

Trophy Rams of the Pecos Wilderness

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A Hunter's Guide to Bighorn Sheep in the Pecos Wilderness

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Introduction

Foreword: Duncan Gilcrist

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1. Becoming a Sheep Hunter

This chapter explores the motivations for becoming a sheep hunter from a cultural point of view, and it discusses why and how sheep hunters become dedicated to the pursuit of rams in the high mountain country. A philosophical and aesthetic bent in sheep hunters is defined, from written sources and experiences.

2. Pecos Bighorn History

This fascinating chapter delves into the extinction and reintroduction of bighorns in the Pecos Wilderness. Transplant efforts by horses pulling carts, use of pack-horses to move sheep, and finally the use of helicopters in relocation efforts are described. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and men and women dedicated to the return of bighorns, are portrayed in both words and photos.

3. Seasonal Ram Ranges

The Hudsonian to Alpine country, home of the Pecos bighorns, is outlined from north to south and from east to west. Seasonal home ranges of bighorns and particularly rams is discussed in order to give the hunter beginning knowledge on what might be expected during summer and autumn, and how winter range and forage affects Pecos rams' horn growth.

4. Pecos Wilderness History and Access

This chapter gives a brief sketch of the history of the Pecos Wilderness and describes trailheads, trails and how to get into the central Pecos range from the north, west, south and east perimeters of the Wilderness.

5. Ram Stats

The information for this chapter was generously provided by the NMDG&F. Listings of all rams ever harvested in the Pecos gives interesting insights into the history of ram hunts. A listing of all rams harvested that scored over 168 Boone and Crockett points gives the potential sheep hunter a basis of knowledge on what type of rams might be considered a trophy ram in the Pecos. All rams with scores over 180 B & C points are listed. This chapter will help the hunter set realistic expectations for the size of rams that he may hope to hunt in the Pecos.

6. Scoring and Field Judging Pecos Rams

The Boone and Crockett system for measuring and scoring bighorn rams is explained for the information of readers new to scoring and record books. A second part of this chapter goes into the "how to" of estimating the score of rams by using methods developed by Montana experts Duncan Gilchrist, Tim Magness, Jack Atcheson, Jr. and others. This chapter is valuable to both first time sheep hunters and for seasoned hunters who desire to hunt the largest of the Pecos rams.

7. Equipment for Hunting the Pecos

Equipment needed for ram hunting in the high country is discussed for both the unguided and the guided hunter. Tents, clothing, sleeping bags, shoes, food, rifles, optics, and numerous other necessities are recommended. Equipment necessary for bow hunters and muzzle-loader hunters is included in this chapter. Climatic conditions similar to the arctic demand specialized equipment, and the usefulness of horses determine the need for specialized equipment for the horseback hunter and stock in the wilderness.

8. Outfitters and Guides

This chapter defines the difference between an outfitter and guide. Many hunters are uncertain of the necessity to hire an outfitter to hunt rams in the Pecos. The permit holder and those that dream of hunting Pecos rams will find this chapter useful. Information will help hunters make that all-important decision on whether or not to hire an outfitter. Alternative methods for using outfitters' knowledge, stock and equipment are reviewed. What services to expect from an outfitter are explained. Means and methods for checking references on outfitters and guides is explored for the hunter.

9. Horses and Mules

This chapter describes how stock makes the hunter in the Pecos more efficient. Horses and mules may be a detriment to the hunter depending on how well the stock is trained and the experience of the horseman. Advice on care and use of horses in a wilderness

setting is given in this chapter. Equipment necessary for the rider, the riding horse and for the packhorse is discussed. There is nothing better than a good mountain horse or mule to get the hunter and his equipment in and out of the wilderness. Examples of failed hunts due to horse problems as well as stories of how horses made the hunt easier are recounted.

10. Miscellany of Information on Ram Hunting

Hail and lightening may be life threatening; what to do when hail and lightening arrive in the high country is required reading. Hikers, fishermen, hunters and horsemen are trashing the Wilderness. The many facets of scouting are discussed- from trial runs, to acclimatization, to fitness and exploration of bighorn country.

11. The Future of Pecos Ram Hunting

What is the possibility of the Pecos producing a new state record ram? What are the possibilities of a herd die-off due to diseases? What management means and methods might work for the future of the Pecos herd? Will the Pecos continue as the "crown jewel" of New Mexico sheep hunts? These and other questions are pursued and attempts were made to answer these questions.

12. Sheep Hunting in the Early Years; A Tribute to the Maes Ram

We researched the people and revealed the story of the first ram scoring over 185 Boone and Crockett points to be harvested in the Pecos. Except for the Stan Boots ram, the Maes ram may be the only ram ever taken in the Pecos to have grown sixteen inch bases. The extremes of weather, and the enduring will of early hunters to pursue rams in demanding conditions provides a classic example of hunts in the early years when rams were much more difficult to find and harvest. Although the Joe Maes ram is not found in the Boone and Crockett record book; it stood as the largest ram taken in the Pecos for a nineteen-year period.

13. Sheep Hunting Stories

Several successful ram hunters were asked to submit stories of their hunts. There is much to learn from the stories included from stalking to burglary in the high country to scoring rams on your own. These stories are both entertaining and informative. Photos of rams taken and stories of rams missed make for an interesting chapter.

Appendices

Additional information for the chapters on Ram Stats and Scoring and Field Judging Rams.

NMDG&F Bighorn Sheep Possession Permit and Boone and Crockett Score sheets.

About the Authors