

San Gabriel Bighorn Sheep Restoration Project

On the weekend of July 17th – 18th 2004 Bob, Dave and Chad Morgan engaged in an overnight backpacking trip for the purpose of gathering information, tracking and possibly locating “collared” Bighorn Sheep.

(Coordinates used UTM, NAD27 using a GPS Receiver)

Location:

Pine Mountain Ridge (Mt. San Antonio Topographical Map)

Route:

Devil’s Backbone Trail from Blue Ridge Road at the back of Wright’s Mountain to Pine Mountain. Left the trail at Pine Mountain and descended down Pine Mountain Ridge. Descended Pine Mountain Ridge into Camp Lupine via old logging road near “Fish Fork Trail”.

Statistics:

Miles: 8

Starting Elevation: 8,310 ft.

Maximum Elevation: 9,488 ft.

Ending Elevation: 6,542 ft.

Climbing: 2,034 ft.

Descending: 3,662 ft.

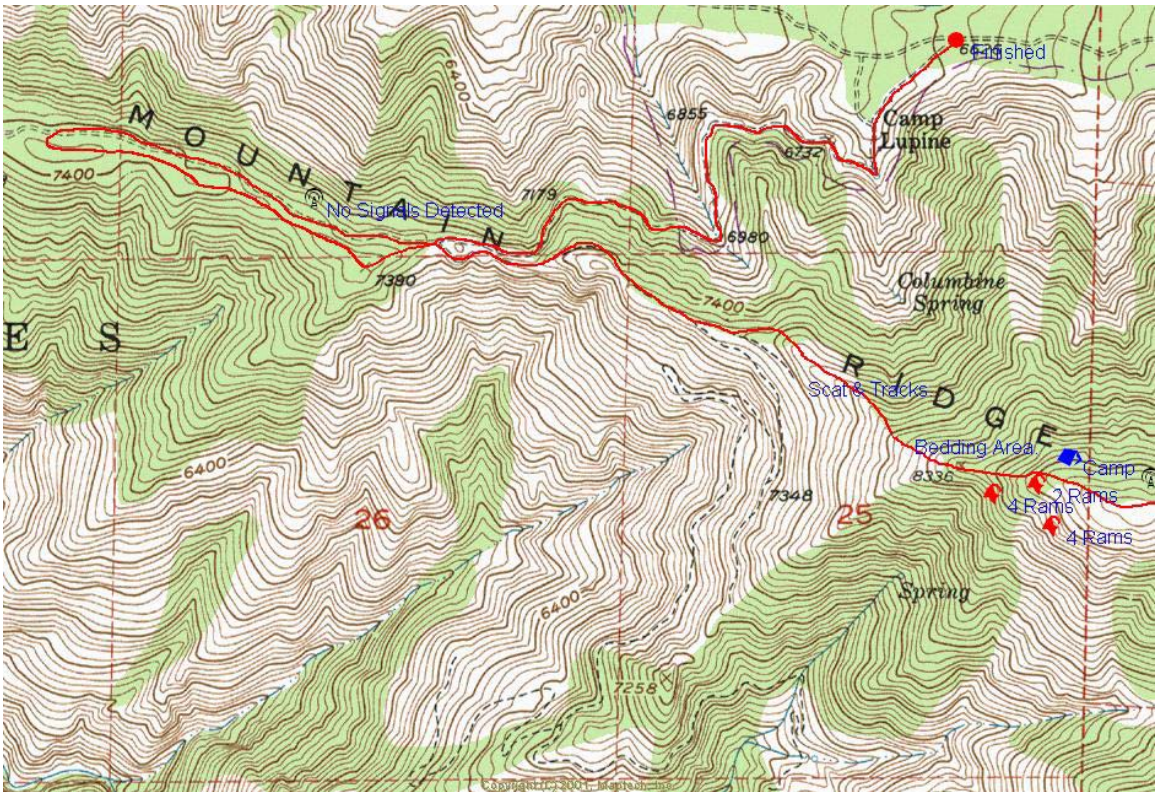
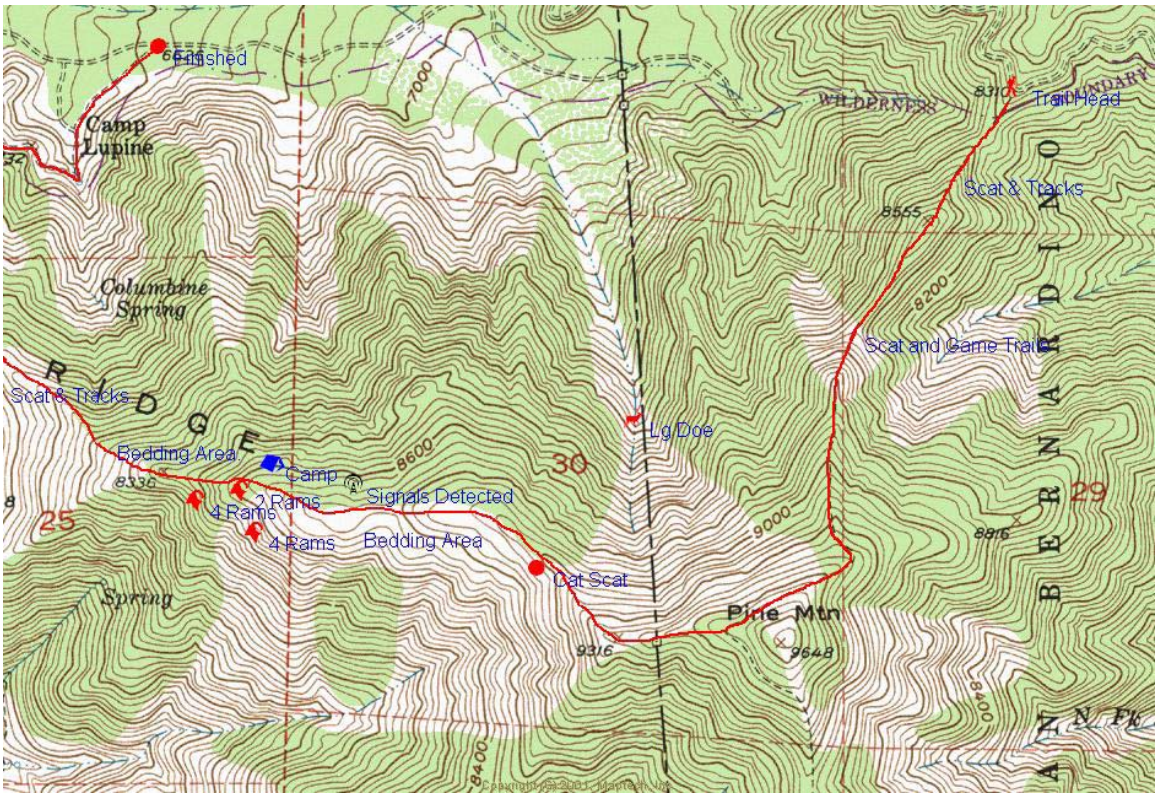
Sightings:

