

Bighorn Updates

January 2008

Herd Count - 2007

Fall count - 150

Past Herd Counts

Since 1990 the highest herd count has been **213** in 2003

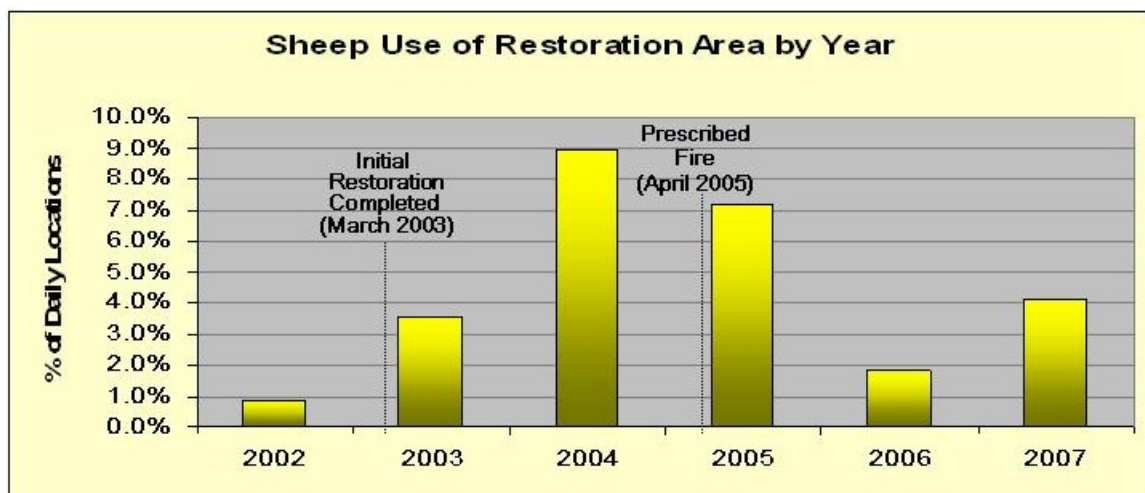
Radio-telemetry Monitoring

Parks Canada is in the midst of a program of ecological restoration of bighorn sheep winter and transitional range expected to continue until at least 2010. Each year a new batch of 10 sheep are fitted with radio-collars so that researchers can scientifically monitor bighorn sheep response to restoration work. Upcoming restoration plans can then be adjusted to optimize the potential benefits to sheep.



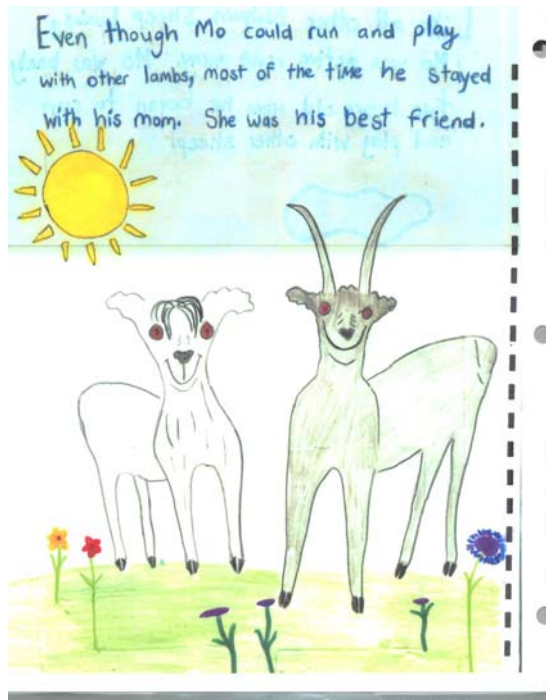
Bighorn Response to Restoration Work, 2002-2007

Restoration of the Redstreak benches was initially completed in 2003, and then followed by a prescribed fire treatment in 2005. The graph below shows bighorn sheep use of the restoration in each year from 2002 through 2007. 2002 was a pretreatment year. Overall, sheep have responded positively to the restoration work, although there has been considerable variation in use from year to year.



Mo the Bighorn

Mo is a senior ram of the Radium herd and is the only animal radio-collared for more than 2 years of the study. He is easily recognizable because of distinctive damage to his right horn. Mo was radio-collared each year from 2002 through 2006, and gave researchers some unique insights into how the habitat selection pattern of individual animals may change from year to year.



Mo received his name from the storybook "The Story of Mo" written by KNP student biologist Omar McDadi in 2004. This book has been used as a resource for outreach programming in local primary and elementary schools.

Sponsor a Bighorn funds to refurbish Collars

A little over a year has gone by since the Friends of Kootenay started the "Sponsor a Bighorn" program.

With a little marketing and some help from Parks Canada on funds for the brochure, the program has started to generate some interest, some funds and about 26 sponsors to date. The funds are slated go into refurbishing the expensive radio collars. To refurbish one GPS collar alone it costs: \$600 - \$700. Since there are 13 collars currently being used then a short-term goal would be to cover the cost of refurbishing at least 4 by the fall.

With a short-term goal of \$2,800 to refurbish 4 collars we are part way there, having generated \$1,875 to date.

