

**WYOMING'S SUPER TAG TRIFECTA**

# ULTIMATE WESTERN BIG GAME HUNTING ADVENTURE

Many hunters aspire to pursue species like bighorn sheep, mountain goat, and Shiras moose. These animals are elusive, the hunts are physically demanding, and they occur in some of the most remote, beautiful, and rugged terrain in the world. The problem is getting a license. Where licenses are randomly allocated by lottery, draw rates are typically in the low single digits. Alternatively, it can take decades of building preference points before a license is obtained. Most hunters will get a chance to hunt these species once in their lifetimes.

*There is a way; however, to circumvent the process.*



The Wyoming's Super Tag Trifecta raffle allows the winner to hunt three such species in a single season! The lucky few who win the Trifecta are set up for experiencing the ultimate western big game hunting adventure.

Ben Jackson, from Cheyenne, Wyoming, had this opportunity in 2015. He could not believe his ears when he received the news from Wyoming Game and Fish Department Director Scott Talbott in July. Choosing which species to hunt from the nine offered was not easy (bighorn sheep, mountain goat, Shiras moose, elk, wild bison, deer, antelope, mountain lion, and black bear). Ben decided to go after bighorn sheep, mountain goat, and Shiras moose, although wild bison was a close contender.

Ben had to start planning his hunts immediately, which started with a regimented workout and shooting routine. Word traveled fast about



Ben being the Trifecta winner and many people were eager to share in his adventure. John Porter of Morning Creek Outfitters called. Not only were arrangements made to have Ben's bighorn sheep and mountain goat hunts outfitted; in addition, they would be filmed for the "Best of the West" television show. Wilderness Athlete Nutrition helped Ben with his physical training in preparations for the hunts as well as provided nutritional products for him to use in the field. Maven Optics supplied the binoculars.

Ben's first trip was an archery hunt for moose. He and his family made camp on August 30th in the Snowy Range Mountains.

Ben had located a number of good bulls during previous scouting trips, but did not have a particular one picked for the season opener on September 1. That would change on the first full day of scouting. Two bulls were located in the evening; both were mature animals and would be considered trophies by most hunters. Ben quickly picked the one he wanted. While slightly smaller, one bull had some extra points on his right antler that dropped down instead of curving up, giving him a completely unique look.

Opening day proved fruitless. Perhaps the cloudy, rainy weather kept the two bulls hunkered down in the forest. Day two started with high hopes. After a short drive to their hunting area, both bulls were immediately located from the road. Ben was able to carefully stalk to within seven yards of the drop-tine bull, but ground vegetation prevented a shot. Both bulls spooked, re-appeared briefly behind him, before moving off for good.

Ben, feeling heartbroken and collecting his thoughts, spotted an even larger bull was coming up the valley. Ben decided to follow this bull, while not giving up on the drop-tine bull, and actually passed on a shot at this second bull at 19 yards. His gamble paid off, the larger bull led him right to the drop-tine bull which was located about 100 yards away just inside a stand of pines. By carefully stalking from tree to tree, Ben was able to get to within nine yards. Again, vegetation prevented a shot. He finally solved this problem by drawing his bow and carefully stepping out to one side of the tree he was hiding behind until a clear shot materialized. Ben let the arrow fly. The shot looked good, but the penetration was poor. After an all day tracking job, the bull was located again and put down for good. It was late evening by now. There were a total of eight family members and friends in camp, which made the pack out relatively easy. Ben's Super Tag adventure was off to a good start.

The morning of September 20th found Ben at a Forest Service trailhead near Meeteetse to begin his bighorn sheep hunt. Camp was a six-hour horseback ride away. They began spotting sheep starting on the first full day of the hunt. On day four, they decided to go after a ram that



they had spotted earlier. Everybody in camp was filled with anticipation as they loaded the horses that morning. While placing a pack on his horse, the animal stumbled forward, knocking Ben to the ground. A protruding saw blade left a five-inch gash in Ben's leg. The injury ended the hunt and completing the rest of the Trifecta was now in doubt.

The doctor told Ben that he needed at least two weeks rest. During the following days, Ben struggled with the pain. The wound would start to open every time Ben's tried to exercise his legs beyond short, slow walks.