Multiple locations of fresh Bighorn sheep scat and bedding areas

Possible Large Bobcat or Lion Scat located

3 separate Bighorn sightings of 2, 4 & 4 Rams. (Suspect only 4 different sheep)

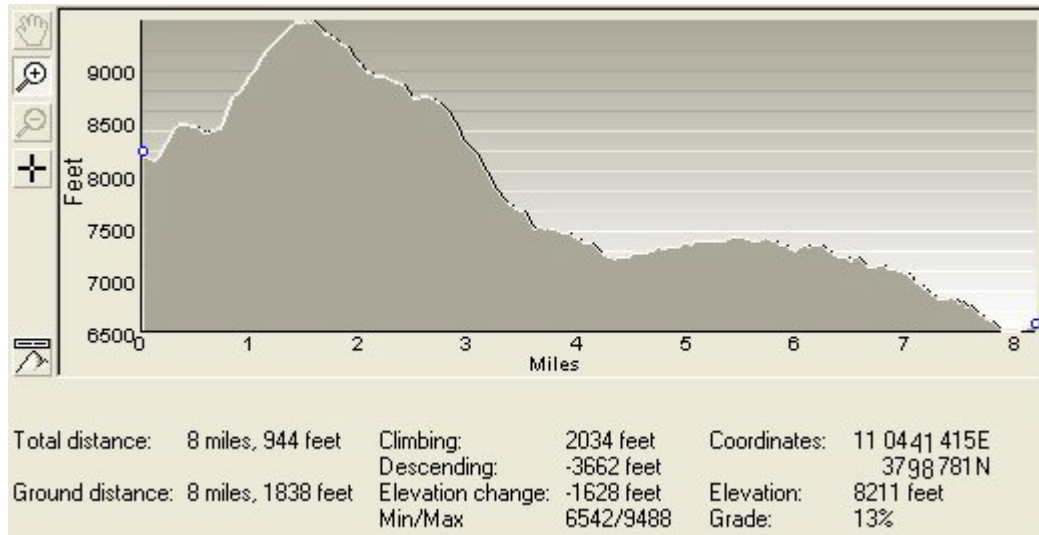
Detection of PM Male Sheep and PM Lion VHF Collars



