



National Bighorn Sheep Center

Providing education and outreach for the national conservation of wild sheep, wildlife and wild lands

March 2022

Friend of the bighorns,

The days of March melt quickly as we eagerly await the Wind River Range changing into lavish green robes from its snowy winter blankets. The days grow longer and we flirt with warmer temperatures yet are humbled by sporadic snowstorms. Hiking up Trail Lake Road in Whiskey Basin one can observe the young grasses sprouting alongside stubborn patches of snow. In this time of transition, we reflect on the “seeds” we’ve planted and the expectations we hold for their sprouting and legacy.

At the National Bighorn Sheep Center, we sow the seeds of conservation and appreciation for wild spaces for the next generation through our outdoor programs and museum.

We share our March newsletter to highlight how we see our “seeds” sprouting in our world of outreach and conservation education. Thank you for joining us on this trail.

Yours,

Sara Roni Bridge
Executive Director

*“There is simply no issue more important.
Conservation is the preservation of human life on earth,
and that, above all else, is worth fighting for.”
— Rob Stewart, Sharkwater*



View of the Wind River Range from the Dubois Badlands, March 2022

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Museum & Giftshop

Spring Hours
Tuesday-Saturday
10AM-4PM
10% member discount

National Bighorn Sheep Center

Wildlife Collision Mitigation Strategy Complete for Dubois



TORY TAYLOR (DUBOIS) — It has long been recognized that wildlife/vehicle collisions on US Highway 26/287 in the Dubois area are a major problem. The Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) has documented that over 100 deer per year are killed on this stretch of highway. Bighorn sheep have also been struck by vehicles as they cross the highway east of town. The area being analyzed for solutions to this problem spreads 25 miles from the Shoshone National Forest boundary on the West side to the Wind River Reservation on the East.

The Wyoming Department of Transportation, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wind River Indian Reservation, National Bighorn Sheep Center, several conservation groups, and many concerned citizens continue to address this ever-increasing destruction of wildlife and vehicle damage.

Although there are many deer, elk, other animals and birds killed, the National Bighorn Sheep Center is particularly concerned about one segment of the highway that involves bighorn sheep. This segment along the curves about 12 miles east of Dubois, known as Red Rocks, is located within the Wind River Indian Reservation. Bighorns often cross this busy stretch of highway in search of forage and water, especially during the winter and spring. Despite warning signs and flashing lights, bighorn sheep and deer are often killed by vehicles while crossing this highway segment. With an ever-increasing number of cars and trucks using Highway 26/287 through Dubois, this threat to bighorn sheep and other wildlife will only increase. Solutions to reduce the danger to wildlife from vehicle collisions are on the way. For many years, various projects have been suggested, such as lowering the speed limit to prevent bighorn/vehicle collisions, but without success. The Wyoming Legislature controls the vehicle speed limits, but is opposed to reducing the speed limit in such areas for wildlife. Today there is a Master Plan which will place highway warning signs and construct fencing, wildlife barriers and overpasses which will hopefully reduce wildlife and vehicle collisions. The proposed plans to prevent wildlife and vehicle collisions in the Dubois area will take much time and money. Section 6 of the Master Plan is the highest priority area where construction will begin in 2022. Hopefully these measures will prevent bighorns and deer from entering the highway right of way to cross the road and reduce the number of wildlife and vehicle collisions.



Trail Lake Meadow Renovation Update

AMY ANDERSON (LANDER) — The WYGF has begun the process of renovating the Trail Lake Meadow which is located just past the Conservation Camp along the Trail Lake Road. The renovation of the meadow was highlighted as a priority task in the Whiskey Mountain Bighorn Sheep Plan. The implementation started when Shoshone National Forest Fire and Fuels crews successfully completed a prescribed burn in early 2021 to remove canopy cover of smooth brome and basin wild rye. These two grasses are not desirable forage species for bighorn sheep or mule deer, both of which winter in the Torrey Valley.

A mixture of native and introduced grasses and legumes are included in the mixture. Both low stature and more rigid, higher growing plants were selected in order to provide forage whether there is significant snow cover or not. The native grasses were selected due to their presence in fecal samples collected from wintering bighorn sheep in the area. Legumes will provide nutritious forage for both bighorn sheep and mule deer as well as fixing nitrogen to improve soil health in the meadow. A total of 30 acres will be seeded with this mixture using a no-till drill.



