Successful wildlife conservation programs are developed around what we call "the wildlife management triad"—a simple concept that reminds us that all wildlife conservation projects are composed of three parts—the animal, its habitat, and the human factor. Without considering all three components, chances for successful conservation of species are slim. While a simple, common sense concept, it is one that is too often overlooked; especially the human component.

A mentor of mine, David Ferguson, for many years in the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Division of International Affairs, frequently reminded me, in relation to conservation projects in Pakistan, not to forget the human component regarding sustainable use of wildlife. His point was that for conservation efforts to successfully assist developing countries in their efforts to conserve wildlife, their citizens and wildlife professionals at the local level must eventually assume the day-to-day management of the program.

Wildlife experts from developed countries can offer valuable initial assistance in setting up a program and helping locals with funding and development of monitoring protocols that fit with the area and that are realistic in terms of operational expense. This approach is much different than many projects involving experts from developed countries; often such projects are more research projects for the consultant than for the development and implementation of a well-rounded wildlife management program that can easily be taken over by locals.

Grand Slam Club/Ovis; Wild Sheep Foundation; Safari Club International Foundation; August L. Hormay Wildlands Institute, Inc.; Mongolian Ministry for Nature, Environment and Tourism; and members of the Mongolian Hunters' Association are working as a team to work in Mongolia for many years, surveying argali populations and their habitat. I have always worked closely with Mongolian natural resource professionals, hunters, and those involved in the hunting and tourism industries. Since the early 1990s, I have trained many Mongolians in methods for surveying argali in a manner that is both practical and suitable for monitoring the influence of legal hunting on that country's wild sheep populations. With financial help from Grand Slam Club/Ovis; Wild Sheep Foundation; Safari Club International Foundation and with technical assistance from the August L. Hormay Wildlands Institute, Inc., Mongolia is now beginning to grasp its own destiny by actively taking the lead in collection of field data for the Ministry for Nature and Environment and the USFWS. This data will be considered when setting Mongolia's national hunting quotas for argali and the number of argali import permits allotted to U. S. hunters.

We initiated the effort in spring 2009 when Mongolia crews, trained by me during earlier surveys, collected population data at established survey sites. For the 2009 spring survey, Mongolians collected data following our established survey methods; I coordinated the effort from the U. S. and prepared the resulting data in a technical report for use by the USFWS and Mongolian Environmental Ministry. We followed up in November 2009 when I led a countrywide survey that repeated the 2002 survey.
2009 fall survey yielded a population estimate of 26,155 argali; the 2002 survey yielded a similar estimate of 20,226 argali. In spring 2010 and 2011, and during fall 2011, surveys were conducted following the same protocols. As I write this update, Mongolians are again in the field surveying populations for 2012 lamb production and will survey populations again this fall. I am scheduled to return to Mongolia in 2013 to lead a second country-wide survey to estimate total argali population size.

We are thus working together very effectively to assist Mongolia in developing the tools it needs to maintain its own credible international sustainable use program. We are beginning to see the positive influence of our efforts as evidenced by the following:

- In 2010 the USFWS again began to allow Altai argali to be imported into the U.S. after about three years of closure;
- In 2011 the Ministry for Nature and Environment issued a quota of 50 argali licenses. USFWS continued to allow the importation of trophies from the Gobi/Hangai and Altai;
- Argali population trend from 2002-2011 is stable to slightly increasing, depending on the specific survey site;
- 2011 appeared to be a good year for argali with minimal lamb mortality over summer and early fall (i.e., 59 lambs per 100 ewes shortly after birth compared to 53 lambs per 100 ewes in October);
- A data base of hunter-harvested rams and mature rams found in the field dead of natural causes that we built over the years, indicates Mongolia’s legal trophy hunting program is not having a negative influence on argali populations.

Hunters are harvesting rams at about the average age that non-harvested mature rams die of natural causes;

- All surveys to date demonstrate a diverse age structure of rams with good numbers of mature rams present across Mongolia (i.e., 57% of rams observed during the fall 2011 survey were mature).

Our work is ongoing; data are being collected, publications are in preparation, and surveys continue, so it is not possible to report more specifics at this time. I look forward to submitting future updates as the project progresses.

Members of Grand Slam Club/Ovis, Wild Sheep Foundation, and Safari Club International Foundation can take pride in the fact that their organizations are leaders in helping Mongolia in a manner evocative of 19th Century America when hunters, frustrated with government inaction, “took the bull by the horns”, thus ensuring us the wonderful wildlife heritage we cherish today. WS