



BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAIN GOAT SOCIETY

SMITHERS BC CANADA

MTGOATS@BCNORTH.CA

Newsletter #24

April 20, 2022

Greetings Members

New Videos

Our McKendrick Mountain project continues. We have monitored the mountain goat herd 31 times so far since November 7, 2021. Each session lasts between one and two hours depending on the temperature and whether we can still feel our fingers. You can view the most recent video reports at:

[McKendrickReport 5 April 16 2022 - YouTube](#)

[McKendrickReport 4 Feb22 2022 - YouTube](#)

[McKendrickReport3 Jan25 2022 - YouTube](#)

Earlier reports are still available at:

[McKendrick Mountain Report #2 Dec 24 2021 - YouTube](#)

[McKendrick Report 1 Nov 2021 - YouTube](#)

The reports are unlisted on our YouTube channel. You need the link to view.

Snowmobiles and mountain goats

Snowmobiles can displace mountain goats but they can affect mountain goats in other ways. When a snowmobile travels over powder snow, the snowmobile track packs the snow. That snow remains packed (sintered) all winter.

On McKendrick Mountain in past years, snowmobiles sintered the snow every weekend. Powder snow is easily moved by the wind to expose the ground but snow sintered by snowmobiles stays in place and builds a firm thick base. Mountain goats find it difficult or impossible to paw through the sintered snow to forage on grasses and sedges.

Instead of pawing through a thin layer of powder snow in January, the goats must wait until the end of April for the sun and wind to melt the sintered snow left by snowmobiles in order to forage on grasses and sedges.



Another effect of snowmobiles is oil. Most mountain snowmobiles have two-stroke engines that require oil mixed into the fuel. The oil lubricates the engine parts and is designed to pass through the engine unburned. The exhaust is pointed down to keep the exhaust away from the driver but the oil in the exhaust gets mixed with the snow thrown up by the track. Part of the oil stays in the air but part coats the snow.

A skier can smell exhaust gases in the air for ½ hour after a snowmobile passes by. The oil in the exhaust will last a lot longer mixed in with snow. And when the snow melts in spring, the oil will eventually coat the forage on the ground.

We have never found a study on the effects of two-stroke oil on alpine ungulates in winter but mountain goats have a very good sense of smell. We have to be concerned that the smell and taste of two-stroke oil in the snow will deter pawing and will make alpine plants less palatable.

We wanted to do a study of snow contaminated by oil years ago but the labs that can do the analysis were not interested in such a small job.

Mountain goats and ravens

Wherever you find mountain goats in central British Columbia, you will find ravens. The ravens are life-long neighbours and love to tease the goats in their neighbourhood. A raven will silently glide behind a goat and then dive down. The goat is always startled by the friendly attack. One nanny jumped straight up and tried to gore a teasing raven. Fat chance that will work. The most recent McKendrick Report #5 has a nice clip of a raven teasing three goats.

While ravens are sometimes pesky, mountain goats always listen to ravens. When a raven calls an alarm, the nearby goats will stop, watch and listen to the raven. We can assume that mountain goats know the alarm calls made by ravens. Ravens know everything that happens in their neighbourhood and a goat would be smart to know what the ravens are talking about.

The ravens benefit from the goats. Of course, they feed on carcasses of dead goats but ravens are very social. We see ravens do a fly-by just to see what the goats are up to.

Nanny leadership

The leadership skills of a lead nanny in a herd are critical. All the other goats in the herd follow her no matter what. If she makes a wrong decision, she may be injured or die and all her followers may share the same fate.

The McKendrick Mountain Report #5 has an excellent video clip of a nanny making a quick life-or-death decision. She panicked and forced her followers to climb a steep slope as quick as possible. We watched for some time to see if there was a predator in the area. We could not see any sign of danger. But her decision is final. If she panics too often, she may exhaust the younger members of her troupe and cause death by exhaustion or hypothermia – always a risk factor late in winter.

Until the next time.

Jim

Jim Easterday

Co-founder and director

British Columbia Mountain Goat Society

Smithers BC

250-847-4802

mtgoats@bcnorth.ca

www.mtgoats.ca

www.bcmountaingoatsociety.ca