

July 6, 1993

Maureen Finnerty, Superintendent  
Olympic National Park  
600 East Park Avenue  
Port Angeles, WA 98362

Dear Superintendent Finnerty:

Enclosed please find a copy of the review Mark Nesvig requested I do concerning the mountain goat literature. If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,



Paul Lawrence Farber  
Professor

cc: Keith Benson

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A REVIEW OF LITERATURE  
RELATING TO MOUNTAIN GOATS IN THE  
OLYMPIC MOUNTAINS

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Department of History  
Oregon State University

June, 1993

## BACKGROUND

The following remarks are based on a review of four items:

1. Dr. Susan Schultz, "A Review of the Historical Evidence Relating to Mountain Goats in the Olympic Mountains Prior to 1925."
2. Dr. Randall Schalk, "A Review of the Ethnographic and Archaeological Evidence Relating to Mountain Goats in the Olympic Mountains."
3. Drs. D.B. Houston and E.G. Schreiner, "Extract from Monograph Regarding Mountain Goats in Olympic National Park."
4. Dr. R.L. Lyman, "Significance for Wildlife Management of the Late Quaternary Biogeography of Mountain Goats (*Oreamnos Americanus*) in the Pacific Northwest, U.S.A."

## DISCUSSION

Dr. Schultz's review presents a convincing case that the historical record does not provide evidence that mountain goats were found in the Olympic Mountains prior to 1925. Although a few early reports mention goats, the credibility of the references are low. Eighteenth-century Spanish explorers, for example, are notoriously unreliable as sources of biogeographical information. In contrast, the more reliable observations and reports of later trained naturalists, especially those from the Field Museum in Chicago and the U.S. Biological Survey, suggest that goats were not found in the Olympic Mountains in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If the animal in question was a small invertebrate, then it may well have been overlooked, even by trained naturalists. But mammals, followed by birds, were more actively sought. Given the terrain, mountain goat behavior, and the number of individuals who had opportunities to observe those

habitats where mountain goats thrive, it is unlikely that they would have gone unnoticed. Also, given the rapid growth of the goat population after its introduction in the 1920s, it is unlikely that mountain goats, if they inhabited the Olympic Mountains, would be confined to sub-populations so small and so remote as to defy observation by trained naturalists and local tribes.

The ethnographic and archaeological reviews by Dr. Schalk strongly support the conclusions of the historical review. Local tribes of the Olympic Peninsula do not have records of mountain goats. Quite to the contrary, these tribes had a trade network that supplied them with mountain goat wool and horns from outside the Peninsula. The local tribes, moreover, raised wool dogs as a substitute source of wool. Schalk notes that these dogs were kept by tribes that did not have direct access to populations of mountain goats. Archaeological data corroborates the ethnographic findings.

The historical and ethnographic evidence convincingly suggest the lack of mountain goats in the Olympic Mountains from the late eighteenth century until their introduction in the 1920s. Such evidence does not preclude their existence earlier during the late Quaternary. Drs. Houston and Schreiner, however, argue that the mountain goat is but one of many species found on the adjacent mainland, but not found in the Olympic Peninsula. Similar to "landbridge islands" like Vancouver Island, Queen Charlottes, and the islands of the Alexander Archipelago, the Olympic Peninsula has an impoverished fauna compared to the mainland. Houston and

Schreiner relate this ecological situation to the geological and geographical history of the region.

In contrast, Dr. Lyman "conjectures" that mountain goats colonized the Olympic Mountains somewhere between 17,500 and 13,500 BP. That is, he hypothesizes that mountain goats were among the species that possibly crossed the Puget Trough and colonized a habitat that was suited ecologically to them. This is, of course, a possibility. But without any historical, ethnographic, archaeological, or paleontological evidence to back the claim, and in light of the impoverished fauna of the Olympic Peninsula, which suggests that many possible species didn't colonize the peninsula, it is at present a weak and unsupported speculation.