

October 2015



Lansing Area Chapter Safari Club International Newsletter

HUNTING THE GHOST IN THE MOUNTAINS

By David Ratliff, SCI Life Member

This sheep hunting story starts out like most sheep hunting stories by booking a hunt at least a year in advance and then several months of physical preparation before departing to hopefully harvest a Stone Sheep.

My Outfitter, Mr. Shane Black of BC Safaris, and I have become good friends over the years as I have hunted with him several times in the Arctic and have grown to trust and respect his hunting knowledge and advice. I booked the Stone Sheep hunt with Shane at the SCI convention in Vegas in 2014. We were set to go to his Lodge in the Cassiar Mountains in Northern British Columbia in mid-August 2015.

My official first training day was May 1st of 2015 to get in physical shape for what I knew was going to be a tough physical hunt. I had hunted three different species of sheep in the prior 12 months (Dahl Sheep in the Yukon, Desert Bighorn in Mexico and Marco Polo Sheep in Tajikistan) and I knew the Stone Sheep hunt would be no picnic. Intensive hill climbs with a heavy pack were daily events along with tread mill work and a serious diet regiment. I wanted to be in the best shape I could be by August 13th, my departure date. I was able to lose 30 pounds and felt pretty good about my condition. Little did I know the mountains were still going to kick my butt!

The summer came and went quickly. It was the middle of August before I knew it and time to head north. My 36 hour trip would

take me to Vancouver, then to Terrace, BC and ultimately to Dease Lake, BC to the float plane base. From there, after loading my 50 pounds of gear into the plane, I was flown into BC Safaris main lodge called Turnagain Lake Lodge. The float plane was a 1953 Dehavaland Beaver. I was extremely excited to fly in it as I have been a pilot for the last 20 years and had never had a chance to fly in the "Workhorse of the North". The views were the most beautiful scenic vistas you could imagine. High mountain peaks with lush fertile valleys covered with Willow Bush. There was water everywhere in the form of lakes, streams and some larger rivers. It was wonderful and the further we got away from

civilization the more excited I became thinking of what the hunt would bring and the possibility of harvesting a nice Stone sheep.



We arrived at Turnagain, unloaded the gear, and met the crew of 8 to 10 people consisting of guides, wranglers, camp help and Shane Black. Spirits were high and the weather was good that day. Little did I know that *good* weather in this country was a rarity? The rest of the day was spent sorting gear to get ready to leave the lodge via horseback the next day to head to our first camp. The camp crew was busy getting the horse tack sorted and shoeing a few

horses. I had a good time with the crew helping out wherever I could and watching what it takes to shoe horses. Boy, I am glad that I am not a Ferrier!

The next morning we rode five and half hours up and down the mountains and through two passes. It was spectacular and I have the calluses on my rear end to prove it! We arrived at a very rustic cabin and unpacked to get ready for the next day's hunt. The plan was to hunt from the cabin and it would be home base for the next few days. If we found sheep in other areas, we would move to a spike camp. My guide, Lucas Hobson, was a veteran Sheep

hunter with many successful hunts to his credit. Our veteran guide, Jerry Geraci, had also formerly owned another hunting lodge in the area and had hunted sheep for the past 30 years. He was great to have along with all of his hunting stories and history of the area. Our wrangler, Corey McMillan, would prove to be an important asset.

Over the next three days we checked out four different basins that were in the vicinity of the cabin. We did a lot of glassing and quite a bit of hiking into different areas of these basins trying to get a look at some sheep, but to no avail. I said to Lucas and Jerry that hunting these sheep was like trying to find a Ghost in the Mountains. They laughed and said, "That's sheep hunting". We

did see Mountain Caribou, Grizzly, a Mountain Goat, and great scenery, but no Sheep. The weather also played a role in the days' events with rain on and off every day. Good rain gear is a must when hunting in BC, for sure. During the evening of the third day my guide Lucas called back to the Lodge and spoke with Shane. He recommended that we move to a new area where some sheep had been spotted the year before. So, with that we made a plan and packed what gear we needed for 5 or 6 days and looked forward to seeing some new ground.

