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Zion and Bryce Nature Notes



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Zion-Bryce Nature Notes

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This bulletin is issued monthly for the purpose of giving information to those interested in the natural history and scientific features of Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks. Additional copies of these bulletins may be obtained free of charge by those who can make use of them by addressing the Superintendent, Zion National Park, Utah.
PUBLICATIONS USING THESE NOTES SHOULD GIVE CREDIT TO ZION-BRYCE NATURE NOTES.

P. P. Patraw, Superintendent

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ANIMALS AND BIRDS OF BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK

By C.C. Presnall

Although the chief attractions at Bryce are scenic and geologic, there is great interest in the wildlife of the region. Both birds and mammals are more abundant in Bryce than in Zion, but unfortunately many of the questions which visitors ask about them have had to go unanswered or poorly answered for lack of definite information. Bryce is a new park, and the fauna has not yet been studied very closely, but a compilation of information accumulated to date may be useful to both Park Service men and visitors, until such time as an intensive survey can be completed.

The following tabulation of birds and animals is intended only as a preliminary list that is far from complete. It represents the writer's observations at odd times during the past eighteen months, together with notes from other observers credited in the text. Only a slight amount of collecting has been done in the park, hence the subspecific status of many forms is still unknown; such status is omitted except where specimens are available, or where subspecies can be identified by sight, or where it is reasonable to believe that the Bryce forms are identical with known forms in the vicinity. The sign "#" indicates study skins or mounted specimens at either Zion or Bryce Museums.

Animals

Bats - Several kinds are seen during summer months, but nothing is known concerning them; neither is anything known about Shrews, although it is quite possible that they live in the park.

Bears - A small Black Bear Euarctos americanus was killed in Campbell Canyon in 1922; none have been seen since then. Mr. Ruby Syrett and Ranger Cope both say that black and grizzly bears used to cross the Bryce region at irregular intervals, apparently traveling between the Parowan Mountains on the west and the Escalante Mountains on the east. Bears are still found in both ranges, although rarely.

Mountain Weasel Mustela arizonensis - Quite common. It has been seen pursuing chipmunks, which are probably its chief diet, and which are very abundant.

Skunks - Spotted skunks are common in the lower canyons, and one stayed at Bryce Lodge during the winter of 1931-32, becoming very tame (Cope). Striped skunks are rare, and usually at higher elevations.

Badger Taxidea taxus - Fairly common, especially on the rim.

Red Fox Vulpes macrotis - Occasionally seen in the highest portions of the park; one being noted near the Natural Bridge in August, 1934. Apparently they have always been uncommon, and trapping outside the park has made them more so.

Gray Fox Urocyon cinereoargenteus ssp? - Quite common in the Upper Sonoran Zone below the rim, where they are frequently trapped outside the park. It is possible that this subspecies is scottii, but local trappers say it looks redder than the Arizona foxes. (Cope).

Mountain Coyote Canis lestes - Much more common than in Zion, especially in portions of the park still grazed by sheep.

Rocky Mountain Cougar Felis oregonensis hippolestes - A few wander through the park at times, so that there is probably at least one within the boundaries at any given time. It should be borne in mind that the park is so small and narrow (55 sq. mi., averaging slightly over 2 mi. wide) that it is in no sense a game sanctuary for any of the wide ranging species, such as this one, or coyotes, or deer. #

Bailey Bobcat Lynx baileyi - Fairly common throughout.

