



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release FEBRUARY 12, 1950

LIVE-TRAPPING AND RESTOCKING OF MOUNTAIN GOATS IS SUCCESSFUL

During the last nine years 96 mountain goats have been live-trapped in Montana, and most of them have been used to restock old game ranges within the state. In 1949, 25 mountain goats were captured for restocking purposes through a cooperative arrangement between the Montana Fish and Game Department and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior Secretary Oscar L. Chapman announced today.

In a report to the Secretary, Fish and Wildlife Service Director Albert M. Day stated that the project is a typical example of restocking of big game habitat by the transfer of animals from another area — work which has been made possible by the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid to Wildlife program. This phase of the Federal Aid work has been highly popular with sportsmen who hope to see unused game ranges become productive. Larger stocks of animals for hunting would thus become available.

Because mountain goats live in small, scattered groups, live-trapping and restocking is a slow process. Several traps in northwestern Montana were operated during May, June and July, 1949. These traps were baited with salt and browse. Of the 25 goats trapped during the season, six were whiskered old billies past their prime — and were released. Of the remainder, 13 were successfully transplanted, while six others died from unseasonable heat and from fright. Losses normally are low.

The captured goats were rendered harmless to each other and to their handlers by having a short piece of garden hose looped and cemented over their two stiletto-sharp horns. The goats were then blindfolded and their feet tied for transportation out of the mountains seven miles on the river in a rubber boat — shooting the rapids enroute. Once out of the mountains, the goats were loaded in a Stinson plane and flown to the new range area. There, the goats were packed into the mountains on horses.

Besides the "General Wildlife Restocking Project" in Montana — which is also concerned with live-trapping and transplanting of deer and antelope — other states, like Oregon and Colorado, and Alaska have used P-R Federal Aid funds to capture and restock mountain goats.

An example of the possible results from this type of work can be seen in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Several mountain goats escaped during the 1930s from Custer State Park and located themselves in the Harney Peak region. By 1939, there were 23 mountain goats at Harney. Although South Dakota had not formerly been mountain goat territory, an estimated 300 of the animals were in the Black Hills last year.

South Dakota game agents also report a large number of feral goats in the Black Hills. Feral goats are domesticated goats gone wild. These common goats can be distinguished from mountain goats by the latter's heavy coats of white hair, and their two black spikes for horns. The mountain goat, in fact, is not a goat at all — it's a close relative of the European chamois.

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