Topographical Map and Points of Interest

Terrain Features:

While the “Devil’s Backbone” trail joins Blue Ridge to Pine Mountain, on its way to Mount San Antonio, we would be leaving the trail where Pine Mountain Ridge joins Pine Mountain. The route was strenuous, very narrow and steep. Pine Mountain Ridge slants precipitously downward on both sides. Footing was often difficult as the ridge is composed of an abundance of loose rocks and grayish talus. The elevation drop from Pine Mountain was quite severe in places.



While the Ridge would spread out at times, we endeavored to follow the crest of the peak, giving us spectacular views of the canyons on both sides of the ridge. Traversing the ridge down was difficult on the ankles because of the many loose rocks and the steep elevation change.

The ridge was filled with new growth of “Buck brush” and “Manzanita” as well as an abundance of other small plants. The area is making a great comeback from the fire of several years ago and provides a lot of food for the Bighorns.



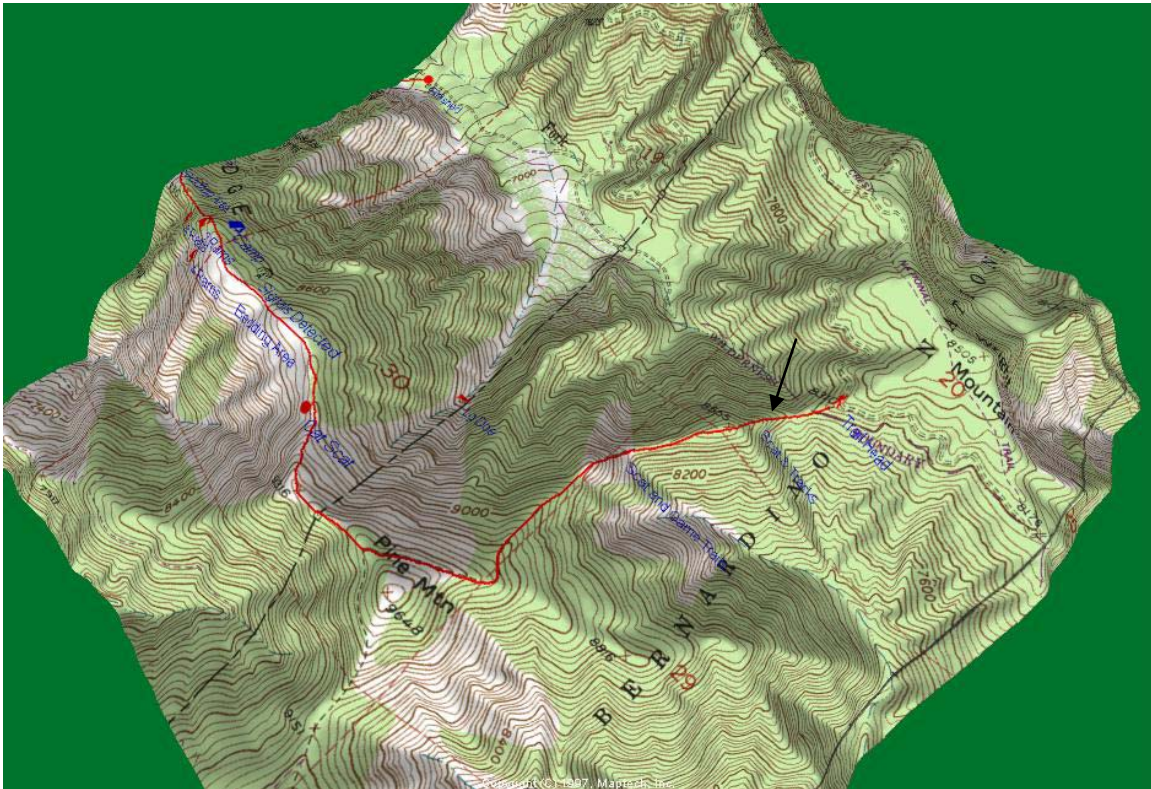
The trail was dry and required us to take all our water with us. Temperatures were in the upper 80s. 8 liters of water each sufficed.

