

2023 Wild Sheep Jurassic Classic

by Wild Sheep Ambassador – Trevor Carruthers

August is a highly anticipated time in the BC sheep world. The start of thinhorn season in Northern BC brings a lot of anticipation and hunters gear up to head out to the hills. Anticipation also runs high for an annual event held in Chilliwack, BC each year that supports and raises funds for those same wild sheep. The 7th Annual Wild Sheep Jurassic Classic wrapped up this past, and this year was another great event that brought people together from all across North America to this province in the name of fun, fish, and fundraising. Participants come together each year and spend the weekend fishing for an iconic fish species – the Fraser River white sturgeon, all in the name of supporting an iconic mountain species, the wild sheep of BC.

This year was another sell-out event with 56 participants who came from all corners of Canada and the United States to participate in the name of camaraderie, connection, and conservation. The event is limited in size to a total of 56 participants each year, which keeps a wait list yearly to attend. Fourteen boats guided by Great River Fishing Adventures guide the 14 teams of 4 for two full days of fishing and an entire weekend full of excitement.



The fishing was excellent this year as it usually is in late summer. A total of 153 fish were caught, with an average length of approximately four to five feet long. Using measurements from each fish, an estimated 10,824 pounds of fish were caught and released over the two days. Over the past seven years, the event has been incredibly successful, and even through slower fishing times, our guests have found success catching some truly giant prehistoric fish.

Each year one of our team gets bragging rights as landing the longest white sturgeon and it will typically take a nine-foot fish to be a contender. In 2019, the Canadian Wildlife Capture team of Mike Bridger, Chris Procter, Ben Berukoff and Jordan Smaldon took him first place with a nine-foot five-inch, 550 pound sturgeon.



Dean Werk and his crew at Great River Fishing Adventures never cease to amaze, and seeing 14 boats lined up on the shores of the Fraser River bright and early sure brings a pile of anticipation in what the two days will bring. Dean has been guiding the Fraser for over 30 years, and if you ever want to learn more about what conservation means to him, be sure to check out Youtube for some great videos of Dean sharing his passion for the river and sturgeon.

While every guide working the weekend is capable and confident, guests do look for a competitive edge each year, especially those returning year after year. A guide selection auction has become an annual tradition where guests bid for their choice of guides. The top bidder in each round earns the right to select their guide for the weekend – a benefit that can make the difference between being in the prizes or not and earning bragging rights of landing the longest sturgeon.

Nearly \$50,000 was raised this year in our guide selection auction, amazing the organizers again this year. We also auction off the services of our Official Jurassic Classic photographer, Jeff Jackson. Anyone who's seen Jeff's work knows the quality of Jeff's sheep and wildlife photography. His Jurassic Classic photos are stunning, and he's become a bit of a good luck charm to have along in a boat. Thanks again for the amazing support, Jeff.



Late Saturday afternoon, after a day on the water fishing, guests get back to the shores to find a wild game and salmon BBQ awaiting them. Through the day (and for days leading up to the event) our volunteers work tirelessly to create unique appetizers involving wild game, and follow it up with a salmon BBQ served outside along the shores of the Fraser. To say the BBQ is a highlight of the weekend is an understatement. The connection that most guests feel to the outdoors while sharing pictures and stories of the first day are unmatched in the conservation community. This type of hospitality couldn't be put on without our volunteers hard work. This year, we even had kids helping assemble appetizers for hours in the afternoon.

Speaking of hospitality, many of the world's problems seem to get solved in the hospitality suite each night of the event. Open in the evenings and only closing when the last guest leaves, the room is a place where guests can kick back and enjoy a drink or two. Our hosts mix up sturgeon inspired drinks and serve them with some flare each year. Annually there seems to be a silent award given for those who remain the longest. Woody's Pub was our beer sponsor this year, supplying all the beer in the hospitality suite, at our outdoor BBQ, and on the boats.

Sunday evening, we close out the weekend with an awards banquet and wrap up silent auction. This year at our evening program, we were lucky to host a screening of Jason Matzinger's new film "Selective" to the guests in attendance. This film highlighted the energy and passion that most all of our guests share for wild sheep and spending time in the mountains with them. The respect that harvesting an old ram brings and the nuances of trophy hunting or selective harvest in the sheep hunting community.



While the event is about a lot more than a simple fishing tournament, its hard not to look at the healthy competition that the weekend provides. Each boat tracks all fish caught and records all measurements of every fish landed. Through the help of our sponsors, we've been able to provide a prize package for our participants valued at over \$10,000 each of the past few years. The prizes and prize packages awarded were as follows:

Longest single fish – Caught by Joel Vielfaure and the Vielfaure Team boat, guided by none other than Dean Werk. The fish measured 8'4" and was approximately 373 pounds by calculated measurements. The first prize this year was a prize package valued at over \$5500 by our generous donors at Stone Glacier, Yeti, and Glen Cartwright.

Total length by all fish – Won by Team Rundell/Nelson. Over the two-day period, this boat caught 91 feet 10 inches of fish, guided by Rick Stahl of Great River Fishing Adventures. Rick is both an accomplished and experienced guide and also carries a heavy load helping with the planning and execution of the Jurassic Classic each year. This team won this prize with a 25-foot lead in total length over two days. WSSBC's Official Sponsor, Sitka Gear provided an amazing prize package.

Mystery Length – Won by Larry Jacobs, Wayne Henderson, Tom Miller and Shane Nye was guided by Brandon Wootton. The mystery length this year was 172 centimetres.

Smallest fish – An annual competition that several people pride themselves in fishing for. This year was no different as we had several teams vying to try and catch the smallest fish they could. The smallest this year was a sturgeon measured at 1'2" long by Shane Nye and his team of Tom Miller, Wayne Henderson and Larry Jacobs, guided by Brandon Wootton.

Our 2024 event is sold out to the public, with the only way of attending is by purchasing a team entry at one of our wild sheep chapters or affiliate supporters, or other conservation organizations who auction these coveted spots to raise funds for their own conservation initiatives. Check out Wild Sheep Foundation's Sheep Show, Wild Sheep Foundation Midwest Chapter, Dallas Safari Club NE Michigan, or Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta if you're interested in bidding on one of these spots and attending the 2024 event.

The Jurassic Classic wouldn't be what it was without the help and support of our amazing sponsors. Our major sponsors include SITKA Gear, Yeti, Swarovski Optik, Stone Glacier. Each year funds are raised through an online and silent auction, and in recent years a Jurassic Classic rifle raffle has been run to support the Fraser River Test and Remove Legacy project. This year Sako Canada has stepped up in a major way and donated a Sako 90 Adventurer in 6.5 Creedmoor topped with a Steiner scope.



The Wild Sheep Jurassic Classic is an event like no other in the conservation world. It is an event that brings guests back year after year and always has a handful of new guests who come through our fundraising efforts. This all-inclusive weekend is a great way to close out summer and get ready for fall, and we look forward to future continued success in raising funds for wild sheep through the province and having a great time doing it. There is a reason we call this event BC's Full Curl Fishing Experience!

The 2024 Wild Sheep Jurassic Classic will be held August 23-25, 2024.