

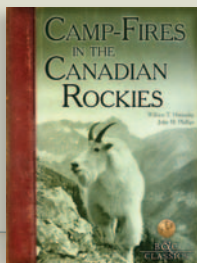
CAMP-FIRES IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

An Excerpt from Chapter XIII

Photographing A Mountain Goat At Six Feet

The Boone and Crockett Club launched a series of classic hunting and adventure books digitally re-mastered as eBooks. Works from Theodore Roosevelt, William T. Hornaday, Charles Sheldon, Frederick C. Selous and others are being converted to high-quality versions for eReader and iPad users.

Following is an excerpt from *Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies* by William T. Hornaday and John M. Phillips. Travel to British Columbia with Hornaday and Phillips on an expedition to collect dozens of museum specimens and capture their adventures with a Hawk-Eye Stereo Camera.



WILD-ANIMAL PHOTOGRAPHY—A SUBJECT ON THE CRAGS—AT THE HEAD OF THE GRAND SLIDE—THE BILLY GOAT AT BAY—EXPOSURES AT SIX FEET—THE GLARING EYES OF THE CAMERA STOPS A CHARGE—A SLEEPLESS NIGHT FROM THE PERILS OF THE DAY.

AT LAST THE CAMERA HAS fully and fairly captured the elusive, crag-defying Rocky Mountain goat. *Oreamnos* has stood for his picture, at short range, looking pleasant and otherwise, and the pictures call for neither an “if” nor an apology. They are all that the most ambitious wild-animal photographer could reasonably desire.

In photographing rare wild animals in their haunts, the camera always begins at long range and reduces the focal distance by slow, and sometimes painful degrees. To the difficulties always present in photographing a large wild animal in its haunts must be added the dangerous crag-climbing necessary in securing fine pictures of the mountain goat.

So far as I know, the first photographs ever made of *Oreamnos* in his native haunts were taken by the late E.A. Stanfield, on the rock walls of the Stickine River, northern British Columbia, in 1898, not far from where he afterward lost his life in that dangerous stream. This was a single negative showing two goats in the middle distance, and three others, far away, sticking against the side of what appeared to be a perfectly smooth wall of rock several hundred feet high.

After that came three or four pictures of goats taken in timber, on level ground, and amid surroundings that seemed more suitable for white-tailed deer than crag-climbing goats. The distance was so great that it was only when the negatives were much enlarged that the goats became interesting.

On both sides of our ideally beautiful camp in the head of Avalanche Valley, the mountains rose steeply and far. First came the roof slopes, a mile



Head of Largest Big-Horn Ram, (*Ovis canadensis*). Carnegie Museum specimen (No. 1). The hump on the nose is due to recent fighting.

Phillips Peak,
from Bird
Mountain
ELEVATION ABOUT
10,000 FEET.
OUR CAMP ON
GOAT PASS WAS
UNDER THE RIGHT
SHOULDER OF THE
SITTING FIGURE.





CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Mr. Phillips's most dangerous position, drawn by Charles B. Hudson | The goat climbing down and away. | The finest mountain goat picture taken at eight feet.

from bottom to top, their faces seamed with parallel "slides" and ribbed with the ridges of rock and points of moss-green timber that climbed up between them. Above all that rose the long stretches of crag and rock wall, crowned by peak, "dome," and "saddle"... there was one old billy who fascinated us all. When we looked out of our tents on our first morning in that camp, he was calmly lying upon a ledge at the foot of the cliff immediately above us, near a bank of perpetual snow. For two days he remained there, at the same elevation, moving neither north nor south more than three hundred yards. When hungry, he came down to the foot of the cliff and fed on the tender plants that grew at timber-line, then climbed back to his favorite contour line, to lie and doze away the hours.

That goat seemed so sociable that finally we began to regard him as one of us, and we scrutinized him and apostrophize him to our heart's content. On the fourth morning, the beautifully clear sky and faultless atmosphere revealed a rare opportunity. While the cook was putting the finishing touches to an inspiring breakfast of fried mule-deer steaks and other luxuries, those of us who had most quickly succeeded in finding the clean spots on the camp towels took our usual early-morning gaze at "that old goat." (Ye gods! How glorious was the crisp air, the spruce-woods odor, the crackle and snap of the

camp-fire, and the golden glow of sunrise on the western peaks and precipices! That was life,—without a flaw.)

As we gathered around our standing-lunch breakfast table, I remarked to Mr. Phillips that it would be a glorious feat to secure some really fine photographs of that billy goat in his natural environment. Turning to his side partner, Mr. Phillips said very positively, "Mack, it is up to the unscientific section to get those pictures!"