Trail Lake Hay Meadow 2021 summer prescribed burn

Species (% Seed Count)

- Falcata Alfalfa (15%)
- Medium Red Clover (15%)
- Sainfoin (10%)
- Orchard Grass (10%)
- Pubescent Wheatgrass (15%)
- Blue Bunch Wheatgrass (15%)
- Sandberg Bluegrass (10%)
- Idaho Fescue (10%)



Trail Lake Hay Meadow (before 2021 summer prescribed burn)

National Bighorn Sheep Center

Monteith Shop Update

Brittany Wagler and Rachel Smiley from the Monteith Shop at the University of WY provided an update about the lambing study at our Annual Meeting. Wagler explains this is the “best year so far for lambs” with two lambs still alive in Dubois of those collared this summer. Smiley dived into the concept of *chronic carriers* and described the extent of chronic carriers in this region. Daryl Lutz from WYGF explains a *Test and Remove* program as a viable strategy that may aid the hurting group in the Red Creeks subherd East of Dubois. This tactic has been successful in other areas of the West (i.e., Hell’s Canyon near Lewiston, ID led by Dr. Frances Cassirer). **Visit bighorn.org/repository** to see the full Monteith Update and join us Saturday April 9th at 11A on Zoom to hear Dr. Frances Cassirer discuss *Test and Remove as a Management lever*



Webinar Series: *When Wilderness & Culture Collide: Human Predators and Big Game Behaviors* - March 31



LARRY TODD (MEETEETSE, WY) Wyoming’s mountain archaeology is a **puzzle**. A really complex puzzle, with tens of millions of pieces scattered over millions of acres of rugged, high elevation landscape. But the archaeological puzzle pieces are also mixed with bits and pieces of other puzzles with pieces that look very similar. Same size, same shapes, similar color schemes. Game behavior and movements puzzles; snowpack, runoff, and rainfall puzzles. Vegetation species and abundance puzzles; treeline and forest fire puzzles; erosion, mass wasting, and sedimentation puzzles. All these have been mixed together over thousands of years and all have many missing or damaged pieces. Todd’s talk for the

National Bighorn Sheep Center explores how research into one key variable – culture (defined as information acquisition, processing, storage, and transmission) – may help assemble parts of several of these puzzles at once and reveal a more complete, connected, and unexpected picture of Wyoming’s dynamic landscapes.



The National Bighorn Sheep Center Goes to Sheep Week

RYAN BROCK (RENO, NV) The Center hosted mock sheep captures at the *Youth Wildlife Conservation Experience* at the Wild Sheep Foundation’s (WSF), *Sheep Week* in January. Youth had the ability to net, capture, blindfold, hobble and then “collect” information for their data cards, modeling wildlife biologists and technicians.

Truly a hands-on educational event, this event offered something for everyone. Youth and parents already engaged in outdoor recreation and conservation further developed and enhanced their skills; those new to this space were inspired to learn more. This event, which has grown over the past decade, was designed to excite and inspire the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts and wildlife conservationists. Over 1,300 youth participated.

“I am glad I will not be young in a future without wilderness.” - Aldo Leopold

CAMP BIGHORN 2022

Camp Bighorn, launched in 2019, grows in popularity each year. Although five months away, we already have campers signed up. Our 2022 program introduces new sessions such as *Backpacking 101*, *Mountain Shoshone Living*, and *Maps and Compass Navigation*. Local volunteers return year after year to host favorite programs such as kayaking and archery, 'Art of Taxidermy', and 'Edible Plants'.

Through this program we provide opportunities in experiential education. Locals who've trailed and stewarded these valleys and hills for over 30 years lead campers on hikes in Whiskey Basin. They share the unique history and culture of Dubois, WY and they share their love of this place.

When asked what makes Dubois special, Gary Butler, former regional Whiskey Basin Habitat Coordinator replied: *"The habitat that's here, the diversity of wildlife and the people who love and enjoy them."*

Sending a child to Camp Bighorn *"is learning that is rooted in what is local—the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature and art of a particular place."* **Join us as a camper or sponsor!**



PHOTOGRAPHERS RETREAT 2022

August 8th - 13th 2022: The Wind River Photographers Retreat offers a week-long get-away for the adventurous photographer who wants to intimately explore Wyoming and hone his/her techniques. Based at the remote and scenic Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp, photographers venture through the Wind River Valley with locals and award-winning photographers Sandy Zelasko and Bill Sincavage for morning and evening photoshoots. Technique workshops (Photoshop/Lightroom) and portfolio reviews take place in the afternoons.

Creating a true 'retreat' experience, photographers are invited to partake in yoga, hiking, campfire conversations, live music, and educational programs around conservation and the unique history of this region. Meals and cabins are included in the tuition.

"I was very impressed with the professionalism that Sandy and Bill had, for their openness and kindness. I feel the group was brought together nicely and that we grew together and were able to learn, not only from Bill and Sandy, but from each other. I attribute that to the leadership that was provided and the professionalism of the staff." 2021 Retreat Participant



April and May Events

Dr. Frances Cassirer <i>Test & Remove</i> Webinar	Sat. April 9th	11AM MST	Zoom
Annual Spring Clean-up (VOLUNTEERS NEEDED)	Sat. April 30th	9AM MST	Sheep Center
Part 1: <i>Why the Badlands are Anything but Bad</i> with Bruce S. Thompson Webinar	Thurs. May 12th	6PM MST	Zoom
Part 2: Badlands Exploration with Bruce S. Thompson	Sat. May 14th	9AM MST	King Fisher Road Trail Head

Want to see our recorded webinars? Visit bighorn.org/repository

Call us to schedule a guided nature & wildlife tour 307-455-3429