



BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAIN GOAT SOCIETY

SMITHERS BC CANADA

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Newsletter #17

March 7, 2021

Greetings members

We hope that you are all staying healthy. Here in north-central BC, we are so lucky to be able to spend a lot of time outdoors, away from the pandemic.

Netazul Mountain

Two years ago, we discovered that snowmobiles pioneered a new trail into Netazul Mountain near Smithers BC. The snowmobiles were travelling close to prime mountain goat winter habitat, so we submitted a proposal to close part of the mountain to motorized vehicles in winter.

Our proposal has been approved and is now published in the BC Hunting Regulations at [hunting-trapping-synopsis-2020-2022-region6.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](#) See page 65.

We originally proposed closing a small part of the mountain close to the goat habitat. The biologists who reviewed our proposal expanded the closure to include the entire mountain above 1500 meters. They said that enforcement for a partial closure would be too difficult.

The acceptance of our proposal is a vital first step in recognizing that snowmobiles are disturbing and displacing mountain goats on many mountains. And that snowmobile access must be controlled. It also shows the power of citizen science and the importance of conservation groups like our society.

When we submitted the Netazul Mountain proposal two years ago, we received a reply by a deputy minister. He explained that according to census data, each goat on Netazul had over 340 hectares to roam so that snowmobile traffic should not displace the goats. He had misinterpreted the data supplied to him and simply divided the total alpine area by the number of goats on the mountain.

We know that mountain goat winter habitat is typically a very small land area so we prepared a paper giving an overview of the actual amount of land in each goat winter habitat. See the attached paper on Ribbons of Land.

Cameras and scopes

We have nine trail cameras in place this winter. We place the cameras in October and let them collect video of mountain goats until we collect them in April or May. Until then we spend time monitoring several herds by viewing with a spotting scope from nearby roads when the weather is clear enough to see the goats. Unfortunately, any photos we take at such long distances are poor quality and are only useful as an historic record. Here is a sample. Small black lines indicate each goat in the group of five goats. You may have to zoom in to see the goats.



This photo was taken at a distance of 2 km. We use a Nikon P950 camera.

YouTube

We have come across three videos on YouTube that capture mountain goat behaviour that is very difficult to document.

[\(88\) MOUNTAIN GOAT GRIZZLY BEAR ENCOUNTER IN CANADIAN ROCKIES - YouTube](#)

This nanny knows that she is safe. If the grizzly charges, she steps forward and the grizzly will find himself at the bottom of the cliff and suffering serious injury. The nanny's repeated foot stomp is a warning to others in the herd.

This video shows the confidence that mountain goats have in retreating from natural predators in steep escape terrain. That same confidence does not work well when it's a hunter with a high-powered rifle. Staying in place in steep rock then becomes a liability.

[\(88\) Grizzly Bear Chasing Mountain Goats in the Wild - YouTube](#)

This video is poor quality due to the distance from the camera to the cliff. But watch how the mountain goats run circles around the grizzly sow. She can outrun a goat on level ground but here in the rocks, the goats are king. It is amazing to see how quickly a goat's brain can calculate the best path across extremely complex terrain. The reaction time and foot/eye coordination of the goats is off the charts.

[\(88\) Mountain Goats Coastal British Columbia - YouTube](#)

This video is almost a tragedy and tough to watch. Something or someone forced this herd of goats into terrain that they did not know well. At the same time, the goats show extreme ability to climb in rock and recover from falls. You can also see the danger of rockfalls. We hope all members of the herd survived but we don't know for sure.

Cheers

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