

# Rugged Rocky Mountain Sheep & Goats

*Rough and Tough  
Mountain Climbers*



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Intermountain Region  
Uinta National Forest

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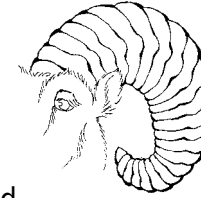
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## Characteristics: Bighorn Sheep



- ♦ Horns are tan. Rams will have curved horns, while ewe's horns are smaller and shorter, never reaching a full curl.
- ♦ Hoof prints are rectangular. Hooves have a hard outer rim with a soft concave middle for better traction on rough terrain.
- ♦ Coats are brown, with white hair on the belly, rump patch, backs of legs, muzzle, and eye patch.
- ♦ Eyes are a yellowish color.



## Viewing Wildlife

During the summer months (July - September), goats are most likely seen on Mt. Timpanogos' high ridge tops and at Hidden Lakes Cirque and Bomber Ridge. Winter brings the goats east of Provo along the Wasatch Front to Lost Creek Canyon and Slide Canyon and to "The Fingers" area in Provo Canyon.

During the summer, bighorn sheep may be seen at the mouth of American Fork Canyon, Provo Canyon, and along the Wasatch Front. They may move to lower elevations in the winter to find food in these areas.



## Characteristics: Mountain Goat

- ♦ Horns are short, black, and do not curl. Billies' horns are larger at the base and curve sharper than nannies.
- ♦ Hoof prints are square. Hooves have a hard outside with a spongy, convex pad inside, making travel easier over rocky terrain.
- ♦ Coats are white, with a wool-like undercoat and long guard hair as the outer coat.
- ♦ Eyes are dark brown to black.



photo by Brian Maxfield

## Viewing Tips

- View from a distance. Use binoculars, spotting scopes, and tele-photo lens to view and photograph wildlife to avoid stressing them.
- Protect newborns and young animals by keeping your distance.
- Animals may charge if chased, crowded, or followed.
- Animals require special diets - Please don't feed them.
- Avoid sudden loud noise around animals.



# Introduction

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIGHORN

**SHEEP** (*Ovis canadensis canadensis*) are native to the Wasatch Mountain range, but were eliminated in the early 1900's due to hunting and disease resulting from settlement in the area. Only a small population of desert bighorn sheep in southwest Utah managed to survive.

The Uinta National Forest is currently involved in a partnership to reintroduce bighorn sheep. The reintroductions are an attempt to increase the population for Utah, and to reestablish a native sheep population on Mt. Timpanogos.

## Capture and Release

The North American Wild Sheep Federation, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), the Sundance Corporation, and private individuals contributed time and money to this reintroduction project. Project planning spanned over 15 years.

Approximately 60 bighorn sheep were released into Grove Creek Canyon and Rock Canyon on the Uinta National Forest. The sheep were captured from the Rattlesnake Canyon herd near Green River, Utah and from Hinton, Alberta Canada.

There are plans to transplant more bighorn sheep on Cascade Mountain and Box Elder Peak areas on the Uinta and Wasatch-Cache National Forests.

## Biology

Bighorn sheep males, females and yearlings are referred to as rams, ewes, and lambs. During the summer, rams establish order of dominance by the size of their horns. When two bands of bighorns meet, rams possessing horns



of equal size often engage in head butting bouts. Head butting also occurs when two rams are following the same ewe during

breeding season. The victor wins the right to breed with the ewes.

Breeding or rutting season lasts from mid-October to December. Lambs are born from mid-April through late June. They weigh about 9 pounds. Twins are very rare. The first two weeks of life only milk is suckled, then the lambs will eat grasses and plants.

## Habitat

During the summer, bighorn sheep live on high mountain slopes with rugged terrain and in the foothills near rocky cliffs in the winter. Both areas are near permanent water sources. They depend primarily on grasses and forbs for food, and shrubs depending on the season. In spring and summer, mineral licks containing salts are eagerly sought.

# Introduction

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN GOATS (*Oreamnos americanus*)

inhabit the Mt. Timpanogos Wilderness in the Uinta National Forest. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources transplanted 10 goats from Olympic National Park in 1981. There are now close to 100 goats occupying this wilderness area.

There is still debate about whether the goats are native to Utah. They may have lived here in the past before recordable histories of fossils could provide evidence. Fossils of a smaller mountain goat, Harington's goat (*Oreamnos haringtoni*) have been found, but evidence suggests that the goats have been absent from Utah for 10,000 years.

## Biology

Mountain goat males, females, and yearlings are known as billies, nannies, and kids. Billies are only allowed near the nannies during rutting season, which lasts from November to December. Kids are born from mid-May to mid-June and weigh 7-8 pounds. Twins and triplets have been born on Mt. Timpanogos but these are rare. They only nurse for a short time and then begin eating grasses and forbs.

Billies are territorial and will defend their space. They will line up parallel to each other but facing opposite directions. If one does not back down, the goat next to them will jab their horns into the hind quarter most of the time. They will also run at each other and as a threat, lower their heads and display their horns.

## Habitat

Mountain goats live at high elevations in rugged terrain in the summer and move to lower elevations during the winter. These areas are close to water. Diet varies from season to season. Summer meals consist primarily of grasses and forbs, while winter food consists of shrubs and browse.

In the spring and summer, salt licks are used. These areas usually have a number of minerals, which the goats may have been lacking all winter. During the summer, goats can be found in wallowing areas, which are depressions in the ground where goats roll around in the dirt to remove external parasites and to cool down.



photo by Brian Waxfield