



Mountain Goats

➤ HIGH up in the Rockies and in the Cascade Mountains, in the more inaccessible reaches of Montana, Idaho, and Washington, the kids are being born. From the human point of view, the footing is tricky and the scenery breath-taking, but the mother mountain goat is equally unaware of both danger and beauty. And the kid is too preoccupied getting its breakfast and testing its mountain legs to notice anything else.

Throughout the end of April, May, and June the kids are born, singly or in litters of two. The lying-in takes place in some well-hidden cranny, from which the mother ventures to forage for her own repast, returning at frequent intervals to cater to her hungry offspring.

This period of infantile isolation does not last long. Very soon, a matter of days, mothers and kids congregate in nursery herds a couple of dozen strong, feeding together over a comparatively restricted area. The adult males do not participate in this domestic band, preferring to range far, alone and untrammelled.

The mountain goat is a member of the

antelope family, and is a close relative of the Alp-climbing chamois. It is marvelously adapted to its chill and precarious environment. It has a long shaggy coat with a dense soft woolly underfur. Its white color renders it all but invisible against snow, and its suction-cup hoofs and elastic, spreading toes give it a sure-footed agility that sometimes seems to defy the laws of gravity.

The prodigies of climbing and leaping that these animals are capable of always brings out a mingled exasperation and admiration in those venturesome people who try to get close. Owen Wister once described following tracks through snow and soft shale. The marks showed that the perverse animals "invariably chose the sharpest slant they could find to walk on, often with a decent level just beside it that we were glad enough to have. If there were a precipice and a sound flat-top, they took the precipice, and crossed its face on juts that did not look as if your hat would hang on them."

Another observer, Frederic Irland, has recorded a winter trip in the Cascade Mountains. "We had nearly burst our hearts by climbing for an hour or two," he writes, when suddenly they spied four mountain goats "on the edge of an abyss of the kind which Dore has portrayed in illustrating

Dante." The goats saw them too, and scampered away "along scandalous precipices."

After a perilous pursuit "wholly unsuited to nervous persons . . . we saw those four fool goats again, the big one and a small one looking back around the corner to see if we were really coming." The men never did catch up with the goats.

Science News Letter, May 6, 1950

PUBLIC HEALTH

Polio Poll May Show How It Spreads

➤ A "GALLUP polio" may help determine the causes of polio and the ways in which it is carried.

Interviewers of the Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta of the U.S. Public Health Service will question samples of the populations of three cities on headaches, coughs, diarrhea and other minor ailments which sometimes are the symptoms of mild forms of polio.

The cities are Charleston, W. Va., Topeka, Kans., and Phoenix, Ariz.

Experts will examine the people who report that they have had these minor ailments to determine whether there is evidence in these persons of having had polio.

While these Gallup surveys are continuing the experts will wait until a real outbreak of the "frank" crippling polio occurs—as they know it must inevitably in one of those three cities. In the meantime they will be gathering valuable knowledge of the causes of the waves of these "minor morbidities" as the experts call them. They will be finding out what the real trouble was which produced epidemics of headaches, for instance, never reported to the doctor.

When polio that paralyzes hits one of these medically Gallup-ed towns, they may find out that it is accompanied by a wave, a noticeable increase, of one of the minor morbidities. With this evidence, along with other knowledge, they will know that many more people had polio than was actually reported by the doctors and they will know where the cases are.

Although there were 42,000 cases last year, putting an unprecedented strain on those fighting the disease, for the purpose of the experts trying to find out how the disease is carried and why, there aren't nearly enough cases of polio. By this is meant that only those cases which can now be identified as polio are reported—others which disguise themselves as coughs or headaches remain unknown.

It is for this reason that polio presents such an erratic picture, popping up in towns far apart, seeming to hit only one member of one family and all members of another, skipping several city blocks. The cases of polio that are reported are too far apart, both in space and time, to give the doctors and the research men a complete enough picture of how polio travels and where it comes from.

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