

STALKING THE LARGEST WILD SHEEP

Dr. Roy Schultz of Avoca grew up in the Treynor area and served as a veterinarian of the region for many years before he retired. He is internationally known as an authority on swine diseases and has traveled around the world speaking on this topic. But, he also has another passion--that of wild game hunting, especially sheep. He has accomplished the rare feat of achieving the World Slam of Wild Sheep which includes 12 varieties. The ultimate experience, Dr. Schultz noted, was the hunt for a trophy Marco Polo sheep, the largest wild sheep of the world, weighing up to 450 lb. These sheep are found in a very remote area of high elevation and harsh climate of the Pamir mountain ranges of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, northern Afghanistan, northern Pakistan, and western China. The hunting party operated from a base camp in Tajikistan at 12,599 ft elevation with mountain peaks around them ranging to 17,000 ft. Dr. Schultz noted the habitat of the Marco Polo sheep is a high altitude desert plain that can be largely traversed through the valleys and passes by 4x4 vehicles. Dr. Schultz explained the sheep daily trek about 2000 ft of elevation as they go from grazing during the day time on the valley floor to refuge in the rocks of surrounding peaks at night. They do this mainly to avoid wolves and to get away from cold winds. Dr. Schultz and his hunting guide were able to spot a large ram with some ewes, but it was late in the day so they decided to come back the next morning. When they finally saw the sheep again the next day they started going over the mountain down the other side. Dr. Schultz said he and his guide walked over the mountain crest of about 16,000 ft following the sheep. In the late afternoon they finally caught up with the small flock. They were about to disappear again and Dr. Schultz took a shot at the ram nearly 500 yards away. Through a spotting scope the guide declared a hit, but the ram and ewes disappeared over a ridge. The guide recommended that they descend the mountain and come back the next day. The next day they found the ram of trophy quality. Dr. Schultz said you can see the mounting in the Avoca City Hall. The Marco Polo sheep are an endangered species, Dr. Schultz noted, and hunting is restricted, but there were many sheep observed in their habitat. Dr. Schultz is a founding member of the Foundation of North America Wild Sheep which has been instrumental in increasing the population of wild sheep on our continent.