



Newsletter #41

September 2, 2025

Greetings

Spring visitors

We monitor a herd of six mountain goats on a local mountain all year round. On May 9, 2025, we were surprised to see that the herd had visitors. The herd of six were on one bench looking at a group of nine visiting mountain goats on the next bench. We returned often to see how long the visit lasted. By May 29, the number of visitors had declined from nine to only four visitors. Here is what we figure happened.

Mountain goats around here usually leave their winter home around April 15 and start moving across their entire home range. Seems that this group of nine kept going, right into the neighbouring herd's range. We knew that the visit had to come to an end. There is barely enough forage for the original six goats in the late spring. This is the first time we have seen a superherd event in spring.

Who knew?

Mountain goats paw and chew and on zeolite mineral salts on a cliff face and end up eroding rock walls and creating caves. Goats defecate and urinate at winter sites. All that waste fertilizes forb and grass meadows in summer and helps provide forage the following winter. Mountain goat trails are etched across the alpine. We finally found the name of scientific research that is interested in the many physical effects mountain goats and other animals have on their habitat – it's zoogeomorphology. Who knew?

Smithers Method Grant

Our Smithers Method grant in the amount of \$10,000 has been assigned to the management of the Wilp Wii K'axx, part of the Gitskan nation with headquarters in Hazelton, BC. The grant will be used for helicopter costs to survey mountain goat populations using the Smithers Method. The surveyed area includes three territories

north of Hazelton. The helicopter surveys will establish a baseline population count. The mountain goat populations in the area are under threat by heli-skiing in winter and heli-fishing and mining exploration flights in summer. The First Nations group is also planning to ensure that heli-skiing operations in their area meet our standards for Mountain Goat Friendly Certification. And that is exactly what has happened.

Another heliskiing certification

Skeena Heliskiing operates north of Hazelton and has been awarded Certification as a Mountain Goat Friendly operation for the first time. [Heli skiing in Canada is best with Skeena. Find out why](#) They join White Wilderness Heliskiing from Terrace BC that re-qualifies for a second year of certification for the 2025/2026 ski season for. [Heli Skiing Canada - White Wilderness Heliskiing Resort](#)

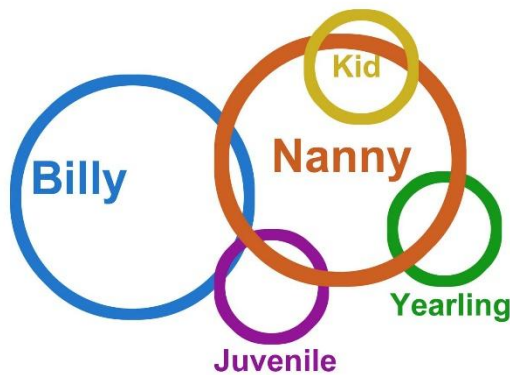
We keep a list of certified heliski operations at [Heli-ski certification](#) Our certification assures heliskiing customers, First Nations and the provincial government that the company's helicopter flights avoid known mountain goat winter habitat.

Smithers Research Grant

Big news. A portion of our Smithers Research Grants has been awarded to Petra McDougall PhD of Telkwa BC for research into non-invasive marking and re-identification of mountain goats. Some of our subscribers in academia will know Petra from past work. Petra's goal is to develop software that identifies individual mountain goats from trail camera images using machine learning. Petra will also consider how to mark mountain goats and attach identifying tags non-invasively. New technology will ensure that we have a way to estimate populations and keep track of dispersals without traditional problems associated with netting goats, drugging them and attaching heavy collars for extended periods. This research will keep us on the ragged edge of new non-invasive technology. Are any of our readers doing similar research?



Where are you going with that Mr. Wolverine?



Mountain goats - relative importance, association and dependency of herd members by gender and age

We created this graphic to indicate how members of a mountain goat herd relate to each other. The size of the circle shows the importance of different age classes to the herd's survival. The ring overlaps show the social dependencies by age and gender. The relative position of the rings show degree of association.

Bear pursuit

A friend describes a scene on a local mountain:

"We were on the top of a cliff looking down into a basin. A black bear and her cub strolled downhill when a nanny goat with two kids appeared coming uphill. Both sets of animals seemed surprised. The nanny decided to run. The bear ran and caught up with the three goats. At that point the nanny must have thought "the heck with this flight stuff" and turned and confronted the sow bear. They were nose to nose. One of the kids hid behind the nanny. The other kid split off and decided to flee. The bear turned away from the nanny and gave chase to the kid. The nanny and the second kid ran to safety in the opposite direction. The bear was quickly gaining ground on the kid and I thought that it was a goner. But the bear must have tired because soon after disappearing around a corner, the bear returned without the kid. The three goats survived unhurt." This story shows that in a pinch, mountain goats will defend themselves in close quarters. Another friend watched a mountain goat and a grizzly fight. Luckily the goat was uphill. The bear tried to swat at the goat but the goat kept lunging and knocking the bear backward. Both eventually gave up and walked away.

Nanny's glare

We were installing a trail camera next to a steep rock wall this spring. I suggested to my colleague Ron that he walk around the corner to see how steep the rock was. He went around the corner and immediately came back with eyes wide. "There's a herd of goats!" A nanny and five younger goats were bedded down around the corner about 20 feet away from Ron. The younger goats immediately got up and left but the nanny just stood up, laid her ears back and glared, making it clear to Ron that she did not appreciate his presence. Ron apologized to her and backed up out of her sight. He will never forget the look on that nanny's face.

Classic mountain goat behaviour

The following YouTube video is a classic example of how mountain goats can elude a predator in steep rock. Not by running but simply by standing still. The grizzly could easily charge down the slope but he knows that he would not be able to stop. The bear is already sliding on his smooth paws. If the bear charges, all the nanny has to do is step forward and watch as the bear falls down the slope to his death. "Checkmate" The nanny stamps the ground hard with her front hoof to warn her herd that danger is near.

[MOUNTAIN GOAT GRIZZLY BEAR ENCOUNTER IN CANADIAN ROCKIES](#)

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Until the next time

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