

B&C BOOKS

Bill Sheldon and the Wild Sheep of British Columbia



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BORDEN (SELF PHOTO)
TAKEN IN SHEEP
MOUNTAINS.



SHELDON
CARRYING OUT RAM
(40" CURL) BY
TUMPLINE. PACK
INCLUDED SOME
MEAT AND SKIN,
AUGUST, 20,
1931. PHOTO BY
BORDEN



That William G. Sheldon (1912 to 1987) had an interest in mountains and wild sheep is not surprising since he grew up under the influence of his father, Charles Sheldon, whose name needs no introduction to naturalists and sheep hunters.

With a desire to study the wild sheep of British Columbia and to explore the extent of the ranges of the Stone's and bighorn species, young Bill Sheldon, still a teenager, and his close friend, Dick Borden, undertook two full summer expeditions into uncharted Peace River country in 1931 and again in 1932. These trips had as an additional objective to collect specimens of large and small mammals for the National Museum in Washington, D.C. He kept detailed journals during both trips which were not published until many years later. In

a letter to the Boone and Crockett Club, he wrote:

"I plan to write up the trips Borden and I took in Peace River country in the early 30's before professional guides penetrated that country, before the Alcan Highway, before use of planes, and before construction of the hydro-electric plant in Peace River Canyon at Hudson Hope. We packed our own horses, made our camps, etc.; all our hunting was alone; we hunted independent of each other to cover more country and collect sheep from 25 miles north of the Peace River to Liard watershed - probably looking over 150 rams - not seeking record heads but seeking good specimens at geographical locations for the National Museum in Washington."

The journals referred to in Bill Sheldon's letter were eventually published by the Amwell Press in 1981 in an edition limited to 1,000 signed copies with the title *Exploring for Wild Sheep in British Columbia in 1931 and 1932*. John Batten, an early classmate who shared his love of sheep hunting, wrote an extensive biographical foreword to the book.

Bill Sheldon graduated from Yale in 1933 and undertook a career that never strayed far from his love of the outdoors and natural history. His first job as a forest ranger for the Weyerhaeuser Lumber Company was followed by a year-long expedition sponsored by Dean Sage to study the wildlife of Western China and to collect specimens for the American Museum of Natural History. The highlight of this trip was gathering detailed information about the giant panda in its natural habitat. Sheldon's journals of this expedition were published in 1975 by the University of Massachusetts Press under the title *The Wilderness Home of the Giant Panda*. It is the only known study which ex-

tensively deals with the panda in its wild and natural habitat. During this expedition many big game animals were studied and specimens collected of blue sheep, takin, goral, serow, and leopard.

After serving and seeing much action with the ski troops during World War II, Bill Sheldon studied and received a Ph.D. in Vertebrate Zoology from Cornell University in 1948. He then served 24 years under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as Leader of the Massachusetts Cooperative Wildlife Unit. During this time he wrote *The Book of the American Woodcock*, published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 1967, a work considered to be one of the most authoritative studies of the great game bird.

Bill Sheldon was a long-time member of the Boone and Crockett Club. His friend, Richard Borden, has been a member since 1938 and at one time was the chairman of our Conservation Committee. Dick Borden has pursued a career close to wildlife conservation: he served on the staff of the National Audubon Society, was executive director of the National Wildlife Federation, and is best known for his work in wildlife photography. As founder of Borden Productions, Inc. he was responsible for many television productions and educational films on birds and big game for Disney, the National Geographic Society and ABC. He resides in Santa Barbara, California.

Dick Borden also wrote journals of the 1931 and 1932 British Columbia trips he took with Bill Sheldon. These journals have never been published, but we are excited that extracts are planned for inclusion in a new anthology, number eight in the "Acorn" series, to be published later this year. This will mark the revival of the "Acorn" series after an absence of more than sixty years!