The next morning found us with some dry weather which was a pleasant change. We spent three hours on the horses to get to our spike camp. We set up a tent and a dining fly and got ready to do some scouting. We rode three horses as high as we could ride then hiked up and over the pass into a huge basin. We were not there 20 minutes glassing the basin when Corey spotted three sheep working their way down the far mountain slope into the grass flats in the bottom of the basin. Finally, I got to see my first Stone Sheep in the wild and three Rams to boot. They were all colored Gray with the apparent white rear ends which are easy to spot in the mountain rocks. The rest of the body of the Sheep just blended into its background. Unfortunately, the three Rams were not legal as none of the possessed a full curl of horn which protruded above the bridge of their nose. How great it was though to finally see some sheep. It grew late in the day and with daylight fading we hiked back to the horses and rode to our humble spike camp.

The following day we awoke to pouring rain and strong winds. We all got up and had coffee and decided to get back in the tent and get a little rest and see if the weather would break later in the day. We crawled out of the tent at noon and noticed the weather was changing so we grabbed a quick lunch, saddled the horses and headed back up to the pass that we climbed through the day before. We made it through the pass and it quit raining. Wow, what a break! We got into glassing position to check out the big basin and quickly spotted the three Rams from the day before. We watched them feed some 1000 yards away for about 30 minutes and then Jerry got up and walked ahead about 100 yards to peek around the corner of the mountain we were sitting next too. Around the corner lay another small basin which was mostly loose shale and some scree stone. Jerry put up his binoculars and he quickly put them down and turned to us and held up two fingers like a peace sign. We all looked at him and held our hands up as we thought he was joking around. Then in a whisper, we could read his lips he said, "Two Rams". With that we walked carefully to his position and kept a low profile, so as not to be spotted. There, in the back of the basin on a bench half way up the cliff face some 500 feet from the bottom of the basin were two Stone Sheep Rams. One was Gray and the other was a dark chocolate brown. Lucas and Jerry quickly got out there spotting scopes and zeroed in on the Rams. I heard Jerry say to Lucas the Gray is definitely legal, no question. Lucas turned to me and smiled and I smiled back as he said, "do you want to see him in the spotting scope". As if there was any doubt that I wanted a closer look, I leaned in and viewed this magnificent Ram, stone gray in color with huge horns that were full curl up past the bridge of his nose. I said to myself, "the hunt is on".

Now it was three o'clock in the afternoon and we knew that we if we went after him, there would be a chance of running out of daylight. We quickly agreed that we would have a go at him and if we could not get close enough for a shot by the end of legal shooting time we would just back off and try for him tomorrow. This Ram was on a bench that was totally isolated from the rest of the basin with no easy access route for a shooting position, go figure? We quickly hatched a plan for a route of travel up the mountain to get above the Ram and hopefully be able to get to a side hill into a higher ground shooting position. After an hour of climbing and side hilling on some very steep terrain we came to a crevasse that we could not negotiate. So with that we climbed back down to a bench below us and side hilled some more, sometime literally jumping from rock to rock. If we missed our footing I would not be writing this story. I had made up mind that day to put fear behind me and put everything I had to muster into getting into shooting position for the Ram. After encountering two more crevasses, going up and down the mountain two more times and being seriously out of breath it was now 7:30 PM. The sun was starting to go down and on top of that, we had cloud cover. I have read from several other sheep hunters that the mountain gods are always against you. Now I knew firsthand what they meant.

At 7:30 we were perched on top of a rock point on a narrow bench. Peeking over the rocks we could see the Rams feeding and our hope was that they would feed towards us. We sat there for 15 minutes waiting to see what they would do. It felt like hours, not minutes. As the mountain gods would have it, the Rams bedded

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down. Lucas told me that we were at 630 yards from the sheep and asked me if I could shoot from here. I said yes, as I had been practicing at Glen Daly's farm with my rifle all summer and I was confident out to 800 yards. But, I said to Lucas that we should try to get closer as I did not want to take a chance on making an unethical shot at that distance due to wind drift. Lucas quickly glassed around and said to me, "do you see that rock point down there on the second bench?" I said yes. He said that if we can make it to there before shooting time was up it would take another 200 yards off the shot. I said, lets go!

