAS, PL 92-195 does state in part,"Management activities shall be carried out in consultation with the wildlife agency of the state to protect the natural ecological balance of all wildlife species. ", now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED the Sportsmen's Council of Central California does lend full support to enactment of H.R. 2935 introduced by Congressman G. William Whitehurst of Virginia into the House of Representatives on February 5, 1975 and which will amend PL 92-195 by stating, Quote: "Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that(a) subsection (a) of section 3 Public Law 92-195, the Act of December 15, 1971 (16 U.S.C. 1333), is amended by adding "The Secretary is authorized to use aircraft and motorized vehicles to provide for the protection, management, and control of wild free-roaming horses and burros, such use to be in accordance with humane procedures prescribed by the Secretary. (b) Section 3 is further amended by adding a new subsection (c), as follows: "The Secretary is authorized to sell, or donate, without restriction, excess horses or burros to individuals or organizations." (end quote), and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that other conservation organizations be asked to assist in the enactment of H.R. 2935, and that Congressional delegation from the area of such conservation organizations also be asked to assist in its enactment.

ADOPTED at Buellton, California

March 16, 1975.

Signed Stanley Radom
President.
Lewis E. Carpenter.
Secretary for Legislation.

In Unity There Is Strength to Better, Propagate, Conserve, and Harvest Our Fish, Wildlife, and Natural Resources

Photo Special to The Denver Post

TRAPPED, BUT ONLY TEMPORARILY

George Bear of Wildlife Division frees bighorn sheep.

APPETITE FOR APPLE PULP UNDOES BIGHORNS

A report from Fort Collins, Colorado states that an insatiable appetite for apple pulp resulted in the capture of 25 bighorn sheep during the first week of February. Apple pulp is the material left after apples have been mashed for cider. The trapping and transfer of sheep are a part of the long range plans of the Colorado Division of Wildlife to extend bighorn sheep ranges wherever it is possible.

The early trappers and mountain men, and later prospectors, found bighorn sheep (ovis canadensis canadensis) throughout the foothills andmountains and at times even out on the plains. At a very early stage in the history of the white man in what is now Colorado, the effects of human disturbance upon bighorns were evident. Extirpation from much of their original range and forcing of remaining animals into more marginal, high-mountain habitat began in the 19th Century and has continued to the present time. By the 1940's, many bighorn herds in Colorado were much reduced from their former size, and others had passed out of existence.

In September, 1944, the then Colorado Game and Fish Department initiated a project under the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act for trapping and transplanting bighorn sheep. Between 1944 and 1952, 202 bighorns were trapped out of the Tarryall Herd and transplanted to other locations in Colorado. Sheep were also trapped and relocated in Montana in exchange for mountain goats. Some of the reintroduction sites were the Geneva Creek area of Mount Evans; in the Medano Pass and Horn Peak areas of the Sangre de Cristo Range; Mesa Verda National Park; in the James Peak area near Georgetown; the Green Mountain Falls area of the Rampart Range; the Nunn Creek Basin of the Cache la Poudre; Glenwood Canyon; the Gore Range; the Rifle Hogback; Brush Creek; Saguache Creek; Ladore Canyon and the Sapinero. Information obtained by study of these introductions have shown that some have been very successful, some moderately and some have been unsuccessful. These specific studies have served as guidlines for evaluating potential bighorn transplant sites which are applicable for Colorado. In applying these guidlines, it must always be borne in mind that bighorn sheep have narrow tolerance limits on what is acceptable as habitat, and in making a final positive recommendation the possibiity that a transplant will be unsuccessful cannot be eliminated. The sheepthemselves will make the ultimate decision. Even habitat changes which may occur while the transplanted herd is becoming established can reverse the initial success of the transplant.. Detrimental changes may also take place over a considerable length of time. Good quality bighorn sheep range habitat must provide seasonal elevational ranges. Much of the decline of bighorn sheep in the past must be attributed to the loss of good winter range. In some areas bighorns can survive the winters by utilizing widswept ridges above timberline, and have continued to exist in this fashion long after all low-elevation winter range has become unsuitable or unavailable.