The long-term goal is to cover Vet expenses and all of the refurbishing of radio collars.

Some of the funding will go into including Bighorn information on the Friends website and making a dynamic site where you can "Sponsor a Bighorn" online as well as become a Friends of Kootenay Member.



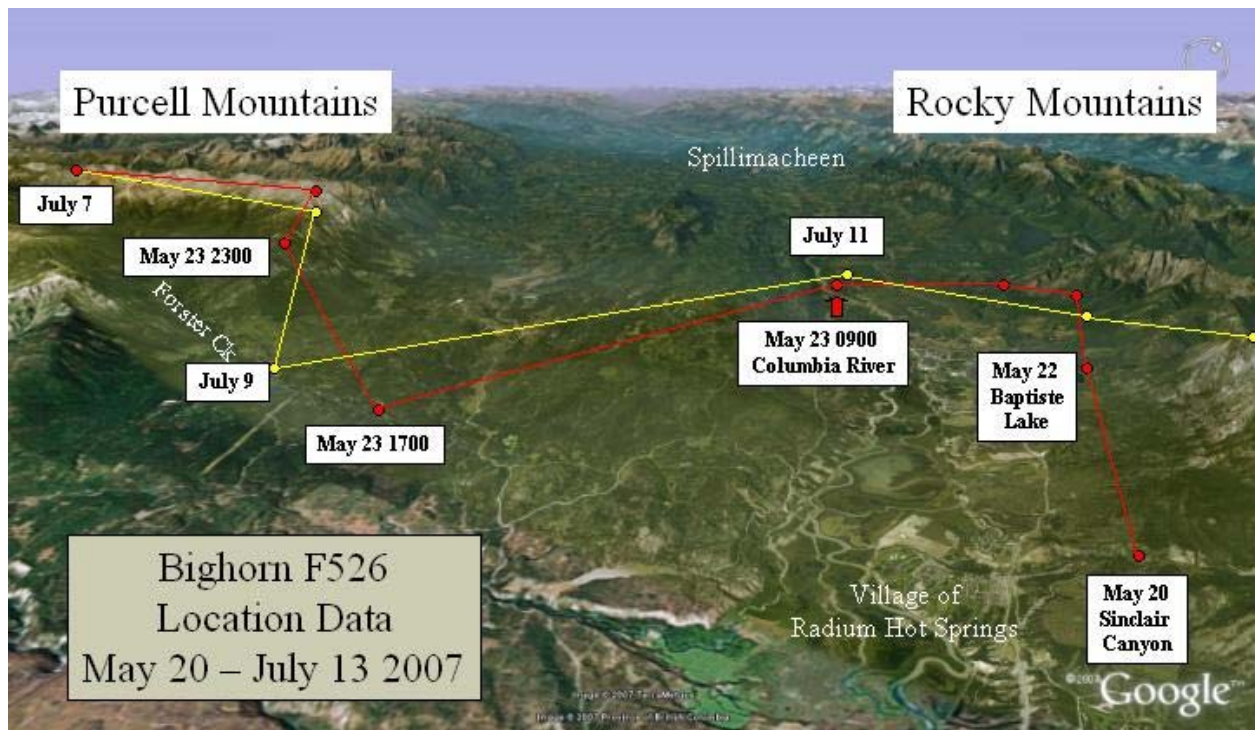
Mortality – highways and railways

11 of 18 sheep mortalities in 2007 can be attributed to highway or railways

Drive slow and watch for wildlife!

Purcell Mountains Sheep

For the very first time in our study, a marked animal has crossed the Columbia River! In 2007, female F526 crossed the valley north of Edgewater (presumably swimming the Columbia) in late May, stayed briefly on Steamboat Mountain, then traveled west into the ranges between Frances and Forster Creek. She eventually reached a point 25 kms west of Edgewater! On July 11th she crossed the Columbia near the same spot and joined other female sheep in the Brisco Range. This sheep's travels support anecdotal reports from local residents of sheep sightings in the Purcell Mountains, including the Horsethief drainage. We are very interested in documenting sheep occurrence west of the Columbia. Please report sightings from this area to Alan Dibb, wildlife biologist, at 347-6158 or to Shelagh Wrazej, wildlife technician, at 347-6168.



Fun Facts

Horns have growth rings that are formed when the horns stop growing in the winter and resume growth the rest of the year. Horns have a bone core, but the outer layer is made of keratin, which is the same material that hooves, hair, and fingernails are made of! A ram's horns can weigh up to 30 pounds (14 kg), equal to the weight of all the bones in his body! Rams use their horns to fight each other to determine who is dominant and to compete for females. These battles can last up to 25 hours!

Lambs are born in sheltered areas among steep cliffs in the spring. Each ewe chooses a different area to give birth. Ewes can recognize their offspring visually and by their scent, and lambs can recognize their mother visually. Each ewe and lamb remain alone for up to a week after its birth, then join other ewe-lamb pairs for up to a month before traveling to their summer ranges.



Parks Canada
Parcs Canada



BIGHORN IN OUR BACKYARD



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