All of the training I did in the prior months was put to the test during this final drive to the shooting position. You do the training so you can have the stamina to make the final push and do what is required to make the shot. At this point the hunt is a total mental game of me pushing myself to get to where I need to be in time. With a lot of hard breathing and some motivation from Lucas we were within the last 120 yards of our stalk. The only problem was that now we had to climb almost straight up a jagged rock slide the last 100 yards. Lucas looked back at me and said, "You are doing great, we need to get up there". I was out of gas, but with that, I made a commitment to myself that I was not going to let this opportunity escape me, so I pushed on. After a few stops up the rock slide we crested the summit and spotted a large rock with a smaller flatter rock on its right side. This was our last cover between us and the Rams, our shooting position, now only 20 yards away. I asked Lucas to crawl up and place his backpack on the rock on the right side as I am a left handed shooter and it would be the perfect rest as he spotted off the larger rock to the left. He was off and I was catching my breath so I could hold the gun steady when the time came. He motioned to me to crawl forward and I was up there in a flash, chambered a round in my 300 Win. Mag. and made sure the safety was on and put it on the backpack. I couldn't believe I was finally in a position where I could get a shot at a Stone Sheep. I scoped the bench that the sheep were on as Lucas said they had changed position and the big gray Ram was now laying down. He asked me if I had him spotted and much as I tried I could not find the Ram lying on the bench and daylight was fading fast. Lucas said, "He just stood up", then I took my head out of the scope and looked across the bench and I could clearly see him standing there. I quickly got him in the scope and Lucas said he is at 370 yards, take him. I controlled my breathing and focused the scope on the correct elevation point and squeezed the trigger. Boom! The gun fired and I saw the Ram take two quick loping steps to right, but did not see a bullet impact or hear the bullet whop. I chambered another round and got ready for a second shot. At that moment when I reacquired the Ram in my scope he stopped broadside turned his head as to look out into the basin and his neck got wobbly and he fell over. Lucas said, "I think you got him". What a feeling came over me as I had just completed a life long dream of harvesting a mature Stone Sheep. I kept the rifle aimed at the spot the Ram dropped for the next several minutes to be ready in case he stood again, but he never did. After about 10 minutes we were sure that the Ram was finished and we signaled to our other friends to come and meet us.

By the time we climbed across the basin and up to the Ram it was dark. We found the Ram in the exact spot where he had tipped

over. A perfect shot center mass right behind the front shoulder, I was elated. A beautiful trophy lay before us. I said a prayer for the animal and us and placed a last clump of grass in his mouth as a memento of respect. By the time Jerry and Corey showed up it was well past dark and we opted to take photos and skin and butcher the animal. Then we packed up everything and hiked out in the dark with our headlamps back to the horses. We did not reach the horses until 3:30 AM. We were all exhausted, but did not care because we had our Ram. We got back to camp at 4:30 AM and celebrated by having Mountain House for breakfast and hitting the sack. We slept most of the day and got up and celebrated some more by having sheep steaks cooked on a hot rock over the camp fire. Sheep meat is delicious and we savored every bit.

This sheep hunt started out like many other sheep hunts, but along the way it turned out to be a total team effort. I thank Lucas, Jerry and Corey for all of their help. This was the toughest physical hunt and also the most rewarding hunt I have done. It was a lifelong dream come true for me hunting and harvesting the ghost in the mountains.

Mark your calendars -

Below is a list of the next
scheduled Chapter Dinner
meetings at Eagle Eye

October 8, 2015

October 25 – *Veterans' Pheasant Hunt*
(Dunn Creek)

December 10 – *Whitetail Night*

February 11, 2016

March 18, 19 - *Fundraiser*

April 14

June 8 – *Chapter Elections*

August 11

October 13

December 8 – *Whitetail Night*

February 9, 2017

See you there!

Congratulations Hartland and Grand Ledge Archery Teams

These two schools competed this spring and summer with other teams in the 2015 National Championship which was held May 9th -11th at the Louisville Kentucky Expo Center and the World Championship which was held July 22nd-25th at the Music City Center in Nashville, TN. Hartland had 12 archers win \$750 scholarships at Nationals; one



were, Layla Rumble, Abby Gardner, Sarah Bragg, Emily Paajanen, and Shane Karls. Shane Karls won not only overall Top HS Male Archer, but also the Top Overall Champion at Worlds! This earned him two brand new bows!!



archer won \$1,500, and Sydney Vivian took home the top scholarship amount of \$20,000 at Nationals.