Open grassy hillsides below timberline or nearly any above-timberline alpine tundra will provide good to excellent summer range. As long as such sites exist on proposed transplant areas, plant species composition is not critical because, by their very nature, these sites are dominated by the grasses, grass-like plants, and forbs that bighorn prefer. Plant species composition is an important consideration in evaluating winter range, however, because of limitations of availability. It matters little that a south facing slope may be free of snow most of the winter, if it is dominated by a shrub community having very little understory, or has been overgrazed to such a degree that only undesirable species are present. Bighorns generally do not thrive in competition with other grazing ungulates, and domestic livestock animals appear to be the most competetive. Ideally, bighorn sheep range at all seasons of the year should be free from competitive grazers.

The sheep in the Poudre Canyon area trapped during February were from two different sites, to the west of Fort Collins. All sheep were neckbanded. Blood, and nasal samples were taken from most of them for use in parasitology, and virology studies on bighorns being conducted by the Division and the Colorado Cooperative Wildlife Disease Unit at Colorado State University. In addition, all ewes were innoculated against lungworm.

The 25 sheep were loaded into a covered truck and hauled to a site just above the Big Narrows in the Poudre Canyon and released into the wild again. The site is 7½ miles down the canyon from their former home. However, it is ideal country for bighorn sheep, so biologists hope this transplant will serve as a nucleus of an expanding herd in this new area.

The sheep were trapped using an unusual radio-operated drop net trap. This trap - a relatively new device in the wildlife biologists bag of tricks for catching wild animals - looks like a big net circus tent suspended from a tall center pole and a number of shorter outside poles. The suspension ropes are wired with blasting caps, which are in turn wired into a battery and radio receiver.

When the sheep are under the net the blasting caps are fired with a radio transmitter sending signals to the receiver. The blasting caps separate the suspension ropes on the

net almost immediately and drop the net on the unwitting sheep. Operation of the drop net has worked quite well since biologists discovered the device. The problem has been one of finding the right lure to get the sheep into position under the net. Alfalfa, grain, salt were all tried with varying degrees of success.
The Bob Schmidt, senior wildlife conservation aide in charge of the Division's sheep trapping efforts, hit on the apple pulp idea. It has a most distinctive odor and has the same effect on bighorn sheep that candy does for small children.
The sheep were baited under the net every day for several weeks using the apple pulp and alfalfa. Then on the appointed day the sheep are baited under the net, the net is wired w ith blasting caps and the radio receiver andwhen biologists have the number of sheep they want under the net the trap is dropped.
NOTE: part of the above report was sent to the editor by Dick Weaver and John Larronde. lew.

FLASH: The Shikar - Safari Club in Colorado has chosen Bob Schmidt (in article above) as the Wildlife Conservationist of the Year 1974, for his dedication and study, both research and applied, in his work to reduce or eliminate the 'lung worm' as a major cause of death among the bighorn sheep of Colorado.

THIS AND THAT

A letter was received from Ray Arnett shortly before he retired from the Directorship of the Department of Fish and Game. He said, in part, "I am constantly impressed by the work you and the other volunteers are doing for wildlife in the desert. I wish you would express my appreciation to these people through "THE SHEEPHERDER" in one of the future issues.....it is complicated, but there is no way to move up the purchase of a $7,000 property item like the drilling machine. We submit a line item budget for legislative approval each year, and each item on the budget is reviewed.".....Again, let me thank you and the volunteers for all of your efforts and good work. Keep it up."

