The Tree Goats of Morocco

by Caitlyn Meagher



If you look up into a tree, you can often spot animals like squirrels and birds. But you may see a very different animal in the argan tree in Morocco: goats! Moroccan goats climb the argan's branches to eat its fruits.

The argan tree is a rare tree that only grows in Sous Valley in southwestern Morocco. This area is quite dry and hot. There are not many food sources for goats in this part of Morocco. So, these goats have gotten creative! When argan fruits ripen, the goats come in groups. They carefully climb up the argan trees, which can be up to 30 feet tall. They risk being pricked by its thorny branches. Then, the goats feast on the yellow and dark brown fruits of argan trees. The fruits make up between 47% and 84% of the tree goats' diet, depending on the season.

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pass it through their digestive system. Farmers gather these softened nuts and crack them open to get to the seeds. These seeds are roasted, ground, and pressed to produce argan oil. Argan oil is a rare item that has become popular throughout the world. This oil is used in cooking. It is also used as a skin and hair cosmetic.

Although these goats help farmers produce argan oil, there are other consequences to their tree climbing. Goats often spend an average of 6 hours per day on the branches of these trees. Their hooves damage the tree's branches. These tree-climbing goats are also a large tourist attraction in Morocco. Farmers have brought in more and more goats to this area to attract tourists, causing a decline in the health of the argan trees. Argan trees are now considered endangered. Some environmentalists are trying to help document this issue to save these trees. Hopefully, these trees will stand the test of time... and these goats will be able to continue enjoying these fruits for many years to come!

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Name:_____**Date:** _____

1. Moroccan goats climb the branches of what kind of tree?

A. baobab tree

B. palm tree

C. argan tree

D. oak tree

2. What causes the Moroccan goats to climb the argan tree's branches?

A. They are trying to see farther so that they can watch for predators approaching.

B. They are looking for food because there aren't many food sources in the Sous Valley.

C. They want to hide from predators so they try to hide among the tree branches.

D. They want to get water that is clean so they wait in the tree branches for rain.

3. Read the following sentences from the text.

"These goats cannot digest the nut inside the fruit, however. They either spit out the nut or pass it through their digestive system. Farmers gather these softened nuts and crack them open to get to the seeds. These seeds are roasted, ground, and pressed to produce argan oil."

What can you conclude based on this information?

A. Farmers rely on goats for an important part of the argan oil making process.

B. Goats are not important to the process of making argan oil.

C. Argan oil can be made with many different kinds of tree nuts.

D. Farmers who know how to make argan oil refuse to share it with anyone.

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4. How is tourism related to the argan tree being endangered?

A.Tourism is causing more pollution in the Sous Valley from cars and trains, which is harming the argan trees.

B.Some tourists want to make their own argan oil, so they try to harvest the argan tree nut themselves, which hurts the tree.

C.Tourists often want to take pictures in the argan trees, so they are climbing the trees and damaging them.

D.Farmers purposefully brought more goats to the area for tourists to look at, but the goats are damaging the trees.

5. What is the main idea of this text?

A.Moroccan goats climb the branches of argan trees for food, which leads to the production of argan oil and some health problems for the trees.

B.Argan oil is a consumer good that is used throughout the world for cosmetic purposes, like on people's hair and skin, and for cooking.

C.Moroccan goats like to eat the argan tree's fruits, which are yellow or brown and which make up 47% to 84% of the goats' diets.

D.Argan trees are now considered endangered, which is a problem because they provide argan oil and are only found in the Sous Valley in southwestern Morocco.

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