



Newsletter #36

November 4, 2024

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Greetings

### **Heli Skiing certification**

At last, we have awarded our first certification to a heli skiing company. [White Wilderness Heli skiing](#) from Terrace BC is now certified “Mountain Goat Friendly”. Our resident expert, Len Vanderstar R.P. Bio, reviewed the company’s flight records from the 2023/2024 ski season. The flight paths of the company’s helicopters avoided disturbing or displacing the mountain goat herds in their tenure area. White Wilderness can now



display our “Mountain Goat Friendly” logo on their web site and in all advertising for the 2024/2025 ski season. Next year at this time, the company can ask to have their flight records reviewed to qualify for certification for the next ski season.

Len is speaking with other heli skiing companies who are interested in being certified, but have not qualified yet. Heli skiing remains a major threat to mountain goats on many remote mountains in BC. The province does not consistently review flight records to our standards. So our certification can serve as a standard until the province catches up with the heli skiing industry. Here is a link to the [certification page](#) on our web site.

### **Mountain goats and wind farms**

We are currently advising a local First Nation regarding a large wind farm proposal near a number of small mountain goat herds. There are a number of issues. Wind turbine blades rotate 24 hours a day and the noise can mask the sounds of predators. We often see mountain goats stop and listen for predators in a forested area. The constant rotation of the blades can be a distraction and annoyance. Maintenance of the wind



*Figure 1 Photo Credit Ed Johnson*

than ideal habitat have not survived. Think of B.C. as fully populated. There are only so many locations that are suitable for mountain goats with the right combination of vegetation, wind, snow, mineral salts and shelter. Unlike other species that can travel to new habitat, mountain goats cannot simply move. There is nowhere else to go. Most



*Figure 2 Photo credit Ed Johnson*

turbines involves new roads, noise and human presence. Wind farms may disrupt the connections between goat herds, especially during the rut and dispersals. Research has indicated that other species such as caribou and roe deer have moved away from wind farms and changed their migration routes. More later.

### **Fully populated**

Mountain goats moved back into B.C. after the Fraser glaciation some 15,000 years ago. One population of goats started south from the ice-free areas in the Yukon and another group north from the northwestern USA. The two populations met in central B.C.

Over those centuries, mountain goats have explored all of B.C. and inhabited the very best habitat. Any populations that settled in less than ideal habitat have not survived. Think of B.C. as fully populated. There are only so many locations that are suitable for mountain goats with the right combination of vegetation, wind, snow, mineral salts and shelter. Unlike other species that can travel to new habitat, mountain goats cannot simply move. There is nowhere else to go. Most of the best spots for a winter home have been taken. So wind farms, heli skiing businesses and other long-term businesses must avoid and respect mountain goat habitat.

### **Movie interests**

We have received four inquiries from documentary film companies over the years. They see our [YouTube page](#) and figure that they can get spectacular footage in a snap. The companies underestimate the time it takes to get good video of mountain goats. They have small budgets and tight deadlines. They want to finish in two weeks and are disappointed when we tell them six months may be more realistic. Documentary makers do not realize that mountain goats live rather boring lives by our standards. Eat – ruminate – sleep – repeat (with a bit of excitement during the rut)

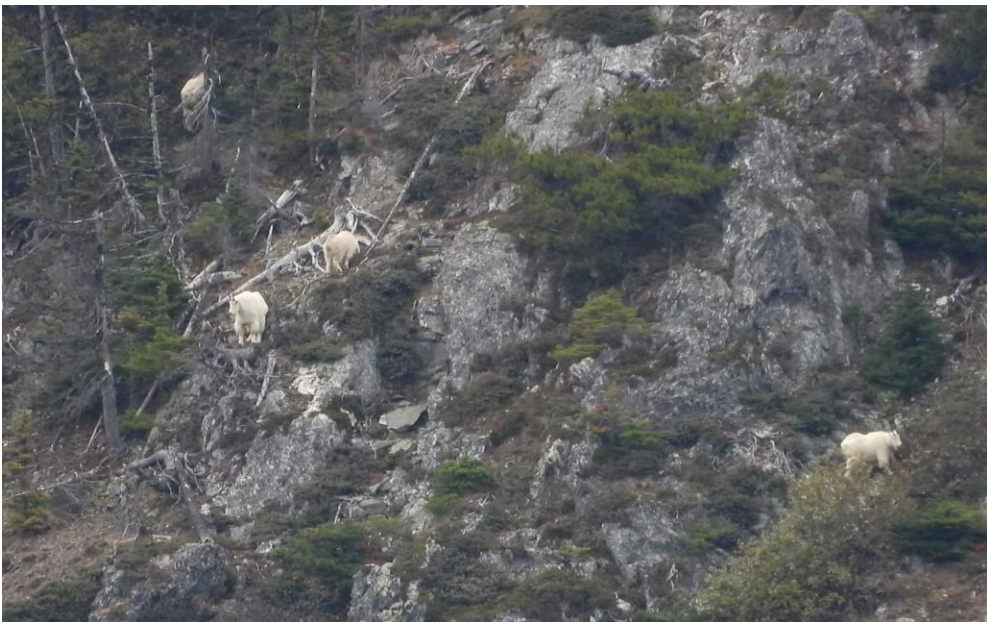
What is amazing is that mountain goats choose to live their boring lives on the edge of a cliff, in treacherous weather and not think twice about it. And they look good doing it. Mountain goats are super athletes because they have to be super fit to survive. They make the rest of us look – well, sort of incompetent.



*Figure 3 An Ice-Age Vision Photo Credit Graeme Pole / Mountain Vision*

### **McKendrick Mountain**

We are back monitoring McKendrick Mountain for the third winter. Last winter was too warm and not enough snow. The herd scattered across the mountain and we were unable to get a good count. The herd does not group together unless it's -20 C and deep snow. We have a two-year extension of the voluntary recreation closure, so we don't have a lot of time to figure out if the herd will recover from the previous population collapse due to intensive disturbance by both motorized and non-motorized recreation. We'll post new videos over the winter. The goats always tell us something new.



*Figure 4 McKendrick Mt October 17\_2024*



*Figure 5 Mountain Goat habitat near Bella Coola*

### **First Nation Use**

Dayna from Bella Coola asked if we could supply her with a small amount of mountain goat hair for a First Nation Apcwakm ceremony for a baby that takes place after the baby's first four seasons of life. The hair will be combined with cedar bark to tie around the baby's wrists, elbows, knees and ankles. Asked why Dayna cannot find mountain goat hair locally, she says that her nation's food hunt for mountain goats has ceased due to the declining goat population and lack of skills to harvest. She is also concerned about the impact of local guided mountain goat hunts as well as local heli skiing. In return for the hair, Dayna will supply us with a photo of her handiwork.

Until next time,

Jim

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