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIGHORNS RETURN TO NEVADA

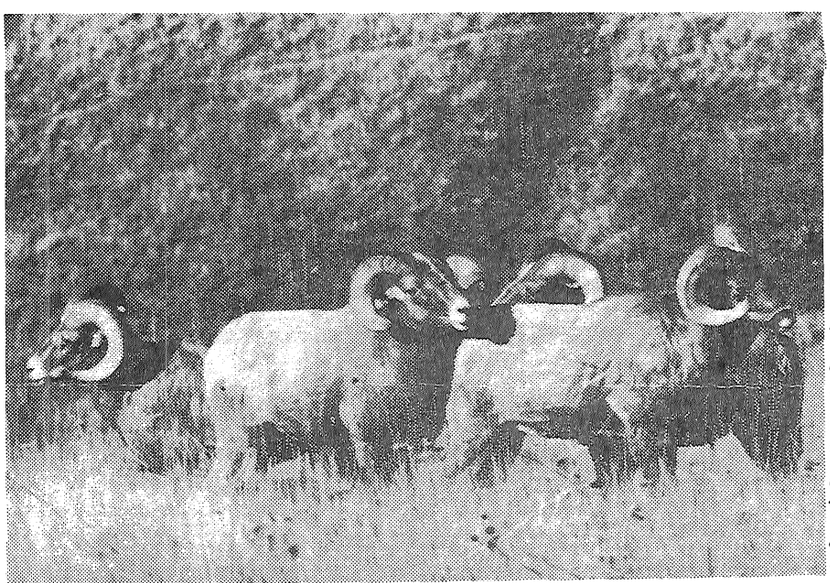

Photo courtesy of Jim Yoakum

A letter from George Tsukamoto Big Game Staff Specialist of the Nevada Department of Fish and Game, says: As you may know, we have been interested in reintroducing Rocky Mtn., bighorn sheep into their native ranges in north eastern Nevada. We were fortunate enough to obtain 16 Rocky Mtn. sheep from the Wyoming Department of Fish and Game in a recent trade for Himalayan snow partridges. These animals were transported to Nevada on January 8th and 9th from Dubois, Wyoming and released into the Snake Range of White Pine County. The exact release site was Smith Creek Canyon on Mount Moriah. The composition of sheep was as follows: There were two yearling rams, eight females and six lambs. Of the lambs, there were two females and four males.

Although recent follow-up information has been difficult to obtain, we have at least confirmed that some of the animals are staying in the vicinity of the release site. Grass conditions are excellent in this area and it appears they are utilizing the south facing slopes in the very rocky areas and are showing good utilization of the available grass forage.

At the present time, I do not have available any photos of the release.

At the present time, I do not have available any photos of the release; however, if they do come available in the near future I will make sure that you get a copy.
NOTE: the photo by Jim Yoakum is not of this release.

BOB JUERGENS RECEIVES ANOTHER AWARD

During the after-dinner program in Bakersfield Bob Juergens, Team Captain of the Turtle Mountains area was presented a plaque in recognition of his long efforts in support of the Volunteer Desert Water Program. For many years Bob has been the one who has been responsible for getting out the many people who have contributed their time and energies into the construction of many of the water projects. The plaque was presented by the Southern Council of Conservation Clubs. Myron "Dutch" Doornbos, Bob Juergens and Leonard Hummel have been leaders of the Southern Council for a good many years. Bob has been so effective in getting out workers, that on many projects more people show up for work than can actually work to advantage---this is really a plus. APOLOGIES TO BOB JUERGENS but no picture is available of the presntation.
Doctor Lutz announced the following dates to be inscribed on the calendars of the Society:
April 5, 1975----The Clipper Mountain Project-----John Massie has sent letters to those people who have signified interest and many have already responded.
May 10 and 11---the Last Chance Project-this is in the Inyo Mountains some 60 miles to the east of Bishop.. To date no volunteers have been obtained. Contact John Massie, Wildlife Habitat Supervisor, Department of Fish and Game, 350 Golden Shore, Long Beach California 90802.
September 27--water project in the Clark Mountains

October 4th --is the tentative date for the Annual Southern California Dinner of the Society.-----more onthis in a later edition

November 21 - water project in the Chemihuevi Mts. of eastern San Bernardino Mts. to the south of Needles.....More about the last two later.

WATER HOLE COUNTS DATES : July 4 - 5 - and 6th, 1975----a total of 40 people are needed in the OLD WOMAN MOUNTAINS; another 40 people are needed in the TURTLE MOUNTAINS AND IN THE SACRAMENTO MOUNTAINS.

For the Old Woman Mountains contactMassie or Marvin Wood, 19 Byron Drive, Lemoore, Ca. 93245; For the Turtle Mts. contact Massie of Bob Juergens, through M.W. Doornbos, 1707 Malvern Ave., Apt 8, Fullerton, Cal. 92633; For the Sacramento Mts. contact Massie or Lew Carpenter, 815 West Gettysburg Av., Fresno, Calif. 93705.

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'BLUETONGUE' CONFIRMED IN SHEEP DEATHS

Under the date line of February 20, 1975 the Herald and News of Klamath Falls, by way of Jim Blaisdell, reports that bluetongue has been confirmed as the disease responsible for the death of the six California bighorn sheep at Lava Beds National Monument during last September. Test results were received earlier in February from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal andPlant Health Inspection Services, Veterinary Services Diagnostic Laboratory of Ames, Iowa. Samples were sent to Iowa through Dr. Ted Kistner of the Oregon State University veterinary medicine department. The sample used was taken from one ewe but, according to National Park Service field biologist Jim Blaisdell, "It's pretty obvious that's what they all died from. The symptoms were the same for all the animals."