On October 1st, Ben received a phone call from John. A friend had spotted a great ram during an elk hunt. Ben was nervous about the condition of his leg, but desperately wanted to go after the ram. Plans were made for a short trip. They located the ram several miles away through spotting scopes late in the evening on the first day of the hunt. However, heavy snows and strong winds that began that night and lasted for the next two days prevented them from reaching the valley where the ram resided. Ben returned home empty handed.

With the bighorn sheep and mountain goat

season winding down, John and Ben planned one more hunt. It would begin October 20th. They would go to a new area and try to harvest both a bighorn sheep and a mountain goat. John knew of a mountain bowl that always held a few rams. While rams were eventually found in this location, bad weather and low visibility prevented a stalk. Several mountain goats were also spotted, but never in a location where a stalk was possible. Ben was able to shoot a nice deer in this area.

Eventually, the decision was made to try a new spot. By this time, Ben was resigned that he would probably have to settle for a mediocre ram. They located some six-year old rams one evening with the plan to return the next day to harvest one. When they returned the following morning, the rams could not be located. While eating lunch and planning their next move, another ram was spotted. This one was bigger than any they had seen on this trip. The ram was bedded about 1,300 yards away, but a series of steep ridges separated the hunting party from the sheep.

All nonessentials were left at the lunch spot for the stalk. It took 2 1/2 hours to get to



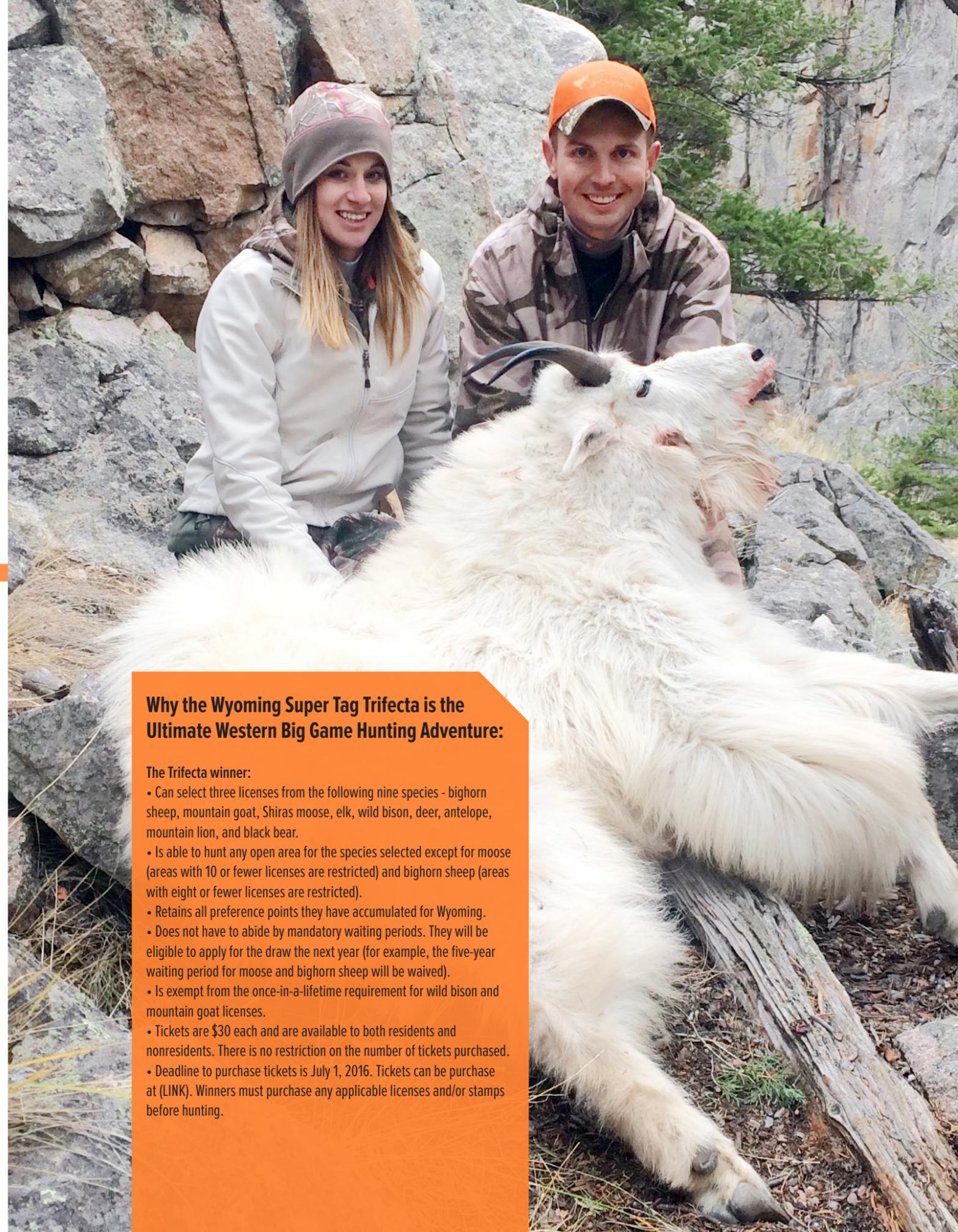
within shooting distance. When Ben finally settled behind his rifle for the shot, the pressure was almost overwhelming. He dry fired three times to calm his nerves before finally pulling the trigger on a live shell. When he did, the ram crumpled. Relief flooded over him. His ram was down, but the work had just begun. Ben's ram was a full-curl, eight-year old. While the ram was shot at 1:30 in the afternoon, by the time they skinned and de-boned the ram and made it back out through the rugged terrain, it was 2:00 a.m. before they arrived back at camp.

