

Does Survey Effort Influence Sightability of Mountain Goats during Aerial Surveys?¹

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Abstract: Practical techniques to estimate sightability of mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*) during aerial surveys have not been developed or are poorly tested. I evaluated sightability of 28 radio-collared goats in 2 study areas in southeastern British Columbia to assess whether sightability increased with increased helicopter survey effort, and to explore what factors might affect sightability. Three surveys at different survey effort were conducted in each study area, during which attempts were made to locate collared goats 64 times. I detected no relationship between survey effort ranging from 1.3 to 6.1 min/km² and sightability from 38 to 83%. Sightability averaged 63%. Only animal activity and larger group size influenced goat sightability. Sightability tended to decrease with increasing vegetation cover. Survey efforts >2.0 min/km² do not appear to result in higher sightability. For surveys of large areas not well known to surveyors, a 60–65% sightability correction may be realistic, with a target of approximately 1.5 min/km² effort.

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Key words: British Columbia, mountain goat, *Oreamnos americanus*, sightability, survey effort.

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