Still unknown is from where the Culicoides gnat, a small "no-see-um," that transmitted the bluetongue, originated. According to biologists, the gnats breed and hatch in mud. Report of bluetongue outbreaks were made last summer before the bighorn deaths and were said to have been affected at least one Klamath County sheep band. The gnats usually are transmitted from cattle or, sometimes sheep.

A catch pen has been built within the 1,100 acre enclosure for possible use for innoculation. Animals expected most susceptible to a new outbreak would be any lambs born later this spring.

Two major drawbacks may prevent any innoculations, however, depending on the veterinarians' study. Innoculations could make the animals sick and damage could be done to the sheep in handling them.

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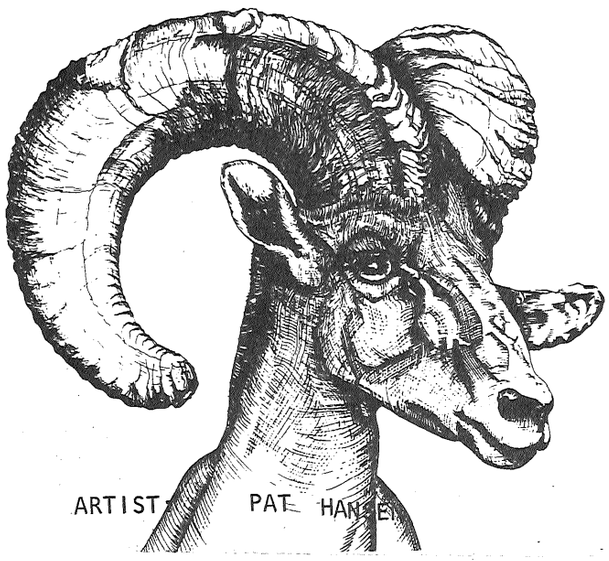

The annual meeting of the Desert Bighorn Council for 1975 will be held in Indio, California during the week of April 8 - 11, 1975. The California Department of Fish and Game has the honor of hosting this meeting. Bonnar Blong is the Council Chairman. Committee meetings in Indio begin at 1:00 p.m. on the 8th. There will be technical sessions on the 9th and 10th. A banquet the evening of the 10th. On Friday the 11th there will be a field trip to observe bighorn habitat in the Santa Rosa Mountains behind Palm Desert. The program will be varied and interesting--all related to bighorns and their problems. Senor Cossio, Director General of Wildlife, Mexico will report on the bighorn program in Mexico; there will be reports of reintroductions from 8 different states; there will be papers concerning Burro--analysis of data,reproduction and movements into bighorn habitat.

The Council is nearly all composed of the professionals in the field of wildlife and veterinary medecine . The membership and meeting are open to the public at large. All that is needed is an interest in the wellfare of the bighorns and a desire to improve their lot.

NEW SIGHTINGS OF BIGHORNS

Dick Weaver recently received a letter from the Nevada Department of Fish and Game together with reports made by Jack Pfiffer and Joe Williams of the BLM's Las Vegas office. The letter stated," Please find attached some additional sightings of bighorn sheep observed by the BLM Las Vegas Distirct) during a recent helicaopter flight in or near the California Line. The observer recorded these observations incidental to looking for wild horses and burros and in some cases did not record any information except the total number of sheep observed and the location.

Of particular interest was the observation of 29 individual sheep on the Castle Mountains near Hart Peak. This was a real surprise and it exceeds both our population estimations of sheep in this area.

Another important observation made earlier in the year was that of 14 sheep crossing the Clark Mountain area and the Southern Spring Range. This supports your earlier observations of a free moving population between these two areas.

During a recent flight on the Southern Spring Range, we were able to classify 39 individual sheep in the vicinity of Little Devil's Peak. Three of these animals observed were albino or at least white in color. Because of the movement of some of these animals to the Clark Mountain area it is possible that the strain of white sheep may also occur in California."

NOTE: This report above is of particular interest as it speaks about observations of sheep in the vicinity of the water developement project of November 9th 1974 in the Piute Mts. north of Needles and which was previously reported in THE SHEEPHERDER. A total of 44 sheep were observed in the reported area.

