



BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAIN GOAT SOCIETY

SMITHERS BC CANADA

MTGOATS@BCNORTH.CA

Newsletter

April 23, 2018

New members

Welcome to our new members. We recently invited conservationists and others who we either know personally or whose excellent reputation is well documented to join as members. We want our society to expand from local to province-wide. Our new members will bring expertise and a window on mountain goat issues outside our Central Interior region.

Our society can serve as a communication hub for mountain goat issues in BC. We will send newsletters from time to time as needed but please feel free to reply to this email list if you have a new concern or information to share.

Our role

One of our new members, Wade Davis, asked about our policy concerning mountain goat hunting. To date, our society views all human activities in the same way. It doesn't matter if it is industry, hunting or recreation, etc. We view all activity as neutral unless it affects mountain goats in a negative way. That means that we are not categorically against the mountain goat hunt nor are we categorically for the hunt. However, our mission statement includes support of non-consumptive use of mountain goats such as wildlife viewing.

We constantly monitor the mountain goat hunt and recommend changes to government when we see that the hunt is endangering a herd of goats or mountain goats province-wide. Currently the world population of mountain goats is healthy and wide-spread over most of the original range. Our role is to keep it healthy. We will soon have a discussion paper on the mountain goat hunt ready for you to consider.

Snowpack

Weather can be a life and death factor for mountain goats – especially at this time of year when fat reserves are low and there is very little browse available in the alpine. Attached are three photos of the same ridge that show the difference snowpack makes for mountain goats. The goat herd in the photos return each year to this exact spot. Wind and a southern exposure normally scours the snowpack thin and makes browse available all winter. The winter of 2018 is different. The snowpack is 125% of normal and as you can see, there is very little browse available on April 17, 2018 due to the depth of snow. Please note that the photo from 2017 was taken a month

earlier than the 2018 photo so that there was even more bare ground by the same date in April of 2017.

Adult goats can cope with deep snow. They can paw through at least 30 cm of snow to reach browse. But the kids and yearlings suffer and may perish before the snow goes and the ridge greens up. A late and deep snowpack can wipe out an entire generation of one to two-year old goats. A series of rough winters and you can imagine how easily mountain goat herds can shrink or disappear. The birth date for most mountain goats is between May 21 and June 7, only slightly more than four weeks away from the April 17, 2018 photo!

Government surveys of mountain goat populations are often poorly funded and infrequent and may miss substantial decreases in a goat population due to weather. That's where our society comes in. We photograph local goat herds and winter habitat each year. We then present the data to government staff responsible for managing mountain goats.

Disease

There is increased concern in government about transmission of disease from domestic sheep, goats and camelids (llamas, alpacas) to mountain sheep and mountain goats. This is a big problem in the US but now there are reports of similar disease in southern BC and in Alaska. There are no reports of die-offs in BC mountain sheep herds but it is possible for the disease to pass from mountain sheep herds to mountain goat herds and then from one goat herd to another.

http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2016/05/nevada_reluctantly_slaughters.html

Mitigation involves keeping domestic sheep, goats and camelids away from alpine and keeping mountain sheep and mountain goats away from domestic livestock in the valleys. We are learning more about the issue and will report back later.

Cheers

Jim Easterday
Co-founder and director
British Columbia Mountain Goat Society
Smithers BC
250-847-4802
mtgoats@bcnorth.ca