



# CALIFORNIA BIGHORN SHEEP

2019 SEASON

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## AS USUAL...

the summer flew by and September came before we knew it. After spending one and a half months in The Northwest Territories guiding, and surviving a huge dumping of 3 ½ feet of snow on a mid-August Caribou hunt, it was a wonderful, warm

welcome home in Southern British Columbia. Temperatures were in the high twenty degrees Celsius each day, with cool crisp nights, just as fall should be. And, the hunting was just as spectacular as we remembered it.

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Our 2019 Sheep Season brought out David Ratliff and Danny Spindler, both from the Eastern USA. It was a long flight to get here, but we believe both hunters went back with smiles on their faces the entire long trip home.

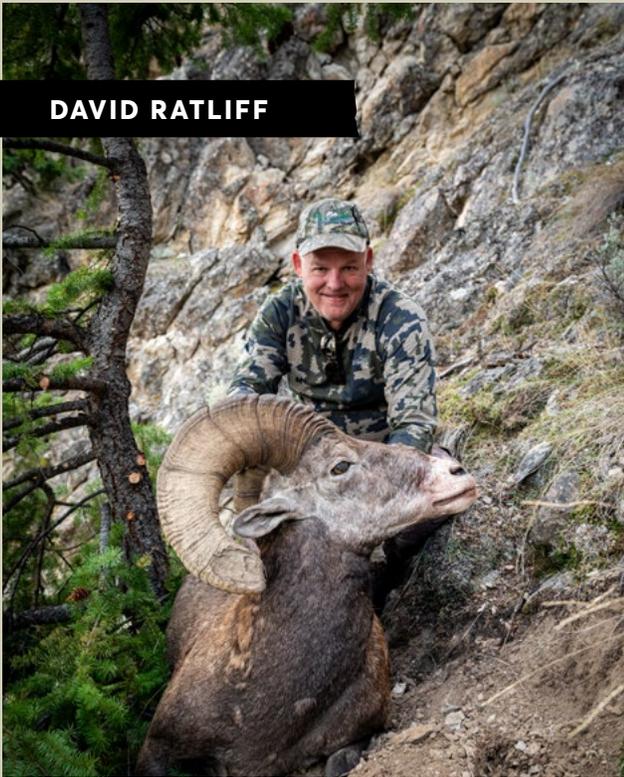
We started things off with Danny Spindler. This was Danny's final wild sheep to complete his North American Grand Slam, as well as his North American 29. On day one, we were quickly on a band of 8 rams with two nice shooters in the group. After deducing which ram was the eldest, and best of the bunch, we had to wait for them to make their move. They played hooky with us for a few hours as we sunbaked out on the hoodoo river bluffs, in the wide open. No shade was to be found anywhere. It's a wonder anything grows in this harsh dry environment, but, the sheep seem to find vegetation in the most unlikely of places

and make a great living at it. After a few hours in wait, the rams finally crested the ridge, and our lead ram bedded right on the lip of a cliff edge. It was a bit of a risky shot, but it was now or never. With many years of hard earned practice and shooting experience, Danny aimed, and his aim was true. One swift clean shot from his rifle and he solidified his ram of a lifetime. Danny's ram never even left his bed. His ram was a beautiful, twisted out 6.5 year old with nice heavy horns and great flare. Danny was all smiles as we took photo after photo, and he never missed a beat. After 55+ years of hunting, it's a true achievement to see it come to fruition, and to achieve ones' goals of attaining all 29 of North America's species. Truly an accomplishment, and we couldn't be happier to have been there to share it with you. Congratulations Danny!

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**DAVID RATLIFF**



After day one's huge success story, we moved on to our next hunter David Ratliff, to see if we could replicate our good luck. We quickly found a ram we had spotted pre-season, and were on him on day three.

After an arduous hike, we finally came within range in heavy timber, but could not get a good look at his horn length to ensure his legality. We sat on him for over an hour in the pouring rain, waiting for that magic turn of the head, to no avail. When finally, just when they were about to stand and stretch, a helicopter buzzed directly over our heads no more than fifty feet airborne, and our rams BLEW out of the country! We were in shock! After such an effort to get within 100 yards of our rams, to have them chased out of the area by a random helicopter flying overhead, of all things!

(There was a large landslide along the Fraser River this Spring, and a huge effort was put forth by Biologists and Wildlife Personnel to ensure the continued, unhindered spawning run of the salmon along the river routes. These helicopters were utilized for this purpose, and were constantly flying back and forth for months to this effect, but usually flew more inland or higher up. For whatever reason this time, they chose not to, and it affected our hunt. But, as it happens, you make the best of it, and move on.)

The next day we said goodbye to Danny Spindler as he was homeward bound, and thereafter once again began the search for the ram we almost had within our reach the day before. After many hours behind the glass, we relocated him over 8 miles as the crow flies from his original position, and still running like something possessed! These poor sheep were sure spooked by the helicopters' aerial activity this summer, and you could see the affect it was having on them. After putting him to bed, we went back to camp to ensure an early start the next morning. As planned, we zipped out to location the next day and once again located our band of rams, more or less in the same spot as the prior evening. We planned a very careful stalk into position, and by mid-afternoon were lying prone waiting for the perfect shooting opportunity.

After a 45 minute wait, our ram stood up to stretch, and David squeezed the trigger. The vapor trail from his .280 could be seen in our Phone Skopes clearly, as it landed square in the ram's vitals, 360 yards away. Our ram ran over the edge of a cliff face and thankfully, wrapped

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himself up in a sage bush, only to fall ten feet. If he had not, it would have been a few hundred more feet to the bottom of the gully, and not an easy way down! We were fortunate. David's ram also completes his North American Grand Slam, and was an INCREDIBLE California Bighorn to harvest. At 10.5 years old, this old warrior was a monarch of the Fraser River Valley. He had survived countless mountain lions and wolves prowling the hills, and many harsh winters. We witnessed him coughing on numerous occasions, and we do not think he would have made another winter. A perfect ram to take, and a trophy of a lifetime. With bases measuring over 15 ½" and carrying it to his third quarter, and

broomed back to 30"x 33", scoring 168" B&C. An amazing animal, well worth the effort and time we put into him. Congratulations David!

This concluded our 2019 Sheep Season...all too quickly! By day five we said goodbye to David Ratliff and the boys of summer: our guides Robin Lee, Nate Venables, and trusty cameraman Connor Gabbott. Thanks to my beautiful wife Rosi for her incredible meals as usual, and delicious sandwiches had on the mountains. It was a year to remember with two fantastic trophy class California Bighorn, and we cannot wait to do it again next year!



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