

George Latham Myers (WV) was seen on the Winter 2016 cover of *OVIS* with a Kamchatka snow sheep taken in August 2015. At first Latham filed a short report, so now we want to share a more detailed version that he submitted later, titled "Kamchatka, Kamchatka:"

The unsuspecting Kamchatka snow sheep ram lay on a grassy spur steeply below us. With his back toward me, the first two quarters of his horns looked massive, as they often do when viewed from the rear. When he turned his head to the left, I realized I was about to shoot a "monster" ram. I allowed the time to admire the ram before ranging him, then prepared my rest and began my "shooting mantra," my hunter's "magical moment of truth" once again. As is often the case, this ram was not easy to reach.

This sheep hunt began as they do with plans, bookings, paperwork, workouts, shooting, airports and travel. I contracted **ProfiHunt**, a Russian based outfitter, to conduct the hunt. I would hunt from the same camp where last year the new **Safari Club International (SCI)** world record ram was killed. Two days after leaving my farm I arrived in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Russia, a city with a population of 180,000 nestled above the picturesque Avacha Bay on the southeastern edge of the Kamchatka Peninsula, a land mass the size of California sandwiched between Russia's Far East and Alaska.

After clearing customs, I met part of my hunting team, **Lena Poddubnaja**, my interpreter/cook, and **Dmitry (Dema) Pavlov**, a local hunter. We stopped at a grocery store for supplies and at 1 p.m. were on the only major road north to Milkova, then northeast to Dolinovka, a small village on the bank of the Kamchatka River, where I met Dema's family. His father, Igor, would coordinate my hunt as Dema had been called to Moscow on business. After changing into my hunting clothes, we were soon organized and had our gear loaded on two 16-foot aluminum boats powered by 50 horsepower Japanese motors.

We raced up the first tributary that flowed into the Kamchatka, the Kitilgina River, running south-southeast for 3½ hours. We overnighted at an old fishing/moose hunting camp on the east side of the river where I met my assistant guide **Ivan Bobrjakov** and the camp dog, Boica.

The next bright, sunny day, the four of us climbed into and onto a tracked, amphibious, Volvo BM troop carrier, which pulled another tracked storage vehicle behind it, and ponderously started east. The country was wild, primitive, and underpopulated. The "tank" ran at a pace between a slow walk and a moderate trot through swamp, tundra, pine and aspen forests. I am not a botanist but at times it appeared we were in a jungle.

7½ back-jarring hours later we arrived in base camp at the foot of the alpine, elevation 3,100 feet and 5,400 direct line miles from my farm as measured by my GPS (global positioning system). One thing for certain, there would be no resident pressure from this

camp, which consisted of a large divided cook tent, individual tents for each of us, an outhouse (with seat!), and a crude, ingenious banja (sauna shack).

I organized my gear, then enjoyed a beer while I glassed the treeless, verdant, snow-patched sheep mountains above camp, then relished a nice dinner of red salmon that nine hours earlier had been swimming up the Kitilgina River. A light rain began to fall, so I retired to my tent. With the rain pinging off the nylon and a strange Russian melody coming from the cook tent radio, I fell into a slumber that four days of sleep-deprived travel had induced.

We arose at daylight, greeted a sunny, breezeless day, and left camp an hour later. We walked off the shelf where base camp was located, traveling east-southeast into the first drainage, then started to climb. As the warmth of the day increased, so did the mosquitoes; ferocious, hungry, innumerable. I was thankful that I had not forgotten my head net. We side-hilled our way south, gaining altitude with every step, stopping periodically to glass. When one stopped the feeding frenzy intensified, the mosquitoes seemingly impervious to bug spray. The country reminded me somewhat of the eastern Caucasus; sharp sided, green-sloped mountains sprinkled with glaciers in every direction, quite stunning.

Around 11 a.m., I watched Ivan approach the lip of the ridge we had climbed and start to glass. He soon turned toward Igor and me with a big smile on his face as he made a looping motion with his hands around his head indicating he had found a ram! Due east, a steep-sided, grey monolith rose above us, a 6,000-foot mountain with seven rocky connecting ridges dropping abruptly toward us, probably two miles away as a crow would fly. I could not see the ram until Igor put him in the spotting scope, a bedded ram lying with his back to us on the second shoulder to our left. I had trouble seeing the ram with my binoculars even knowing where he lay, and only later learned that Ivan had been fortunate to watch him lie down on the skyline.

I knew we had plenty of daylight left to execute a stalk, but felt exhausted after four days of travel on that first day of hunting and wondered briefly if I would be able to make it back to camp that day, were I able to make it to the ram. Igor slapped his thighs, pointed to mine, and asked, "Normal?" I lied and shook my head yes.

The ridge we were on ran north to south and more or less parallel with Mount Kudrijash, where the ram lay, with several hundred acres of open slopes and tundra between them. I thought the distance from the ram would allow us to drop straight off the ridge we were on and angle directly across the tundra to get beyond the sweeping, concave ridge that formed the main spine of the mountain above the ram, but my guides thought otherwise and skirted the ridge we were on well below the skyline. We made a huge loop to keep out of the line of sight of the ram, hurrying to



This outstanding Kamchatka snow sheep from Russia was taken by Latham Myers (WV) in August 2015. Latham hunted with ProfiHunt.

the end of the ridge, which gradually fell into the tundra. At one exposed point, we actually ran, very difficult on the spongy arctic tussocks, but we eventually had put the sweeping ridge between the ram and us. Finally, we could move toward the ram.