This is definitely Bighorn Sheep habitat and our general consensus from our observations is that the Bighorn Sheep are alive and thriving on Pine Mountain Ridge.

Details:

- On the ridge between the trailhead and the tree line of Pine Mountain there was a lot of scat and Bighorn tracks with multiple game trails crossing the ridge from one slide or canyon to the other.
- Large bear track or possible lion track found. Dirt very dry and soft, track not real distinct.

UTM: 11 0441312E 3798329N





Devil's Backbone between Wright Mt. and Pine Mt.



- From the top of the large Pine Mountain Slide we observed a large Doe drinking from a “seep” down near the bottom of the slide.

UTM: 11 0440340E 3797620N

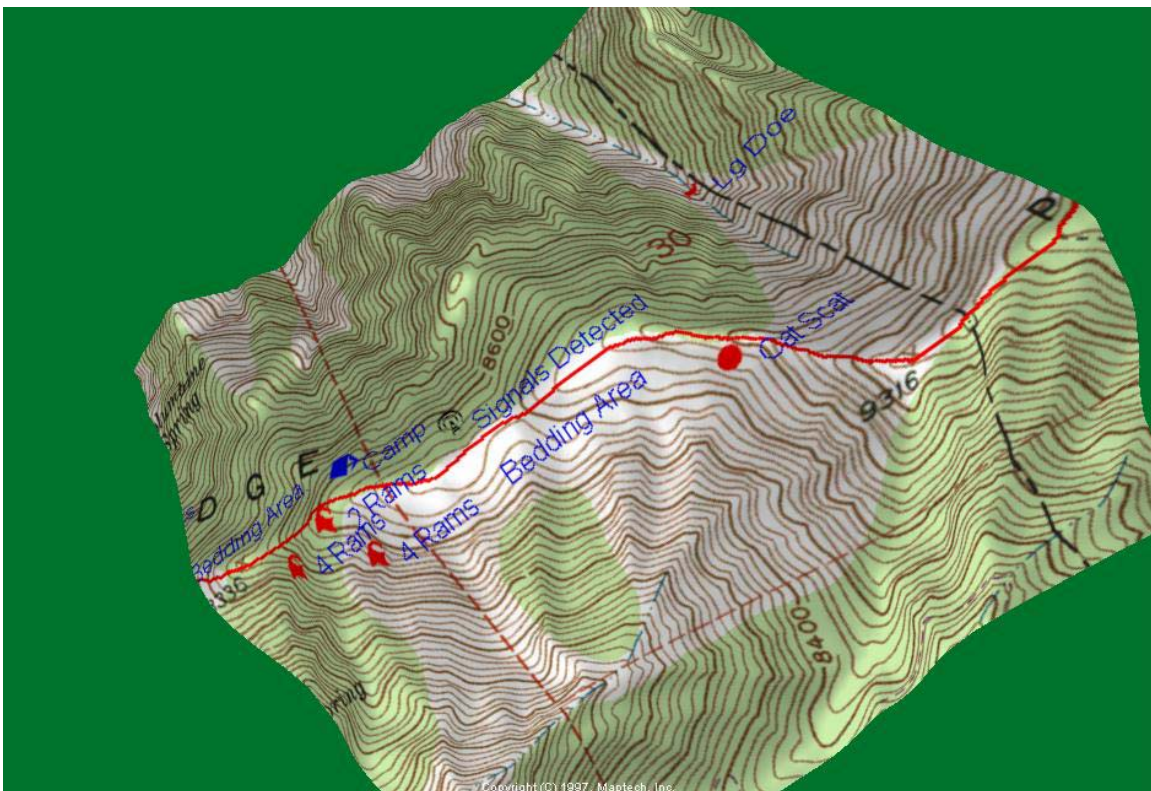


- Large Scat Found. Bobcat? Mountain Lion? Seemed to consist of a lot of fur.

UTM: 11 0439988E 3797208N



Large Scat. Cat?



