

CHAMOIS

Phylum *Chordata*, Class *Mammalia*, Order *Artiodactyla*, Family *Bovidae*
Rupicapra rupicapra

Chamois - The chamois is a hollow boned, hoofed animal related to the antelope. It is about the size of a large goat. Because its hoofs can grip rocky surfaces, it is able to live in high mountain areas where most animals cannot survive. Chamois are nimble, agile, daring, and graceful. They can run up to 30 mph.

Status: VULNERABLE in Italy, ENDANGERED in France, COMMON in Germany, pests in New Zealand.

Habitat: Terrestrial. Rocky areas, alpine pastures at 3,300 to 11,500 ft., lower pastures in winter.

Range: Europe and Western Asia

Diet: The Chamois prefers grasses, herbs and flowers. In winter, when food is scarce, it dines on pine shoots, lichens, and mosses.

Size: This goat grows to a little over three feet long, slightly less than three feet at the shoulder.

Weight: It can weigh up to 130 pounds

Life Span: 20-25 years



Fact File:

- Both male and female chamois have slender, hook-shaped horns. They are set close together on the forehead projecting almost vertically. The horns can reach a length of 11 inches. They are considered trophies.
- The summer coat is short and smooth, while the winter coat is long and dense with soft underfur. In summer their coat is tawny brown. The winter coat is blackish-brown. The throat patch is white.
- Chamois may go without food for periods of up to two weeks without obvious harm.
- When in groups, a sentinel is posted. It warns the others of danger by stamping its feet and emitting a high-pitched whistle through its nose.
- In rutting season the males become territorial. They mark tree trunks and branches with the smelly secretion of the gland at the base of their horns.
- Chamois leather was originally used to create “shammy” pads that are often used for car cleaning. Today, shammy pads are made from a wide variety of different animal skins.
- The name, chamois, comes from an old French word for the animal.
- The hooves of the chamois have an elastic base and a hard thin edge. This flexible hoof pad enables them to move with ease among rocks in difficult terrain.

Breeding and Care of Young: Females and young live in small flocks. Adult males are solitary. They engage in combat to acquire a harem during the mating period. The duels between males are often violent clashes with resounding blows of their horns. After a gestation period of 20 weeks a single kid is born. The kid is fully grown at 3. If a female is badly injured or killed, other females will take care of her young. This has played a major role in the survival of the species.

Threats to Survival: Lynx and wolves prey on chamois. The young are vulnerable to foxes, badgers and large birds of prey. Chamois are considered an excellent game animal. They are hunted for their meat and skin.

Conservation Efforts: None

