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<https://www.wsj.com/us-news/crisco-goat-table-rock-lake-6cff3932>

U.S. | A-HED

A Roaming Goat Escaped Capture. Now He Is a Local Celebrity.

Crisco, occasionally seen frolicking with pet dogs, has become bucket-list lore. Some residents say the goat resembles ZZ Top's guitarist—he agrees.

By Jim Carlton

/ Photographs by Terra Fondriest for WSJ

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OMAHA, Ark.—Bucket-list goals for retirees Sharon and Allen Jones include seeing the Grand Tetons, Glacier National Park—and Crisco, the goat mascot of Table Rock Lake.

Last week they scratched Crisco off the list, capping a two-year quest for the elusive goat. Bearded with long, curled horns, the shaggy white billy came into view on a rocky ledge as the couple approached by pontoon.

The humans were thrilled. Crisco was meh. Mostly he just lay there, twitching an ear.

“We’re easily entertained,” says Sharon Jones, 72, of Liberty, Mo.

For nearly a decade, Crisco, who escaped a roundup, has ruled the bluffs overlooking this reservoir straddling Arkansas and Missouri. His legend exploded after a Facebook page began chronicling his exploits three years ago. Now some 14,000 followers eagerly await Crisco updates.

With his relaxed posture and aloof stare, Crisco cuts a regal figure amid the Ozarks’ lush vegetation and golden sun. His solitary life of leisure spurs onlookers to pursue their own unapologetic independence, a prized regional trait.



Crisco merchandise at a store at Cricket Creek Marina in Omaha, Ark. People admire the goat's verve.

Crisco has spawned paintings, T-shirts, hoodies, mugs, pillows and debates about his love life (some talk of recruiting a mate; others insist he's a happy bachelor). Groupies also butt heads over how much media exposure is enough for Crisco—and for this sleepy corner of the Ozarks.

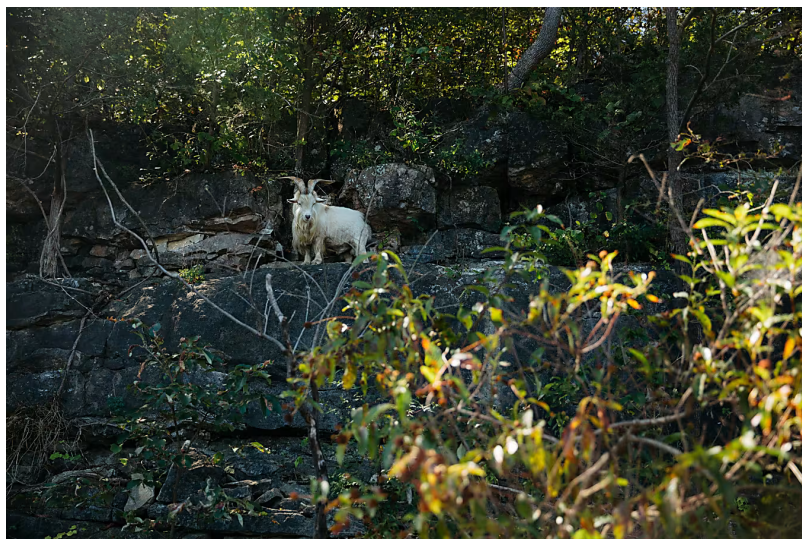
"Crisco is dearly beloved and cherished," says Jessica Taylor, 29, an Alabamian with longtime family ties to the lake. "The trouble is city slickers that come down and behave with entitlement rather than respect."

But some say Crisco is an inspiration whose story needs telling.

"I found out about him when I was broken," recalls 64-year-old Billie Morrison, a former lake resident who lives outside Little Rock, Ark. "I figured if that old goat could survive alone, so could I."

From outlaw to icon

Crisco once ran with a naughty herd that ravaged gardens, romped on vehicles and more in a local neighborhood, recalls Missouri resident Krystal Tippey. The goats were rounded up. But "Crisco got through the cracks," she says.



Some fans don't want Crisco or this Ozarks area to get too famous. Krystal Tippey, creator and moderator of the Crisco Facebook page, rides in a boat to see if the goat is out on his bluff in early September.

The rogue goat spent the next few years foraging for leaves and branches on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land bordering the lake. Then around 2018, he befriended a local couple.

He appeared behind their house, and began nibbling corn and other goodies the husband had set out for local fauna. His wife christened the four-legged visitor Crisco for his white coat.

