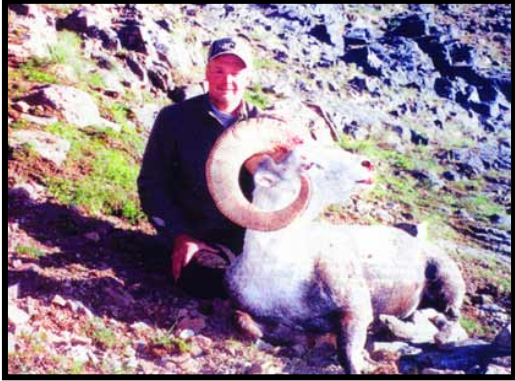


Stone Sheep by John R Wilson

After having taken a Dall in 1994, my next logical move was to book a Stone Sheep hunt. I hunted in August 1998 for 14 days. The Outfitter had bought a concession in B.C. south



of the Croykes a couple of years prior to my trip there and I was primed for a great hunt. Luck did not prevail, but seriously wet, cloudy, raining by the bucketful cold weather did. So, after two brutal weeks, I left without a Stone but did manage to take a 10+ year old billy that provided much needed protein to our diets.

The year 2002 found me in the Yukon after a Stone. Different province, same story; rain, clouds, snow, more rain + no ram taken. This

left me zero for two on Stone Sheep hunts but with some great hunting experience under my belt.

I took a leap of faith and booked with Keith Connors and Shane Black of BC Safaris at the January 2003 FNAWS Reno Convention. August 1st arrived and the long anticipated hunt was on. I felt a certain amount of pressure to connect on a Stone as this would be my third try. I thank my wife and family for being so patient with me in my sheepfever afflicted state. Much to my surprise and happiness, when I arrived at base camp at Turnagain Lake, my old friend Dick Gunlogson was sitting there on the steps of one of the cabins. Dick was my outfitter for a GREAT bear hunt on the Alaska Peninsula several years ago, and I learned that he and I would be hunting together out of the same camp, with Keith Connors as his guide and Al Crawford as mine. Dick was there in pursuit of his "Slam Ram" and what an extreme pleasure and privilege it was for me to share a tent and a hunt with such a legendary figure from the early days of Alaska hunting. The stories I heard, the experiences related throughout our hunt were just about worth the price of admission! Dick should definitely put his thoughts and experiences on paper in the form of a book as I'm sure they would enthrall many readers just as his spoken stories did me.

The hunt went beautifully. Keith's area holds an abundance of Stone sheep and other game and from the amount of young rams, ewes and lambs we saw. They should be in good shape, population wise, for a long time. We had only 1 day lost due to weather, otherwise hot, sunny, and plenty of bugs was the rule: perfect for finding rams up on the ridge tops, trying to catch the breezes and relief from the bugs. Keith, Dick, Al Crawford and I spiked out via backpacks on the sixth day into a rugged area known to have rams. The great weather held and we had a great time sleeping on the ground under the stars, feasting on delicious fare not normally associated with backpack hunting.

At 8:30 am on the morning of day 7, a band of 6 or 7 rams was spotted from just below the crest of the next to last pass we needed to climb. One of those rams looked especially good in the spotting scope. The next 11 hours were spent side hilling and climbing

towards those rams. As we made our way towards the mountain, it became apparent that we had entered the "city of the ram," upwards of 40 to 45 rams, mostly concentrated on the mountain tops and ridge crests. Many of these rams seemed to appear out of thin air at the tops of the cliffs where we had seen a very close proximity, making every the first bunch of rams early that same minute of that day filled with morning. At 8:15 pm, after almost 2 excitement and anticipation hours of peeking over the edges of the cliffs, waiting and watching, Al gave me great news that the large ram seen from across the valley that morning was now directly below us. I eased my way over the top of a large flat rock outcropping and spotted 2 half-curl rams about 300 yards down a ridge. Al, sensing that I wasn't seeing the big one, calmly tipped my head to where I would be looking straight down. There he was feeding directly towards us, head down, totally unaware of our presence, less than 100 yards above him. I waited for him to come broad side allowed his left horn to clear from his shoulder as he turned uphill, held low, half way down his near foreleg and carefully squeezed off a shot. I sent another round through his right shoulder. He tumbled and came to a stop just before he reached a major drop off, about 300 yards downhill.



L-R Guide Al Crawford, John Wilson, Outfitter Keith Connors, and Dick Gunlogson

That ram laying down the cliff represented the culmination of 34 days spent in pursuit of the wiley Stone sheep. All the pent up emotions, pressure and anxiety all seemed to vanish into thin air as I just laid there and looked at that magnificent

ram. The fact that he turned out to be a very nice trophy was extra icing on the cake. Both horns taped 38 1/2", 13 2/8" on the bases, 10 1/2 years old and a green score of 159. I had finally connected on a Stone sheep and I was so very happy.

This Stone sheep harvest puts me at the 3/4 Slam mark. I want to thank my guide, Al Crawford for an excellent job getting me on the ram and for looking out for me throughout the hunt. Many thanks to Roy Caswell, our wrangler, who did a super job keeping track of the horses and things around camp. Thank you to Keith Connors for outfitting this outstanding hunt. Keith is a master of organization and detail and runs an excellent camp. His lodge on Turnagain Lake is possibly the most breathtaking spot for a base camp I've ever seen. I would not hesitate to recommend B.C. Safaris to anyone looking for a great adventure, wanting to see some awesome country and a great chance at some excellent game.

My camp partner, Dick Gunlogson, got his Slam Ram on the evening of the 9th day and that was cause for great celebration late into the night. I feel fortunate to have been there as a witness to Dick completing his Grand Slam. What a fitting culmination to the end of a wonderful experience in the northern British Columbia wilderness!