

9. Mountain Goats

For years, we searched for a Mountain Goat in the wild. Finally we encountered one near Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills of southwestern South Dakota. Seeing one in the wild after all this time was a huge thrill for us.

Mountain Goats, despite their name, are not really goats, however they are closely related. Sometimes they are called Goat Antelopes.

Mountain Goats are excellent climbers. Their hooves have 2 toes which spread wide, providing them with great balance. Rough pads on the bottom of their toes work almost like a hiking shoe to provide grip. They are great jumpers too, and can jump nearly 12 feet!

A mountain goat's long beard and thick coat is important to its survival, as it helps protect the creature from strong winds and cold temperatures that occur in the higher altitudes in which Mountain Goats live.

Female Mountain Goats are called nannies and males are known as billies. Both male and female Mountain Goats have pointed horns and beards, however, males have longer horns and a longer beard. They are herbivores, and their diet consists primarily of plants, grasses, mosses and other alpine vegetation.

Mountain Goats were once endangered but thankfully, due to conservation efforts, they have made a comeback. However, conservation efforts are still important to the survival of this species, as Mountain Goats face many threats in the wild. Predators, falls, harsh winters, avalanches, and even humans are great threats to these creatures.

Mountain Goats are thought to be one of the least studied mammals in North America, however I enjoy studying them, and I hope you do, too. Studying them will help us to better understand this species and develop a respect for them.