



You've Got to Be Kidding!

An Amazing
Fact a Day

Alpine ibex goats have been photographed climbing on the sheer, near-vertical face of a dam wall in order to lick salty deposits off the stones.

You could try to find out:

- If you can find any photographs.
- About cliffs which goats have climbed.
- How goats are suited to climbing.

YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!

Herd of mountain goats casually climb near-vertical 160ft dam

One of the laws of nature states: birds and squirrels live in trees, goats stay on the ground. So at first glance, you could be forgiven for thinking this photo of the Cingino dam in the Italian Alps is unremarkable, but for the feat of civil engineering it represents. However, look a bit closer and you might feel like a bit of a silly billy for not realising those specks on its sheer 160ft face are something altogether more amazing.

These incredible pictures show Alpine ibex goats wandering across the face of the near-vertical dam in northern Italy without a care in the world. The gravity-defying goats typically live in very steep and rocky terrain at altitudes of up to 4,600m and have no fear of falling, whether climbing up or down the 160ft dam wall.

And they aren't doing it just to show off. It is thought that the goats are actually grazing, licking the stones for their salts.

The photos have captured the imagination of bloggers across the iInternet, including Jolle Jolles, a 25-year-old zoologist working at Cambridge University. "I have a great fascination for goats," he said. "I think they are one if not the most fascinating animals on our planet.

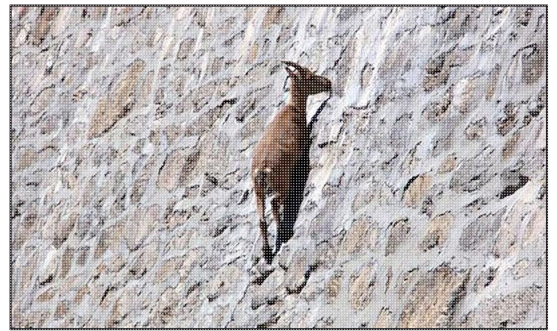


Photo courtesy of Adriano Miglorati via <http://adventure-journal.com/> - granted under creative commons licence

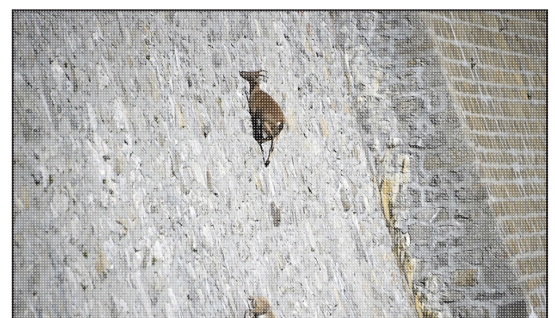


Photo courtesy of Adriano Miglorati via <http://adventure-journal.com/> - granted under creative commons licence

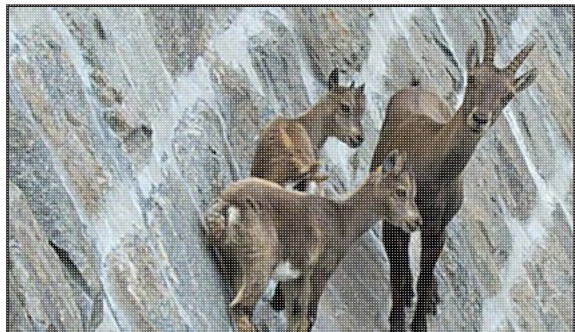


Photo courtesy of Laura Antimiani (video still) via telegraph.co.uk - granted under creative commons licence



Photo courtesy of Laura Antimiani (video still) via telegraph.co.uk - granted under creative commons licence

Probably most of you might at first not agree, thinking of your favourite animal (as) the panda, lion or dolphin. But goats have more to offer than their great grazing abilities."

The Alpine ibex is a species of wild goat which live in the mountains of the European Alps and seek refuge at high altitudes to protect themselves from predators.

Ros Earthy, of the British Goat Society, who has kept goats for 30 years, says the animals learn new tricks quickly. "They are pretty intelligent," she says. "I had one goat that could open gates by drawing the bolt with her teeth. When I had them in pens, she would open the gates of the ones she was friendly with, but would ignore the others. I look at them as being part cat, part dog. They are more independent than dogs, but more trainable than cats. They are affectionate to be around, and they know their names when they are called... but only if they feel like it!"

The most agile are the mountain goats of North America — a hardy and determined species that thrives at altitudes of 13,000ft, descending and ascending near-vertical rock faces.