Soon, Crisco had a staff. The husband began preparing snacks just for the goat, sprinkling in sunflower seeds to enhance his coat and baking soda to aid digestion.

Now, Crisco returns nightly, gleeful for snacktime. "He'll dance around, jump on his hind legs and spin," says the man. "I just love his innocence."

"My uncle will go, 'Are you hungry?' and he does this little hop," says Shannon Dama, 44, nephew of the caretaker, who spoke about his Crisco duties on condition his name and location not be disclosed.

Tippey launched a Crisco Facebook page in 2021, posting rules: "NO HARASSING CRISCO!!! Keep your food, arms, legs, boats and stupidity away from the goat."



Crisco escaped a roundup and has been on the lam for years.

Despite a few incidents, including someone flying a drone over him, most people take pictures and videos from a distance. “You set the bar high on the best picture,” Mary Watters Hartman gushed over a post on Crisco’s Facebook page. “Kind of gets my goat!!!”

Jason Gill, a lake goer from Kansas, posted a photo of Crisco riding on his boat, “Guilty Pleasure,” and claimed they had cruised the lake together. “He’s a horrible driver,” Gill’s caption quipped, blaming Crisco’s “lack of thumbs.” Among 800 comments, at least two fans believed the photo was authentic.

“Living the dream today,” wrote another fan, Tom Pytel, sharing a photo of Crisco lounging cliff-side, horns skyward.

ZZ Top weighs in. Really.

Fans can’t help but notice Crisco bears a passing resemblance to ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons.

Contacted by The Wall Street Journal, Gibbons wasn’t sheepish about it. “What can I say? We’re both Billies and I’m really in no position to deny the resemblance,” he said in an email via a publicist after being shown Crisco’s photo. “Of course, this guy’s got some significant horns on top but I’ve been known to butt heads on occasion so it’s possible we’re related.”

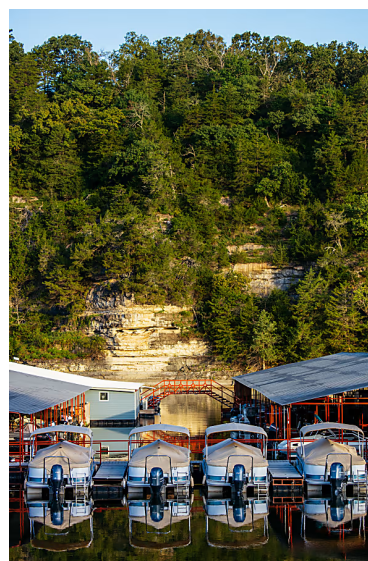


ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons. PHOTO: RITZAU/
ZUMA PRESS

Crisco can get frisky. The caretaker's outdoor video camera caught the goat frolicking with neighborhood pets at night. "You'll see Crisco running, then you'll see two dogs," says Dama, the nephew, who sells Crisco merchandise. "He likes to make them mad."



Bavette Battern buys a Crisco shirt from owner Steven Schmaranzer at The Lake Store in Kimberling City, Mo., this month. Right, boats at the Cricket Creek Marina at Table Rock Lake.



Once, Crisco literally locked horns with a deer over corn, says Corps of Engineers spokesman Jay Townsend. The agency maintains a hands-off goat policy. "Right now what seems to be going on is very manageable."

'Living the high life.'

Pursuing Crisco along the forested shoreline is like chasing Bigfoot. Linda Isaacs kayaked for months, only to keep missing him by a whisker. She'd see on Facebook that others had seen him just before or after. "I'm like, 'Are you kidding me?'"

At Long Creek Marina, about a quarter of boat renters ask about Crisco, says dockhand Kolby Stone. "Man, he's just a lazy goat, that's all he is," Stone chuckles. "He's living the high life."



A painting of Crisco by
Janine Helton PHOTO:
JANINE HELTON

The Allens pursued Crisco during visits to the lake home of friends, fellow Kansas City area residents, Doug and Janet Johnson. “Just part of our entertainment,” explains Doug, 69.

Last week another boater saw the group slowly cruising the shoreline and pointed—at Crisco, sunbathing.

“He just laid on the ledge and was unfazed,” marvels Sharon Allen. She enjoyed the camaraderie. “People can be brought together with something as simple as Crisco!”



Is he out there? Many boaters inquire about Crisco, the goat mascot of Table Rock Lake.

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