



BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAIN GOAT SOCIETY

SMITHERS BC CANADA

MTGOATS@BCNORTH.CA

Newsletter #10

January 27, 2020

Greetings to all members

New Videos

We have added two new videos to our YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=oreamnos2012

“Inside a Mountain Goat Home” is the result of analysing about 1500 trail camera video clips to uncover the goats’ routine in winter.

“Outtakes 2 – Just Kidding Around” is just for fun. It’s amazing what mountain goat kids can do at the age of one to four weeks.

More Big Story

Traces of the Fraser Glaciation are all around us. Look at each mountain in north-central BC. If the top is rounded, the entire mountain was most likely beneath the glacial icefield. If the top of the mountain is pointed with sharp ridges and large cirques, the top of the mountain probably rose above the ice.

There are very few local mountains that were above the ice – Seven Sisters looks like one. Most other mountains were under the icefield during the maximum. Some mountains east of Smithers are so rounded by glaciation that there are no cliffs big and steep enough to provide escape terrain, an absolute necessity for mountain goats.

Low rounded mountains often do not have large cirques and glaciers to retain snow, ice and eventually water for mountain goats, another necessity.

The weight of the glacial ice was enough to bend the ground in central BC down roughly 300 feet. The Skeena river up to Terrace was salt water. When much of the ice melted, the ground rebounded. Today our mountains are still springing back and growing in height about 2 cm per year.

Our mountain goats are remnants from the Fraser glaciation. Their ancestors in eastern Asia are all brown in colour. The white hair of our mountain goats is an adaptation to arctic conditions the goats encountered during the Fraser Glaciation and any previous glaciations that the goats survived. The white hair and darker skin colour is said to trap the sun's warmth better than any other colour – think the coat of the polar bear and arctic fox.

White coloration is poor camouflage when the ground is bare for over six months of the year. But if the glaciation returns in another 12,000 years, that white coat will come in handy. If glaciation does not return, will our mountain goats end up brown?

You will notice in the goat videos that some goat kids have a brown tail and a brown stripe down their backs. That brown disappears by the second year and may be a throwback to the original colour.



Adoption

In some species, mature females will adopt orphan young. Cats and dogs are examples. In the scientific literature we have not read that mature female mountain goats adopt orphan kids. In our field studies we have seen aggression by females toward all young goats except their own. Nannies with new kids will chase their own yearling from the previous year. Mountain goats also keep a personal space of 6 to 8 feet and enforce that spacing aggressively. So if we photograph a nanny with two kids, we assume that both kids are that nanny's own progeny.

In one case we saw a kid follow about 60 feet behind a pair of nannies that had kids of their own. Later we saw the nannies but the lone kid was nowhere in sight. It looked as if the lone kid lost sight of the nannies and could not keep up. We also assume that the lone kid was an orphan. It's nanny was not seen.



In the recent video on the mountain goat home we mentioned that we have filmed two sets of twins. This is a photo from 2018 showing the first set of twins we encountered.

Snowmobiles and Mountain Goats

We have appealed to local snowmobilers to avoid disturbing mountain goat herds on local mountains. As you may expect, the sledders say concern about goats is not in their best interest. They also say that they never see goats. We point out that mountain goats will hear the sleds approaching and will flee to their escape terrain and stay hidden for hours.

So we made up a brochure that lists our local snowmobile areas and where mountain goats stay in each area in winter. Our hope is that snowmobilers learn more about the goats they drive by on local mountains. See the attached PDF file for a copy of the brochure. Members of our society who are not local residents may not be familiar with the names of mountains but you can see our intent to educate.

Technically speaking, the BC Wildlife Act states that wildlife harassment using a machine such as a snowmobile or ATV is prohibited. But to enforce that regulation may prove difficult.

The BC Mountain Goat Management Plan 2010 recommends a 500 meter buffer around mountain goat winter habitat for recreation machines and 100 meter buffer for skiers. That document is available for download from our society web site at <http://bcmountaingoatsociety.ca/links.asp>

Our concern is that snowmobiles will disturb mountain goat herds repeatedly until the stress causes the herd to try to move with deadly results. The other danger is that stress hormones in the herd build up enough to affect pregnancies in the following season and result in a loss of young.



This is a frame from a trail camera video and one of the scenes from our latest video on winter.

Cheers

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