"I dunno about them environments," answered Mack slowly, while he steered a long line of condensed cream into his coffee-cup, "but we can shore git a boxful of scenery up thar. We never yet shot a full-grown billy with a camery; and they're mighty onsartin critters. If we corral him too close, he'll like as not go vicious, and knock us clean off the mountain."

We soon saw that an attempt would be made to round up that goat somewhere, somehow, and take a picture of him at short range. In a few minutes we invented a wigwag code of signals by which the cook was to signal at intervals, with a clean towel on the end of a fossil tepee-pole, the position of the goat. Mr. Phillips and Mack Norboe made ready for the event, and with Kaiser to assist in manipulating the goat, presently set out.

Mr. Phillips dislikes writing about his adventures, but in view of the fact that he

alone is able to relate the occurrences of that day, I prevailed upon him to write out the following account of that daring and dangerous episode. Had I known on that morning the risks that he would run on those cliffs, hanging by one hand on a knife-edge of rotten rock with an angry goat at a nearness of six feet and threatening to knock him off into midair, I would not for any number of photographs have encouraged the enterprise. It was only the merciful Providence which sometimes guards insane camera enthusiasts which prevented a frightful tragedy; for it is well known throughout the goat country that an old male goat cornered on a ledge will fight dog or man.

In order to assist the photographers to the utmost, Charlie Smith and I considerably went bear-hunting; and this is Mr. Phillips's account:

"Shortly after twelve o'clock, Mack and I started for the goat that had been hanging out above our camp. We took my stereoscopic camera, Charlie Smith's four-by-five camera, the dog, and my big gun in order to kill the goat if he attacked me.

"After crossing the narrow flat of Avalanche Creek, we struck up the long, grassy slide directly opposite our camp. At first its slope was about twenty degrees, but this gradually increased until finally, where it struck the slide-rock, it almost stood on end. We reached the slide rock about 2 P.M., after which the going was harder than ever. Gradually we worked our way out of the slide on to a high, rocky point which rose toward the south.

"Although lightly clad, we were by that time very warm. I had taken off my hunting shirt, and hung it upon my back, and opened the sides of my knickerbockers. Inside and out, we needed all the air we could get. I wore that day a pair of light golf shoes with rubber soles, tipped at the toes and heels with leather in

which were fixed some small steel nails. These soles were very flexible, and adjusted themselves so well to the inequalities of the rocks that I could jump, and stick where I lit. Mack said: 'With them foot-riggin's, you shore kin go whar a bar kin!' Mack was not so well equipped as to footgear, having on an old pair of shoes with turned-up toes, set with nails that were much worn. This handicapped him on the bare rocks.

"It's about time Cookie wiggled that rag, to show us whar that goat is,' said Mack as we seated ourselves to rest, and took out our glasses.

"Sure enough. In a few minutes we saw Huddleston out on the green flat in front of the tents, waving vigorously; and from his signals we knew that the goat was still there, toward the south, and above us. We decided that the Director's semaphore system was a good thing. We knew that our best chance for success lay in getting above the goat, to prevent his escape to the peaks, then in cornering him, somewhere. After a long diagonal climb we found ourselves under the wall of the snow-capped mountain, which rose sheer up two hundred feet or more, then rounded off into a dome going about three hundred feet higher. Now, just here we found a very strange feature of mountain work. A great rock buttress stretched along the foot of the mountain wall, originally continuous, and several hundred feet long. But somehow a big section had been riven out of the middle of that ridge, going quite down to the general face of that mountain-side, like a railway cut standing almost on end. This central cut-out section is now the head of a big slide, five hundred feet wide at the cliff, from which it descends at a fearful pitch...