When Ben returned home to Cheyenne, he really did not know if getting a mountain goat was in the cards. There was just one weekend left in the season. He was pretty beat-up from the sheep hunt and his leg was still bothering him. His wife convinced him to give it one more shot. John knew where a three-year old billy was located. While not a huge mountain goat, it would allow Ben to complete the Trifecta.

On October 29th, Ben and his wife left for Cody. They had just two days to hunt for the billy. Upon reaching Cody, it was a short horse ride into the area where the goat was last

spotted. However, after 20 minutes of glassing, not a single goat could be found. Suddenly, Ben saw a "snow patch that began to move" on the opposite canyon wall from where they had been focusing. It was a billy, and a big billy at that! The shot would be across a canyon, but within Ben's range. As often happens with mountain goats, the billy took about a 25 foot tumble after the second shot, but Ben's goat was down. The Trifecta was completed. In order to retrieve the goat, they had to go in from a completely different direction which included a 60-mile drive and an hour four-wheeler ride. When they finally reached the goat, it was in good shape and the horns had survived the fall. It was also a monster, and green scored 50 3/8ths Boone and Crockett, potentially enough to make the all time record book.

When reflecting upon the experience Ben says: "My Super Tag experience was incredible. It was one of the biggest adventures of my life. I saw areas of Wyoming that I had never seen before and probably never see will again. It is an experience that few will have, but those that do will always cherish. I am not sure I will ever have a hunting season that compares."



### Why the Wyoming Super Tag Trifecta is the Ultimate Western Big Game Hunting Adventure:

#### The Trifecta winner:

- Can select three licenses from the following nine species - bighorn sheep, mountain goat, Shiras moose, elk, wild bison, deer, antelope, mountain lion, and black bear.
- Is able to hunt any open area for the species selected except for moose (areas with 10 or fewer licenses are restricted) and bighorn sheep (areas with eight or fewer licenses are restricted).
- Retains all preference points they have accumulated for Wyoming.
- Does not have to abide by mandatory waiting periods. They will be eligible to apply for the draw the next year (for example, the five-year waiting period for moose and bighorn sheep will be waived).
- Is exempt from the once-in-a-lifetime requirement for wild bison and mountain goat licenses.
- Tickets are \$30 each and are available to both residents and nonresidents. There is no restriction on the number of tickets purchased.
- Deadline to purchase tickets is July 1, 2016. Tickets can be purchase at [LINK](#). Winners must purchase any applicable licenses and/or stamps before hunting.