

## The Rim of Mystery: A Hunter's Wanderings in Unknown Siberian Asia

### THE RIM OF MYSTERY

*A Hunter's Wanderings in Unknown Siberian Asia*

By John Bird Burnham, G.P. Putnam's Sons, NY 1929, profusely illustrated and with map.

This is one of the few books ever issued "With the Approval of the Boone and Crockett Club." Burnham, a Boone and Crockett Club member, along with a companion, Andrew M. Taylor, embarked on a five month expedition to the remote Chukotsk Peninsula of North-eastern Siberia to determine whether wild sheep existed there and to what species they belonged. Located across from the Seward Peninsula of Alaska, and with the Arctic Circle cutting through it, this area is one of the farthest north locations of the former Soviet Union.

In a dinner at the home of Charles Sheldon, and with Dr. E.W. Nelson, Chief of the U.S.

Bureau of Biological Survey in attendance, plans were made for the trip. The year was 1921 right in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution, and it took help from the Colorado Museum of Natural History to obtain permission from the Revolutionary Commissioner "to hunt birds!" Burnham wasn't interested in birds but the license was impressive enough to get him through the trip.

Although there was reason to believe that mountain sheep existed in the Chukotsk Peninsula, no one knew what the sheep were or how to classify them. No museum in the world had a specimen from the Chukotsk or from any place near it. In the far north the animals are driven to the sea coast in winter to procure food on account of the deep snows of the interior. On the Chukotsk peninsula, where local people hunt seals and walrus along the sea coast, it would seem that sheep driven to the coast by

weather conditions would soon be exterminated.

After a long search and with much hardship, Burnham did secure a mature ewe. He wrote, "It was very different in color from any sheep I had ever seen. Its back was a mouse color with a black dorsal streak and the tail which was very short was black also. The horn flare was unusual." Other than some picked up horns, this was the only evidence of sheep the expedition secured.

Burnham wrote, "In summing up Taylor and I together traveled twenty-two thousand miles and wore out nine pair of shoes in the five months of our trip to get one small mountain sheep. But, we are satisfied because we accomplished our job and had a mighty interesting time while we were about it. You who love new country will understand; life is too short to try to explain to others." ▲▲▲



Theodore J. Holsten, Jr.  
Editor of Specialty Books and Limited Editions  
Communications, Publications and Marketing Committee