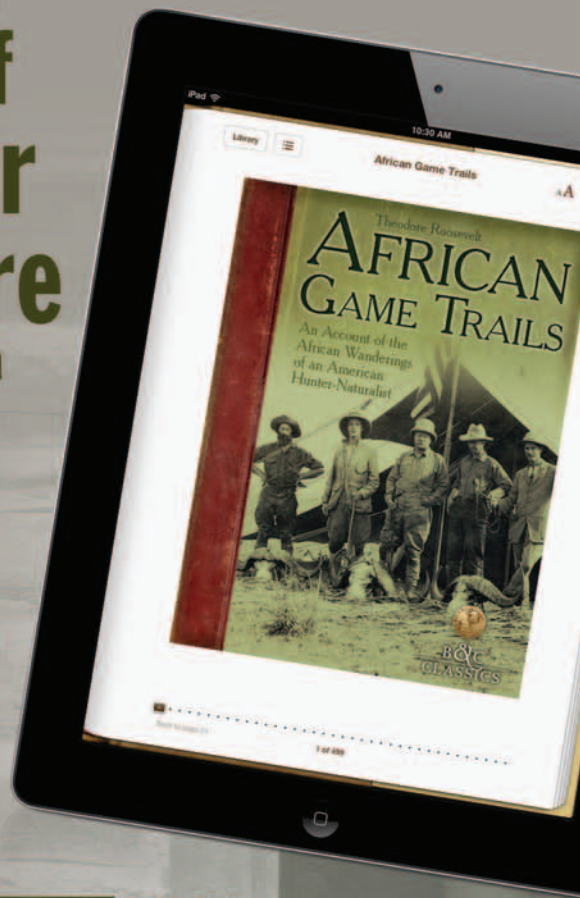
"We stood on the top of the northern ridge, close under the foot of the cliff, and looked down the rock wall which dropped almost perpendicularly to the slide-way far below. On the south side of the slide rose a ridge very similar to the one on which we stood.

"From the signals Huddleston made at that time, we knew that the goat was below us. 'Thar he is, now!' exclaimed Mack, pointing down our ridge, and looking as he pointed I saw the animal about one hundred and fifty yards below us on a point of rock overhanging the slide. He was staring down toward our camp, as if he saw Huddleston and his signals, but I doubt if he did see our cook, for without glasses the distance was too great.

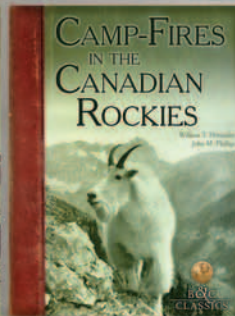
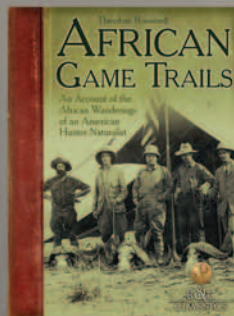
"Up to that moment, our dog Kaiser had been obediently following at our heels. Then we showed him the goat, and explained to him what we desired. He seemed to quite understand what we wished him to do. Leaving us at once, he silently worked his way down over the rocks, and in three or four minutes jumped the goat. And then

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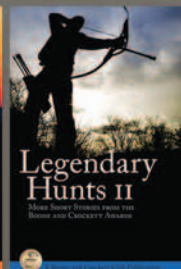


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pandemonium broke loose. Kaiser barked excitedly, Mack rolled stones, and I yelled.

"The goat was very much surprised by all this noise, and the sudden assault of the dog. Seeing that his retreat to the upper sanctuary of the cliffs was effectually cut off, he bounded like a great ball of cotton down the almost perpendicular wall of the cliff, into the slide-way two hundred feet below...

"In the meantime I had scrambled down the rocks into the head of the slide, and found that although it pitched at a frightful angle, I could get footing close under the sheer mountain wall, so I ran and scrambled across, jumping over some water-worn fissures. When I reached the opposite wall, I saw the goat below me coming up the ridge. Owing

to the shape of the slide, I had travelled only one-third the distance covered by the goat...

"Seeing that the goat was safe for the moment, I thought of Mack, and fearing that he had fallen, went back. I found him at the bottom of one of the water-worn fissures. It was too wide for him to jump, so he had gone down into the rock crevasse, and when I found him he was on his hands and knees; and no wonder. The bottom was worn quite smooth, and pitched down at an angle of about sixty degrees. When he heard me he looked up, and said: 'I wisht I had some of the legs them octopuses had that the Professor was tellin' us about! I'd shore rope myself over this ditch!'

"When finally Mack crawled out of his trouble, we went over and looked at the goat. I took a picture of him from the slide,

then leaving Mack in the slide with my gun, I worked my way with the cameras out up on the ridge, and finally secured a position above the goat.

"I found him standing on a ledge about 18 inches wide, backed against a slight projection on the face of the cliff, which cut the ledge off. The ledge rose at rather a steep incline for about twenty feet up to the level on which I stood. The goat was about eight feet below me, while below him was a sheer drop of a hundred and fifty feet or more, down to the slide-rock.

"He was a very large goat, weighing, I should say, fully three hundred pounds. He had a magnificent pair of horns, fully ten inches long. I was surprised to note that he did not show the least sign of panic, or even fear. He looked up at me quite calmly, and then, ignoring me entirely, solemnly and serenely gazed out over the crags below.

"After a few trials from above I found it impossible to get a good picture of him without getting much nearer; so I yelled down to Mack: 'I'm going down to him. If he charges me, you must kill him, in a hurry.'

