

## Habituated, Tolerant, or and Salt-Conditioned Mountain Goats and Human Safety

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**ABSTRACT:** Interactions between humans and wildlife include several consumptive and non-consumptive forms. In some cases, the increased demand for wildlife viewing can precipitate new human–wildlife conflicts. Mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*) are native to numerous North American mountain ranges from southeastern Alaska to southwestern Montana, USA. Goat habitat typically consists of steep terrain and cold weather habitats, which has left them particularly vulnerable to climate change. Their alpine environments also make them vulnerable to disturbance by aircraft and land-based motorized human activity. We reviewed and characterized situations in which goats in close proximity to humans on foot may become a nuisance or dangerous to people. We identify how such interactions might occur, focusing on the array of intensity observed in different settings. We summarize and evaluate interventions that have been attempted and may warrant additional research. Goats that tolerate people along hiking trails, perhaps through a habituation-like process, can typically be kept at a safe distance simply by shouting, clapping hands, or vigorous gestures. Goats that have learned to associate people with a salt reward (e.g., typically urine deposited on the ground, less frequently sweat obtained directly by licking) are more likely to be successfully hazed by tossing small stones, hitting the animal in the flank or rear. Salt-conditioned goats sometimes come within touching distance of humans; we strongly advise against prodding or poking these animals with sharp objects such as trekking poles. The recreating public that ventures into goat habitat is the ultimate source of these conflicts. Education, compliance, and possibly some infrastructure improvements can lessen the potential for conflicts and provide new and safer opportunities to view goats.

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**KEYWORDS:** anthropogenic disturbance, climate change, habituation, mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*), tolerance, salt conditioned, wildlife viewing.