COMMENT --QUESTION: The observation of the three white sheep observed in the Little Devil's Peak area---Presuming that these sheep are not albino---then what does this indicate? In 1940 Doctor Ian McTaggart Cowan suggested that the Nelson's bighorn and Dall sheep are the most primitive of the North American wild sheep. He was later supported by Doctor Valerius Geist's (1941) hypothesis on wild sheep evolution. Based on studies involving primarily morphology and behaviour of wild sheep, Geist (1971) stated that S tone sheep and Rocky Mountain Bighorns are the most advanced forms. (1973 Transactions of the Desert Bighorn Council.)

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A letter from Dick Riegelhuth, Chief, Division of Resources Management of the Yosemite National Park is of interest. Dick says, in part : " The National Park Service is currently in the process of developing a master plan with a date for completion 20 months ahead. This new plan will probably mention the desirability of restoring or reestablishing the California bighorn to Yosemite. The Draft Yosemite Resources Management Plan is specific in this regard and includes the formal recommendation.

Presently, we are endeavoring to determine whether one or more relic bighorn populations continue to exist in and around Yosemite. If so, we feel that the first task is to discover the distribution of the populations and identify limiting factors. Should limiting factors be identified and subject to improvement through management, we would recommend gradually restoring populations through such measures. If no populations or limiting factors are determined then we would probably recommend reestablishment by introduction of other stocks of California bighorns, such as was done recently at Lava Beds National Monument. However, we are a long way from implementing the latter, as we must initially determine the status of bighorn in Yosemite. Enclosed is a status report and list of bighorn observations recorded in and near Yosemite since 1901. This list is not considered complete and many more sightings probably have been made. One unlisted sighting recently obtained was that of a half-curl ram and two ewes during July 1974, in the north section of the Park."

Dick spoke also of the present distribution of the California bighorn as being the Southern Sierra Nevada Crest. Of the five ranges delineated by Jones (1950) - Convict Creek, Birch Mountain, Mount Baxter, Mount Williamson, Mount Langley---the following two support viable populations: Mount Baxter, Mount Williamson, with the Mount Langley range in a questionable status. A very small remnant population may exist in the vicinity of Center Mountain near the boundary of Yosemite National Park, and another small population in the vicinity of Mount Lyell extending east into the adjacent forest to San Joaquin Mountain and Glass Creek Meadows.------estimated population is 200 in California. In 1950 Jones listed the population as being 390 in the above five ranges-----The present status is ENDANGERED.----------Dick listed a total of only 26 sighting and findings of horns and horn fragments of deceased bighorn in the Park since 1901 -----ten of these sightings have been recorded in the past 10 years---all in the extremely high and very roughest parts of the Park.

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February 5th your editor presented a slide program of ourVolunteer Desert Water Program to the Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club here in Fresno. He is a member of the Wildlife sucommittee. Following the meeting Mr. Pat King editor of TEHIPITE TOPICS, their monthly publication asked if he might publish an application for membership in the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep. Permission was gladly given. The March issue of TEHIPITE TOPICS did carry an application blank. The various conservation organizations do have much in common and can achieve more by cooperative efforts than by working at cross purposes. We admit that there are differences in the objectives between the organizations. However there are many areas where we can assist each other. Sierra Club members have worked on many of our water development projects. Therefore, we are happy to carry an application for membership in the Sierra Club. There are many local chapters in California and the other States.

Sierra Club, 220 Bush St., San Francisco, Calif. 94104 Date_____

I have informed myself about the purposes of the Sierra Club and wish to support them. I hereby apply for membership and enclose $_____ as total payment. (See schedule below.) Additional members other than spouse, please use separate forms.

Print Name(s) Mr. / Mrs. / Miss / Mr. & Mrs. _____

Print Mailing Address_____

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Telephone Number_____ Birthdate_____

School (if student) _____

Signature of Applicant _____

Please allow four to six weeks for processing.

	Admission fee	Dues	Total
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☐ Contributing	$5.00	50.00	55.00
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☐ Regular	5.00	15.00	20.00
☐ with spouse	5.00	23.00	28.00
☐ Junior (thru 14)	*	8.00	8.00
☐ Student (thru 23)	*	8.00	8.00
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*Admission fee is waived for junior members, full-time ~~students and~~ life members.