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Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation

The **RAMPAGE**

Spring 2019



Encampment River Canyon Sheep Capture January 2019
By Jordan Seitz

A photograph of a bighorn sheep lying in a snowy field. A person's hand is visible near the sheep's head, possibly adjusting a collar. The sheep has a dark brown coat and curved horns. The background shows a snowy, mountainous landscape.

“If this doesn’t inspire a person to work with wildlife, then I don’t know what would!” Those were my parting thoughts after spending several hours shoulder to shoulder with the Game and Fish experts as the sheep mugging crew flew in 8 ewes to be processed and fitted with GPS collars. I am quick to say it was an experience of a lifetime for those of us whose job doesn’t revolve around managing our natural resources or wildlife.

Student Josie Little put this in perspective by saying, “This opportunity can help kids learn what it takes for us to care for our animals and earth.” And,

“Being able to actually work on the animals with G&F was great: to see the process about how people keep a balance in the ecosystem.” Chad Pickett, one of the parents that joined us, felt that “It was a good learning experience to see how they are captured, the care given to the sheep while captured, the data that was collected, and the urgency to release the sheep. Well worth the experience!”

Biologist Teal Cufaude headed up the capture and had been keeping me updated with possible times and dates it would occur so that I could get some of my students involved again (see our article in the Spring 2018 RamPage). On Saturday the text came through that it was going to happen the next day at noon, so I started to spread the word. When the time came, half my students were still able to attend despite the weekend, in addition to a bunch of parents and community members. A few adults had filled out G&F volunteer paperwork ahead of time and were as eager as the students to help out! Decker Sipe was another one of my students and felt that, “Going on the bighorn sheep field trip was awesome. I am really

glad I got to go because we actually got to touch a real bighorn sheep.”

If the sheep could have had human thoughts... or even seen since they were masked...they would have thought they were celebrities flying in on a private chopper and having the red carpet, aka tarps, rolled out for them. Student Jaylin Bowns reflected on this and thought: “Watching the sheep get dropped off is amazing,” in addition to when “... they get up and run.”

To take a step back, and look beyond the epic fact that we were touching live bighorn sheep, it was an awesome teamwork experience. Game and Fish staff from different towns embraced the crowd which allowed students, parents, community members, and some visitors, to watch or work together with them to safely and efficiently sample, test, and collar some of Wyoming’s most iconic wild animals. It was an amazing opportunity that most of us will be eternally grateful for, and potentially life altering for some others. Jaylin also said, “This opportunity was a really great chance for me to make sure that I wanted to be a vet.”

Data is currently being logged from the collars, and we look forward to learning more about their movement habits!

Finally, Student Ashtyn Tieszen wanted to: “Thank the G&F for letting us come and be able to have this experience and let us participate in all the different jobs they have to do.”