



## BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAIN GOAT SOCIETY

SMITHERS BC CANADA

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### Newsletter #5

November 01, 2018

#### **It's Newsletter time**

Snow is here and our busy summer comes to a close. At last we have time to produce newsletters for you. Over the winter, we will report on the following mountain goat issues we researched over the summer.

Canyon goats – living down low

Mineral licks – so important for mountain goat health

Superherds – mountain goat community but only in August

The Netazul/Blunt mountain research project

The mountain goat hunt

We also have lots of photos and video footage from this summer and plan on producing two more videos in the coming months.

#### **More on Diseases**

Our remote cameras have shown two local mountain goats with scabs around the mouth. We reported to local Fish and Wildlife staff who said that it is Contagious Ecthyma, also known as CE or sore mouth. It's a viral infection that affects mountain goats and mountain sheep as well as domestic goats, sheep and camelids such as alpacas and llamas. There is no treatment. Healthy individuals normally recover within weeks but the scabs may interfere with feeding for the very young and animals in poor condition. CE is very contagious and can spread by nose to nose contact or contact with feces, saliva, etc. and can persist in the environment for years. CE can also infect humans with painful skin lesions. Access to salt blocks or road salt increases the incidence of disease. We're attaching a more detailed description from the BC government.

Mountain sheep and mountain goats can acquire CE from domestic livestock that travel in the alpine such as llamas used for packing or sheep and goats moved to feed in alpine meadows. There is a proposed regulation to limit access of domestic livestock to alpine areas in northern BC to protect mountain sheep from CE. There are also plans to expand the restrictions to keep

domestic stock away from mountain goat habitat. Fish and Wildlife staff have asked our society to report any incidence of disease we observe.



You can see the black scabs in the mouth of the nanny above and the kid below. From a distance, it looks as if the goat is smiling or panting. Contrast that with the normal mouth of the nanny leading the affected kid below.



## **A Great Story**

One of our members, Paul Glover from Smithers, tells a hair-raising story of a close encounter.

“I was high on a ridge on the east side of Mt Thomlinson. It was August 1977, in a spell of hot weather. I’d been climbing this ridge for two days, with an overnight camp on a grassy, waterless ledge around 6,000 ft. I was now well back in the range, heading for the peak if possible. On this second day my route had narrowed to a rocky spine, interrupted occasionally by small terraces about the size of a small front yard in the city.

The terrain was steep. On the north side the ridge fell nearly vertically to a series of glaciers. To the south, and far below, was Sediesh Creek, a tributary of the Skeena. Its rushing current, a roar when I crossed it on a slippery log the previous day, was now barely a whisper. The ridge rose precipitously enough to require hands-on scrambling, mostly just within my comfort zone. I had to move carefully to make sure I didn’t fall off.

Mountain goats were far from my thoughts. I was instead preoccupied with whether I could re-trace my steps: climbing down is harder, and more dangerous, than climbing up.

At something over 7,000 ft I hauled myself over the top of yet another steep rock face and looked ahead to see what was next. Across a short terrace stood a nanny mountain goat and a half-grown kid.

We were all startled. But I was not concerned, as in my experience mountain goats are gentle and benign creatures. I had run into them many times before, and they always disappeared deftly into gullies or onto cliffs and one was lucky to catch sight of them again.

This time, however, the nanny seemed unlikely to retreat from my presence in her domain. She lowered her horned head threateningly, then started to charge. “Well, this could end badly,” I thought, quite aware that the ground dropped thousands of feet behind me.

Following my instincts, I immediately sat down on a rock at the edge of the precipice behind me. Anticipating the blow of the charging goat, I thought, “I’d rather take this with my shoulder than with my chest.” So I turned myself away from the charge, offering my shoulder as a target instead. In the process I got a good look at the glacier far below, where I would be ending up when butted off the ridge.

When just several feet away the goat came to a sudden stop. Without another look at my cringing figure she turned in an instant, galloped back to her kid, and together they clattered up the rock face ahead. I watched them with great appreciation.

After a moment to gather my wits I followed them, with some trepidation, up the ridge. I was still intent on seeing if I could reach the peak by this route. Although I caught sight of the nanny and kid from time to time, they stayed far enough ahead that we never shared another tight spot.

In the late afternoon I turned around, still well short of the summit. I managed to down-climb the tricky sections, still shaking my head that I hadn’t been ejected from the heights by one of the mountain’s true denizens. There is much that I don’t recall from that climb, but the several seconds of being caught between a goat and open space are indelibly etched in my mind.”

That's all for now. Best wishes to all our members.

Cheers

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