At the World Championship, the Hartland High School team, in their 8th season, finished 1st (WORLD CHAMPIONS!!) and the Grand Ledge

Hartland High School Varsity Archer, Sydney Vivian, stayed a few extra days after the World Tournament to compete as a member of the USA All-Star team. The NASP All-Star Championship is an event where each country will take the top 16 archers from that country and compete in a bracket double elimination tournament. Sydney earned a spot on this team at the National Tournament and her coach, Rob Jellison, was once again one of the Team Managers/Coaches of the USA All-Stars. Sydney's 4 person team reached the finals against another USA



High School team, in their 3rd season, finished 40th in the Bull's Eye competition. In the first ever World 3-D Competition, Hartland Middle School team placed 3rd and the Grand Ledge High School team placed 18th in their respective brackets. The World Event did not have any scholarships, but rewarded some top archers with medals, plaques, targets, arrows, and even new bows. World Individual Hartland Award winners



team (capturing a third consecutive Country Title for the USA). Her team finished in second place in the 4 person event and two other USA 4 person teams came in 1st and third.

The World Tournament is an event where schools from the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, South Africa, and Namibia come to compete against other schools from these competing countries. To qualify for Worlds the

teams must shoot very well at their country's National Event. In the USA, Nationals had over 12,000 archers shoot at the event (setting a new world record for the largest archery tournament) and the top teams from this event attended the World Championship. The World Tournament had nearly 5,000 archers in attendance, roughly



1,500 Elementary School archers, 2,000 Middle School archers, and 1,500 High School archers.

These hard working athletes can be very proud of their accomplishments. The Hartland and Grand Ledge Archery Programs received sponsorship funds from SCI Lansing Area Chapter a few years ago and these funds helped the programs build a solid foundation. They would not be where they are today without the support of our Chapter and great coaches willing to invest in the youth. Congratulations to all!!



**NATIONAL ARCHERY
IN THE
SCHOOLS PROGRAM**

AWLS Teacher & LAC- SCI Donation

The Clinton County Career Connections Agriculture Food and Natural Resources program spent the afternoon at Demmer Shooting Center on April 24th. Students arrived at Demmer with a variety skill levels including several who had never shot a firearm before. Demmer instructors taught about firearm safety, and students practiced shooting air rifles on the indoor range. Uncertainty gave way to excitement as new shooters learned and found success in an unfamiliar sport!

The group was led by Heather Borden, the instructor of the CCRESA Ag, Food and Natural Resources Program. With the prior financial support from SCI Lansing, Heather attended the American Wilderness Leadership School Teacher's Program in 2012. "The AWLS program was, by far, the best teacher training experience I have ever had. I would characterize much of what I learned at AWLS as "life skills," and the subject area I have chosen for my teaching career allows me the opportunity to pass on these life skills to my students!"

These experiences were made possible through donations from the Safari Club Lansing Chapter. Thank you very much for your support of Agriculture and Natural Resources instructors and students in Clinton County! Not only are we gaining a fundamental education, we are enjoying learning!



President's Message by Mike Hoskins

Where did the summer go? Did it even arrive? As I stare at my calendar, it does not seem possible that we are heading into fall and beginning all the great activities that come with it (I still have spring projects that I have not started!). I have been told that the older one gets the faster time seems to pass. Although it does not seem possible for time to pass by any faster, it is evident that life happens quickly when one is busy focusing on the many activities that life brings.

With time passing by so quickly, there has also been an increase in the speed and frequency of attacks on our hunting freedoms, heritage, and rights we enjoy in this great country. Was it not just yesterday where schools and communities arranged their schedules around hunting and fall harvest time? In the quick, short passage of time, we have seen more threats on hunting and hunting bans both home and abroad powered by emotionally charged rhetoric from anti-hunting organizations.

The Safari Club International Foundation, which is First for Wildlife®, is leading the way in providing scientific information to move the rhetoric from the arena of emotion to sound science and logic based responsible wildlife management. Safari Club International, which is First for Hunters®, is using that information to leverage the legal and political system to protect our hunting rights and heritage.