"Setting the focus of my stereo camera for six feet, and placing the bulb in my mouth, I gradually worked my way down the ledge, carrying my camera in one hand and holding to the wall with the other. When I was within about twelve feet of him, Mack yelled to me:

"'Look out thar! He's a-raisin' his tail, like a buffalo bull! He's goin' to knock you off!'

"Mack was raised in Texas, with the buffalo, and diagnosed the case correctly. The very next instant, so it seemed to me, the goat came at me, head and tail up, ears drooped forward and eyes blazing green. He came with a bouncing rush, hammering the stones with his front feet so that the loose ones flew like broken ice. I was taken completely by surprise, for I did not think that on a ledge so narrow an animal could or would charge me.

"I was perfectly helpless, for I could not step aside, and it was impossible for me to back quickly up that steep and narrow shelf. The goat was too quick for Mack, for I heard him yell, in great alarm, 'I can't shoot, or I'll hit ye both!'

"Mack told me afterward that he dared not shoot from where he was, for fear the heavy ball would go through the goat, glance against the rock, and either kill me or throw me off the ledge. I was terribly frightened, but mechanically snapped the camera when the goat was about six feet away. There was really nothing that I could do except to hold the camera at him, and snap it.

"He charged up to within a yard of me, but with his eyes fixed on the two lenses. Then he appeared to conclude that any animal that could stand that much without winking was

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too much for him, so shaking his head and gritting his teeth he stopped, and to my great relief slowly backed into his niche.

"Believing that he would not charge the camera, I followed him down, and secured a picture of him at six feet. Then Mack began to see more symptoms of trouble, and since I had exposed my last film I backed out. Then I remembered the four-by-five camera, and started down with it, but Mack yelled angrily:

"Hold on there! That goat's plumb dangerous, and if you start down there again, I'll shorley kill him! What's the use o' bein' loeoad an' gettin' killed fer a few picfers?"

"Mack was so wrought up that to save the goat I abandoned my intention; and when he finally joined me, we slipped another roll of films into the stereo camera.

"Just as we finished our reloading operation, Kaiser took a look down at the goat, at very close range, when all of a sudden, like a Jack-in-the-box, the old billy was up from the ledge and after him. Kaiser ran to us for protection, the goat charging after him, most determinedly. Mack and I yelled, and waved our arms, and finally turned the goat down over the point, this time with Kaiser chasing him.

"They were soon out of our sight, but we could hear the rocks rolling below, and knew that they were going back across the slide. So we slid off the crags into the head of the slide, and running across at some risk to our necks, finally turned the goat on to a small pinnacle, about where we first jumped him.

"It was here that I secured some of my best pictures. Mack, perched on the top of the crag, attracted the goat's attention and tantalized him by waving his hat, while I made pictures as fast as possible. We had to keep Kaiser in the background, for apparently the goat blamed him for all his troubles, and I believe Billy was mad enough at that time to charge the dog through fire.

"My footing was very insecure, and being obliged to hold on with one hand and watch the goat in fear that he would charge me, I could not use the finder of my camera. Once as the goat charged up the rock at Mack I got in close to him, when he suddenly turned on me, gritting his teeth as he did so. His lip protruded like the lower lip of a charging bear, and with his front feet he stamped on the rocks until the small, loose fragments flew in every direction.

"It was just then that I got my best snapshot from in front, although the picture fails to show his ugly temper as I saw it. As I rolled in another film he charged me. Unfortunately I was so scared that I did not have presence of mind to press the bulb at the right distance. He bounced up to within four feet of me, when again the two big, glaring eyes of the camera fascinated and checked him.

Just as he turned his head from the unwinking eyes of my stereo, I snapped it, but he was inside the focus...."

Mr. Phillips's narrative, as he records it, does not half adequately portray the frightful risks that he ran on that memorable afternoon. That night, I think he was awake all night, save once. Then he threshed around in his sleeping-bag, and clutched wildly at the silk tent-roof over his head.

"Hey, John!" I called out sharply, to waken him.

"What's the matter? Are you having a nightmare?"

"Oh!" he groaned. "I thought I was falling off those rocks, clear down to the tents!"

Just before breakfast the next morning

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Mr. Phillips said to Mack in a quiet aside, "How did you sleep, Mack?"

"I didn't sleep none!" said Mack, solemnly.

"Whenever I dozed off I dreamt that old Oramus was buttin' us off them rocks. Every time I lit I shore made it lively for Charlie."

They were not the first men whose sleep had been destroyed by the recrudescence of the horrors of the rocks.

The next day men and dog rested quietly in camp, too tired and sore to move out. ■



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