The wind blew at our backs, which necessitated another lung busting loop to the back (east) side of Mt. Kudrijash to put the wind in our face and the ram upwind. We crossed a small stream and started to climb again. I struggled. My legs were about gone. Drenched in sweat, my heart pounding, my breaths coming in jagged gasps, I switchbacked up the mountain toward a prominent notch, my cardiovascular system compelling me to stop every 40 or 50 steps and my knees screaming "Stop!"

Finally, I forced the final steps to the notch and hopefully peered over the ridge, but could see no ram. We glassed what we could see below us, carefully sneaking out the sheep trodden ridgeline, stopping to glass when new ground opened up below us. Suddenly Ivan stiffened, backed down from the edge, and motioned me to his position. As I moved to the precipice all fatigue, bug cussing, and pain fell away. Slowly, deliberately, methodically pushing my pack in front of me, I crawled to the cliff, admired the ram as I described earlier, focused, then applied the requisite 1.5 pounds of pressure to the trigger. In the time it took me to cycle the bolt and put the ram in the scope again, he was still, never moving or even kicking; done.

When I stood beside the beast I was amazed by the size of his horns. The thick bases carried their weight well to the lamb tips, which rose appreciatively above the nose. I counted 15 annuli! I had just killed the oldest, biggest ram in my life and could not have been happier, or luckier.

It was 5 p.m. by the time we shouldered our packs with as much of the delicious meat as we could carry. The rest we buried in a nearby glacier, being careful to cover the cache with plenty of rocks to deter any carnivores. We were 2,000 feet above and 5½ straightline miles from base camp. I worried I had not left adequate reserve of strength to make it back that day. Totally drained, spent, and feeling very puny, I plodded back toward camp.

I required more and more breaks that evening and continuously fell behind my guides. My knees hurt with every step and I would have given \$100 for an aspirin. Several hours later, as darkness fell, I finally saw light emanating from Lena's campfire just ¾ mile away, and for the first time that afternoon I had some confidence that my body would hold out long enough for me to make it back to camp. With one more painful downhill slog, then one final determined push uphill, I reached camp at 10 p.m., 15½ tough hours after leaving.

I forced myself to eat the dinner that Lena had prepared, as the team reflected on a day well spent. Ivan jokingly said "Kamchatka," as if to imply that I must have known how much effort would be required to be successful in this demanding country. I smiled feebly and replied, "Yes, Kamchatka, Kamchatka." I washed my face, brushed my teeth, and stumbled into my tent.

I took the next day off to recuperate and allow my guides the time required to properly take care of my trophy. I informed Igor that I wanted to carry the trophy back to the states with me, so he called Dema on the satellite phone to discuss our options. That afternoon a friend of Dema's flew his helicopter into our camp, took pictures of my passport, visa, and rifle permit with his phone, then flew the trophy back to Petropavlovsk and stored the salted cape and horns in a freezer. Dema returned from Moscow later in the week and



Latham Myers (WV) and his brown bear taken on the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia during August 2015 with ProfiHunt.

secured the paperwork necessary for me to take the trophy home with me. Amazing! More amazing, they did not charge me a penny for the service! I utilized the banja, called my wife on the satellite phone, and relished an easy day of rest.

The next day we hunted brown bear, a perfectly bright, sunny, cool (60°F) day. We left camp and hiked the same general direction as the day before yesterday (southeast), though we stayed a bit lower, skirting the mountains just above the tundra as we watched the country below us. After traveling four or five miles, we sat up on a prominent point and glassed for several hours. A brisk wind blew from the east, which gave me some relief from the mosquitoes. We split up and glassed until 12:30 p.m., when we regrouped and had lunch. Igor indicated that we should return to the river camp where the salmon were running to hunt bear, so we headed back toward camp, holding a more

eastern route than we had come. We could actually see camp and were talking with Lena on the handheld radios when Ivan spotted a bear! Once pointed out to me, I could see the brown bear with my naked eye, ambling towards a pristine, half-acre tarn at the base of a pyramid-shaped mountain to our north, maybe two miles distant.

We watched the dark black bear swim across the tarn. Igor mimed, "Do you want to stalk this bear?" We did not waste any time angling toward the tarn and bear. We ran-walked ridiculously fast and angled slightly east to get the wind in our favor, soon losing sight of the bear. I recklessly fell twice, but the lay of the land afforded a hidden approach. We dropped into a small stream bed that fell steeply down the hill towards the bear's location, then 750 yards from us. I slowed a bit to get my breath and pulse rate under control. The cut created by the run was shoulder deep and emptied into an intersecting drainage just 200 yards from the berry-grazing bear. We made our final move across the creek and up the opposite bank, then settled in prone behind a foot-high rock about 120 yards from the unsuspecting boar. Perfect! He quartered toward me, facing to the right.

I took a moment to appreciate the bear, then prepared my rest and placed the cross-hairs of the scope at the base of his neck adjacent to the right front shoulder. The shot dropped the bear as though he were struck by a violent earthquake, all four legs splayed neatly behind him, as if he had lay on his belly to go down a slide. With one shot, my .270 WSM pushing a 130-grain Barnes TTSX bullet had killed a Kamchatka brown bear! A dark black bear with lighter brown hair on his back and shoulder hump, he would later measure eight feet in length and Igor estimated him to be 12 years old. The boar had numerous scars on his face from prior violent encounters with his brethren and to me, quite an exquisite trophy. It took us two hours to remove the hide, two hours to make it back to camp, and two shots for me to tag out on this memorable hunt.

Many good times followed, including succulent sheep steaks, cheerful conversations, and the celebratory camaraderie that a successful hunt brings.

It is a real pleasure to be able to share this full report and once again see Latham's ram photo. This is one of the largest Kamchatka snow sheep ever, and a real beauty. Latham, please get it entered for the 2017 Trophy Awards!