The necessary component that allows SCI and SCIF to do the work necessary to protect hunting rights and wildlife is you and all your fellow hunters to be, become, and remain active members of SCI. Why? Many voices and combining many small amounts of member dues drive the organization. Amazingly, although the attacks on hunting rights have increased, SCI membership has slightly decreased. Many members have forgotten to renew their membership nationally and/or locally. Many hunters do not know what SCI does for them on a daily basis and do not know that their hunting rights depend on their membership.

Time is moving fast and it does not seem possible, but it could be soon where our hunting rights are unrecognizable compared to what they are today and have been in the past (just look at what hunting in California is like today). It is imperative that you review your national and local SCI member status. Renew it if it has lapsed. Talk to a few hunting buddies and let them know about the importance of them becoming a member of SCI and the Lansing Area Chapter. Your hunting rights depend on it.

Shoot Straight!

Veteran's Pheasant Hunt

Sunday, October 25 at 9:00 a.m.

Dunn Creek Outfitters
10446 Shaftsbury RD
Laingsburg, MI 48848
\$200.00 per member (limit 10)



Join deserving veterans and fellow Chapter members as we honor our Veterans on a pheasant hunt. We will begin the day with breakfast, a tower shoot, then lunch and storytelling in the lodge and finally those interested can go on a walk-up hunt to clean up the pheasants that got by us on the tower shoot.

Go to the chapter website, www.scilansing.com, click on Oct.25 event to register or send a check payable to SC Lansing at Mike Hoskins at 7668 Oneida RD., Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Members on the Move ...

Chapter Member Tim Salisbury has been busy over the last year. Tim has been working on completing his North American 26. He is very close to attaining that accomplishment. Tim's latest adventures were a Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep hunt in September of 2014 with Marty Lightburn of Rocky Mountain High Adventures in British Columbia. This



completed his Sheep Grand Slam. He also harvested a Mexican Central Plateau Whitetail taken in Jan 2015 on a trip to



Aguascalientes, Mexico with Terry Braden. Not to be outdone, Sue, Tim's wife, also harvested a magnificent Whitetail on that trip. Tim had a Polar Bear hunt come together in April 2015 in the Gulf of Boothia west



of Igloolik, Nunavut booked with Canada North Outfitters and was able to harvest a spectacular polar bear

and seal. Congratulations Tim and Sue! We look forward to hearing about the completion of your goal.

Past President Ron Lanford bought an elk hunt donated by Bob Northrup of Amber Elk Ranch last year at the banquet and took his grandson Brett with him. Ron

had talked with Bob about the chance of upgrading to a small bull. Bob had one that another guy was going to let his dad shoot but the guy never got up there, so Ron thought that he would let Brett shoot it as a present for being ranked #1 in wrestling in the state at 171#.



Ron tells the story ... As we were sneaking through the woods, Bob said he had a big bull that was running

with the small one and he wanted to also get it harvested. He said he'd give me a good price on it, but I really had no intentions of shooting an elk.



We finally spotted the elk bedded on the top of a ridge and put the sneak on them. Brett's bull got up and he made a good shot on it. Then, Brett handed the rifle to me (or I took it) and I lined up on the big bull that did not go far after Brett shot the smaller one. I debated taking it, but figured I'd never see another bull like that my entire life, so I harvested it. I couldn't believe the size of his body, let alone his antlers. His back leg was thicker than my shoulders are wide. It was a great day in the woods with my grandson that I will remember every day I look at that great elk on the wall.

Ron Lanford wrote in while in Oregon on a blacktail deer and black bear hunt. He took this really nice blacktail deer on the first morning at 608 yards. His description was "It was really cool". Ron was also able to take his neighbor kid, Pete, out for a turkey hunt this year. Pete's bird came in first and was going to whip the decoy but they waited until four other gobblers made it in. They took two really nice mature birds



taken at the same time. It doesn't get any better than spending time sharing the outdoors.

Proud 2014 Chapter Safari Wish hunter is now telling his hunting story in Heaven

We are saddened to report that Kaiden, one of our Safari Wish Hunters from last fall has passed on. If you were at our last Fundraiser you may recall that he was in the hospital at the time and could not attend. While his grandma sat with him, his parents along with his infant sister came and received his beautiful deer mount. They returned to the hospital and wheeled it into his room in his sister's stroller. The hospital staff was taken aback but Kaiden was thrilled.

Please pray for his family as they cope with his loss.