- From the location of the large scat, down the ridge, evidence of Bighorn became more numerous. Large “bedding areas” in a hollow off the south side of the ridge were found.
- 35 + separate “bedding spots”, many VERY recent found in this depression between:

UTM: 11 0439934E 3797234N and

UTM: 11 0439831E 3797235N



Depression, from the top, with multiple “bedding spots”



Depression, from the bottom, of multiple “bedding spots”



- Late Saturday Afternoon, our first two rams were spotted.

UTM: 11 0439122E 3797399N



Two Rams looking over “Fish Fork”, Southside of the Ridge

- From here we were able to receive a VHF signal on the Pine Mountain Collared Male (159.505MHz) and the Pine Mountain Collared Lion (160.105MHz). Signal emanating from South side of Ridge. Both at about 35 beeps per minute. Lion Frequency stronger. Both signals diminished the further down the ridge we moved and disappeared as we moved to the North side of the Ridge.

- Made camp about 5:30 pm Saturday evening about 50 yards down from the ridge on a flat spot in the trees on the North side of the ridge.

UTM: 11 0439205E 3797489N



- Sunday morning about 7:00 am, spotted 4 Rams grazing and moving up the canyon toward me, near where the 2 Rams were spotted the day before.

UTM: 11 0439004E 3797394N



Three of the four Rams grazing

- Once they noticed me they took off to the East.
- As I moved into a position to see where they went, I spotted four Rams in a canyon to the East of the previous sighting. Since one Ram was actually bedding down, I didn't think it was the same four that I had just seen minutes earlier. I suspect they may have been the same four Rams.

UTM: 11 0439159E 3797309N



Three of the four Rams visible



Four Rams visible

- As we continued down Pine Mountain Ridge, we continued to see numerous evidence of Bighorn Sheep until we arrived at “Fish Fork Trail” and the Old Logging Road.



