



BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAIN GOAT SOCIETY

SMITHERS BC CANADA

MTGOATS@BCNORTH.CA

Newsletter #28

April 25, 2023

Greetings

New Video

We have posted McKendrick Mountain Report #8 on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iU1ngyA2X7U>

We will continue to monitor the herd until June and report again with news about any new kids. This video shows that March and April can be a challenging time of year when mountain goats are forced to feed on low-quality browse while body fat accumulated in the previous summer is at the lowest level.

Herd Size

Our directors are very familiar with the number of mountain goats in many local herds. We observed that most of the herds number about 25 goats. It seems that, for whatever reason, there is a practical limit to the size of a mountain goat herd. Why?

We also observed that when multiple small herds join together in August to form a superherd, the superherd does not last. After a few hours or a day or two, all the herds that make up the superherd return to their own home range. The same factors that limit herd size may restrict how long a superherd can last.

We can think of two possible reasons for a herd size limit. First, the more goats in a herd, the faster the herd needs to move across the alpine while foraging. Move too fast and there is less time to ruminate or rest. Second, the more goats, the more urine and feces. No ungulate likes feeding on contaminated forage. So the goats at the back of a large herd suffer from the waste of the goats out front and the herd may split into smaller groups. Anyone else have a theory? Let us know.

This is an important issue. When we report a decrease in the number of goat in an area, biologists suggest that those goats may have joined another herd somewhere else. If

there is a limit to the size of each herd, one herd cannot simply join another. It will not work.



Relatives

Our mountain goats have a direct genetic link to two species in eastern Asia, the Serow and the Goral. In this video, you can see that the Serow is quite different from our mountain goats in both body confirmation and behaviour.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIU0aZScxwo>

The Goral is more closely related and shares more traits with our mountain goats, including extreme ability on steep rock.

[\(5\) CGTN Nature: Tangjiahe Series | Episode 4: Chinese Gorals - YouTube](#)

Newsletters

All our past newsletters are now available for viewing at [Contact Us \(bcmountaingoatsociety.ca\)](#)

The Ethics of One

When residents hike on local mountains, they usually don't see other hikers. For all they know, they are the only persons on that trail for days, months or years. Hiking is a solitary venture and nothing is left behind to show you were there. That is what we call the Ethics of One. "We are the only ones here and we do no harm".

What our hikers do not know is that there was a hiking group of five the day before and there will be ten more hikers within a couple of days. The only party that actually knows how many people have hiked that trail are the mountain goats living nearby. They see it all. The point is that a solitary recreation event can be one small part of a cumulative and massive influence on wildlife, enough to cause a herd of goats to displace.

Numbers matter. If our hikers are correct and they are the only group on that trail in a year, no problem for the goats. If there are actually 150 hikers that season, the stress in the goat herd may never decrease. Perhaps every hiker should be required to sign in at the trailhead to leave a record for all to see. Of course, the Ethics of One also applies to snowmobilers, ATV drivers, skiers, etc. These days we repeatedly observe the influence of recreation on mountain goats. Solutions? We're working on it.

Until the next time

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