HUNTING SKILLS

RAM SPOTTING

How to pick out a trophy bighorn

Q: Which of these sheep would score the highest?

A: Ram A has the highest-scoring horns, according to B&C scorer Fred King.

Bighorn sheep permits are hard to come by. If you're lucky enough to draw one, you'd better be able to separate the men from the boys before you squeeze the trigger. Trophy rams have blocky bodies and thick necks that set them apart from younger animals, but to pick out a record, you need to eyeball its horns.

[A] MASS Official scoring uses four circumference measurements and only one length measurement, so the mass of the horn and how far out from the base it maintains thickness is the most important aspect of judging a ram. Look at the horn halfway out on the curl. If the circumference there is the same as that at its base, start getting excited.

[B] CURL A big ram has a full curl that drops below the bottom of his jawline when viewed from the side. And the hole inside the curl should be at least the size of a softball. If it looks as if you could pass through a volleyball, the sheep will probably place in the books.

[C] LENGTH A full-curl ram is defined as having a horn tip that, when viewed from the side, extends upward beyond an imaginary straight line drawn from the center of the nostril to the lowest, hindmost base of the horn. Trophy rams will have horn tips that sweep above the bridge of the nose.

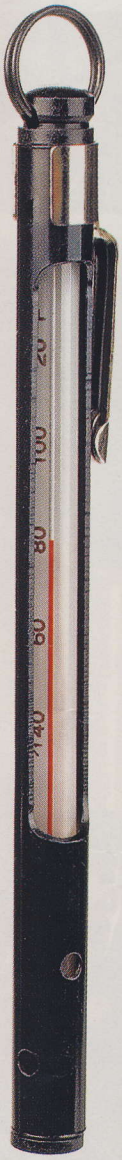
[D] SYMMETRY The Boone and Crockett scoring procedure deducts points for asymmetry, not in length but in thickness, so look for horns that are close to equal in size and have not been broomed back, or worn down, too far.

—KEITH McCAFFERTY

INGENIOUS OUTDOORSMAN

CATCH THE COLD

Why you need a waterproof thermometer



When rivers and ponds warm up, trout find relief where springs bubble cold water from the bottom. Find these springs and you'll find the fish. Here's how.

[1] Tie a three-way swivel to your main line. Attach a foot-long section of monofilament to the second eye and tie it to a waterproof thermometer (you can get one from llbean.com for $12; 800-441-5713).

[2] Attach a 1-ounce sinker to the swivel's third eye using a shorter section of monofilament so that the sinker doesn't bang up the thermometer.

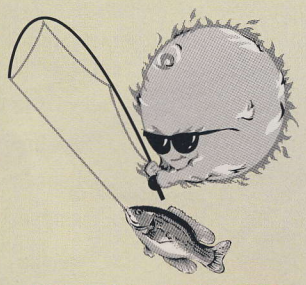
[3] To take the lake's temperature, cast, allow your thermometer to sink, and let it settle long enough for the temperature to register (about 15 seconds). Reel in quickly and read it. Make note of that number.

[4] To locate a spring, start prospecting in likely areas. In rivers, begin in pools, deep runs, or near feeder streams. In lakes and ponds, look near inflows or outflows, around rocky areas, or in transition zones where the bottom changes from sand to rock. If the water is clear enough, look for patches of overturned leaves or discolorations on a sandy bottom; these often indicate the presence of a spring.

[5] When you locate a spot that's colder than normal, mark it on a map or GPS.

—TOM KEER

BY THE NUMBERS



SUN AND SUNNIES

BY DAVE HURTEAU

Core temperature of the sun: **22.5 million degrees F** ■ Preferred water temperature of pumpkinseed sunfish: **Between 70 and 75 degrees F** ■ Number of U.S. homes powered by the sun: **Over 500,000** ■ Number of U.S. anglers who target sunfish: **About 7.8 million** ■ Number of sunfish a Florida angler may legally catch in one lifetime: **About 1.3 million** ■ Mass of the sun: **More than 2 billion quintillion kilograms** ■ Weight of the world-record bluegill sunfish: **4 pounds 12 ounces** ■ Number of years a redear sunfish may live: **About 8** ■ Number of years before the sun runs out of fuel: **About 5 billion**