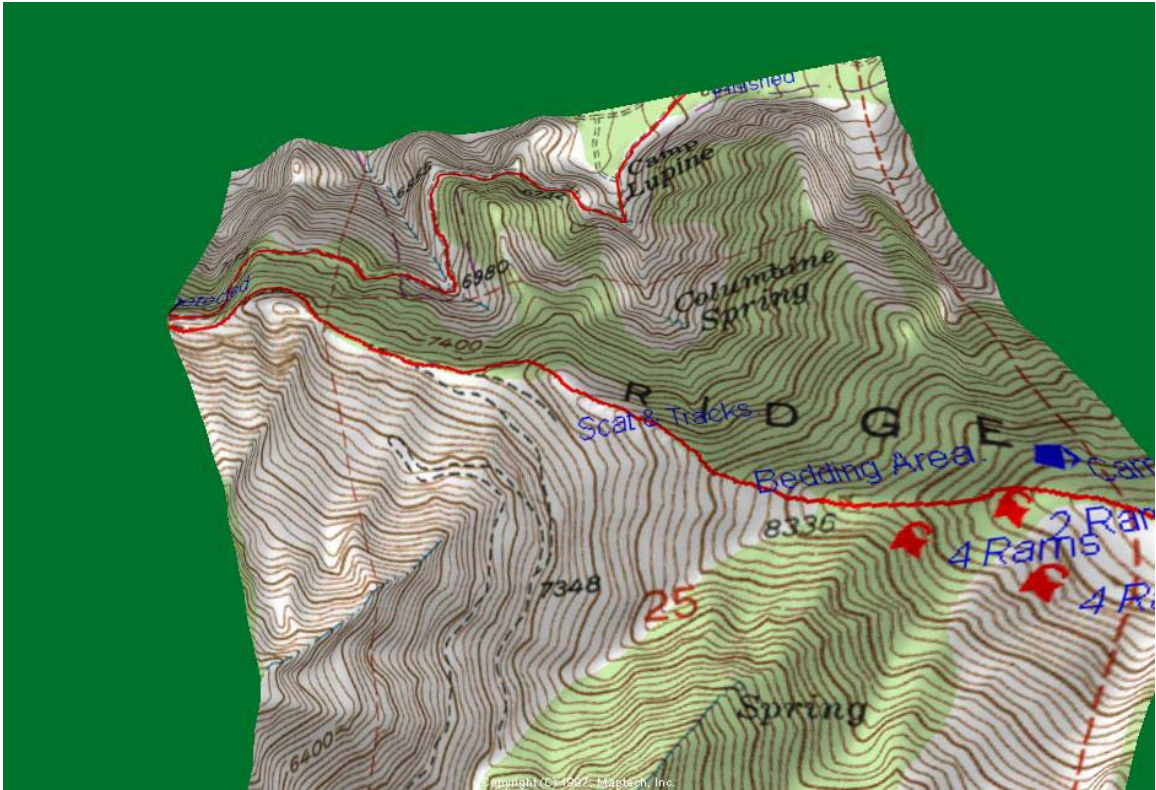
Making our way down the Ridge



Junction of “Fish Fork Trail” and Pine Mountain Ridge

- A second large “bedding area” was found on the North side of the Ridge at:

UTM: 11 0438704E 3797579N



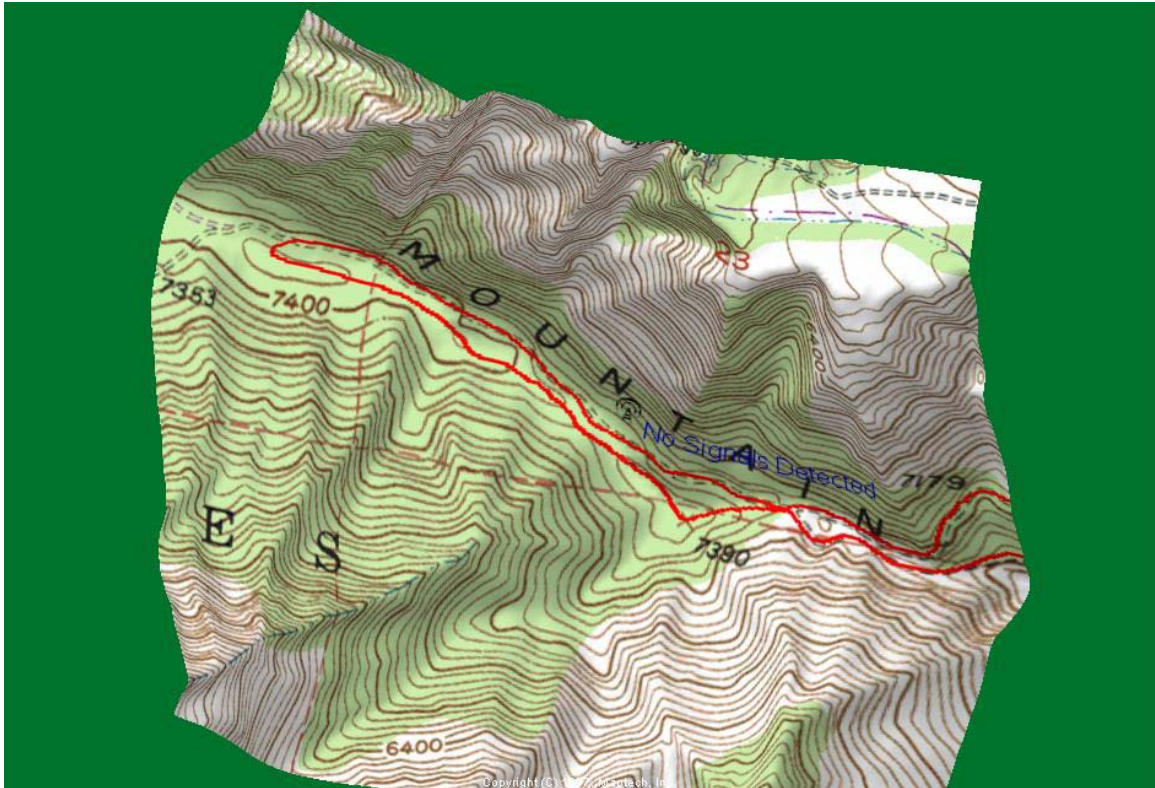
Bedding Area



Tracks and Scat

- We search for a signal for the two collared ewes, (159.260MHz and 159.295MHz), on both sides of the ridge but could not pick up any signals.
Location of Searched area between:

UTM: 11 0437194E 3798157N and UTM: 11 0436152E 3798486N



- From “Fish Fork Trail” to the West on Pine Mountain Ridge, there was no evidence of Bighorn Sheep at all.
- We proceeded down the Old Logging Road and reached Camp Lupine around 12:30pm Sunday.

