



## BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAIN GOAT SOCIETY

SMITHERS BC CANADA

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Greetings

### **Dog stories**

Thanks to Kevin Smith from Alaska who sent the following story about two dog episodes in mountain goat habitat:

“A biologist friend reported an instance of a dog harassing and then getting gored by a mtn goat near Crow Pass (Girdwood, AK) - though the dog survived, as I recall. There was another instance where a dog fell to its death after aggressively harassing a mtn goat in the N Kenai Mtns (Hope, AK). The owner was quite distraught by the incident both because of the dogs death but also was horrified that their dog chased after a mtn goat.”

Thanks also to Eric Holle from Alaska who sent the following:

“Last summer my wife and I were hiking up Mt. Ripinsky above Haines, Alaska with another friend. Some acquaintances of ours with two dogs caught up to us during a break. We continued up the trail and we saw a group of nannies and kids at a distance of perhaps 200 meters. They were resting on a snow patch at the edge of a cliffy area. Before we could signal to the people with dogs one of the dogs took off running toward the goats and the owner’s shouts to the dog did not stop it until some of the goats had gone into escape terrain over the cliff edge, at which point we could not see them to see how far they ran. The owner seemed embarrassed and expressed her prior knowledge of dog impacts to mountain goats, but had not yet leashed her dog.”

So the threat goes both ways. Dogs threaten mountain goats but some goats are able to defend themselves. Another reason to avoid loose dogs in mountain goat habitat.

We have found an interesting paper that addresses the effect of dogs on wildlife. See [\(PDF\) The Effects of Dogs on Wildlife Communities \(researchgate.net\)](#) The paper

includes mention of the interaction of dogs and native carnivores, dogs as vectors of disease and the non-lethal effect of dogs on ungulate behaviour and reproduction.

### **Dog footprints**

When loose in the alpine, a dog will often wander over a large area, while keeping in sight of the owner. The owner wears boots or running shoes that limits the amount of human scent on the trail. The dog is “bare-foot” and scent is deposited directly to the ground. A loose dog’s scent will extend over the entire area of its wandering. A loose dog effectively multiplies the impact of the owner’s scent and any resulting threat to resident mountain goats.

### **Vibrations**

We have observed mountain goats strike the ground with their front hoof when they learn that we are close. See time 2:31 on the video [Mountain Goats On a Wild Ridge \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) for an example. We always wondered if that foot stomp was a warning to the other goats in the area. That would mean that mountain goats can send and receive vibration signals through rock. The mountain goat hoof includes the hard outer shell and a soft inner pad. So goats may have the capacity to generate vibrations with the hard shell of the foot and feel very small vibrations through the soft pad.

Another issue concerns avalanches. Can mountain goats feel vibrations from neighbouring avalanches? Can goats learn to stay away from avalanche paths when weather and snow conditions lead to imminent danger from avalanches? Again, the soft inner pad on a goat’s feet may be sensitive enough to feel vibrations through the ground from avalanches. We have observed that goats stay on avalanche-free ridges when small slab avalanches start up. Is there a correlation?

### **Juneau Nature**

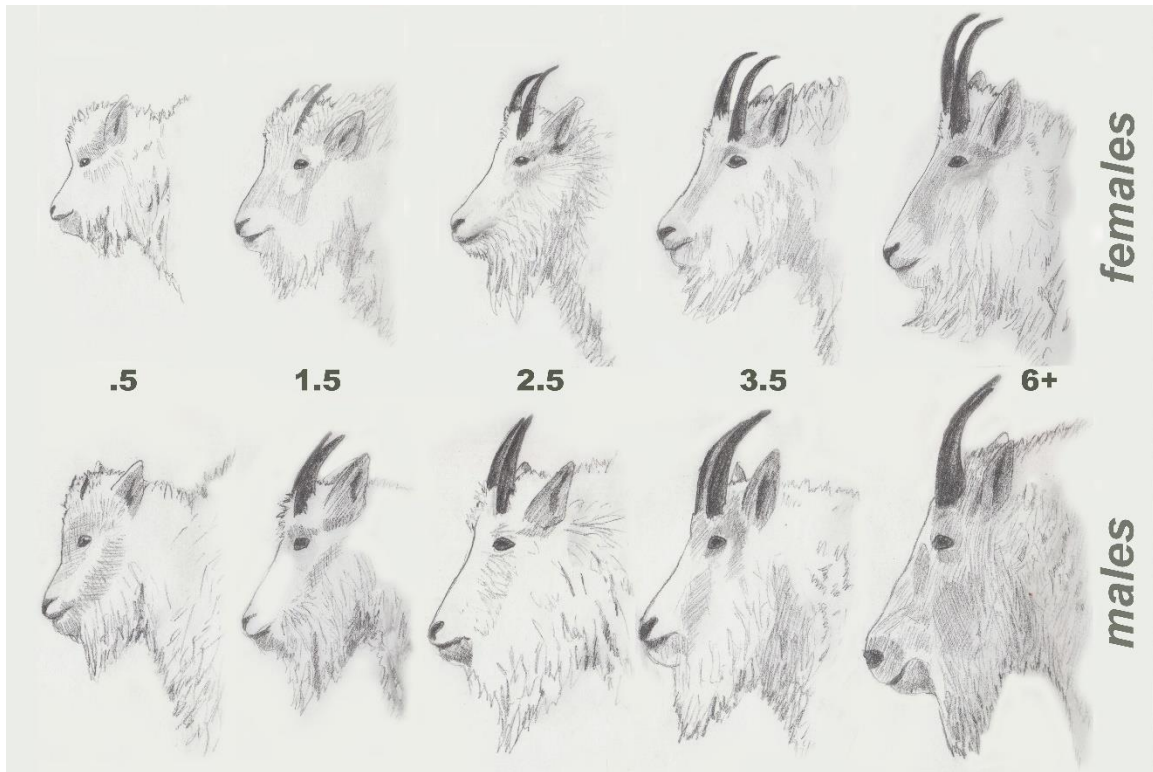
We recently learned about Richard Carstensen from Juneau Alaska. Richard is a naturalist with extensive knowledge of all facets of the natural world in his area of Alaska. Richard has spent years filming and documenting mountain goats that reside close to his home. See [Mountain Goat Archives | JuneauNature \(discoverysoutheast.org\)](https://www.discoverysoutheast.org/mountain-goat-archives-juneau-nature) for links to his work.

We are including two sets of drawings by Richard that are designed to aid in identifying the age and gender of mountain goats. Please contact Richard if you wish to reproduce the drawings. The numbers are the age of the goat in the autumn of each year.

Frontal views traced from video screen-grabs of known late-autumn individuals, watched long enough to be confident of age & gender. By November, kids born ~June 1st are 0.5 yrs old, yearlings are 1.5 yrs, and so forth.



I can't tell sex of long-hair kids except by urination posture—thus, the 'unisex' portrait above. (When short-haired, check for scrotum.) • More portraits in side-view are on back cover.



Thanks Richard. Well done!

Until the next time

Jim

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