Marmot or Rockchuck Marmota flaviventris engelhardti - Often seen on White-ran Bench and other Canadian Zone habitats. For several years a pair has lived on Bryce Point, where visitors often see them. #

Rock Squirrel Otospermophilus grammurus utah - Often seen in the Upper Sonoran Zone, but on the rim they are almost entirely replaced by the following species. #

Say Ground Squirrel Callospermophilus l. lateralis - Quite numerous on the rim, where they are often mistakenly called "big chipmunks". The lack of stripes on the head distinguishes them from chipmunks. #

Utah Prairie-dog Cynomys parvidens - There are only two small Prairie-dog towns in the park: one near Fairyland (on the rim) and another about two miles farther north. A total of about two dozen occupied burrows. #

Wasatch Chipmunk Eutamias minimus consobrinus - This species and the following one are very numerous in all parts of the park. This one can be distinguished by its small size and gray shoulders, the shoulders of the Inyo Chipmunk being reddish buff like the sides. #

Inyo Chipmunk Eutamias quadrivittatus inyoensis - Very abundant, being almost twice as numerous as the preceding species. #

Red Squirrel Sciurus sp? - Rather uncommon, although numerous about ten years ago (Styrett). I have seen only two families, one at Boat Mountain, and one at U. P. Spring. #

Pocket Gophers - Abundant everywhere, but no specimens have been taken for identification.

Sonoran White-footed Mouse, Peromyscus maniculatus sonoriensis - This mouse is universal throughout the park, but does not seem to be as numerous as in the lower elevations of Zion. No other White-footed Mouse has been taken in Bryce thus far. #

Wood Rat, Neotoma sp? - A smooth-tailed Wood Rat lives commonly in the Upper Sonoran Zone; but its specific status is not known.

Lemming Mouse, Lagurus sp? - One specimen, as yet not identified, was taken in sagebrush near a dry meadow on October 11, 1934, in the daytime. It had two yellow pine seeds in its mouth. Thirty-three trap nights in the same locality failed to yield other specimens (excepting 4 Peromyscus). #

Yellow-haired Porcupine, Erethizon e. epixanthum - Common throughout the park. A concentration of porcupines around Bryce Lodge has led many persons to believe that they are too numerous in the park, but very careful study shows that they are no more numerous than in Zion, and less numerous than at Cedar Breaks. #

Jack Rabbits - Twice I have seen Jacks in Bryce, but not close enough to observe whether they were white-tailed or black-tailed.

Black Hills Cottontail, Sylvilagus nuttallii grangeri - Common in the Upper Sonoran Zone, especially in the lowest portions of the park.

American Elk, Cervus c. canadensis - Now extinct in this region, but one was reported killed in Willis Creek many years ago by a Mr. Johnson of Cannonville (Cope). A much weathered portion of a skull and antler was found in Willis Creek in 1932, and is now in the Bryce Museum.

Mule Deer, Odocoileus hemionus macrotus - Common throughout, except on the rim in winter. The deer of Utah have been classified by Barnes (Utah Mammals, U. of Utah, 1927) as Chichuahua Mule Deer, canus, except in the extreme north where typical hemionus is found. On this basis the deer of Zion were so designated in Nature Notes, Vol. 6, No. 2. Later study, however, leads me to believe that canus range far to the south of Utah, and that all hemionus in the state should be classified as macrotus (Say).

Birds

The seventy forms named in the following condensed list represent only a portion of the Bryce avifauna. All bird students will appreciate the limitations of this list when it is realized that very few observations have been made between the last of October and the middle of June; and that even during the remaining four and one-half months (of both 1933 and 1934) observations were made only at odd moments spared from a busy schedule of other tasks. For most of the June observations, the writer is indebted to Ranger-Naturalist G. Y. Croft, and to Mrs. J. U. Kelly, of Berkeley, California.

Turkey Vulture. Cathartes aura septentrionalis. One at Sunset Point, September 17, 1934.

Sharp-shinned Hawk. Accipiter v. velox. One at Bryce Point, Aug. 29, 1934.

Cooper Hawk. Accipiter cooperi. One at Rainbow Point, Sept. 17, 1934.

Red-tailed Hawk. Buteo borealis calurus. Common throughout. #

Swainson Hawk. Buteo swainsoni. Common, at least in summer. #

Golden Eagle. Aquila crisyetos canadensis. One at Rainbow Point, October 20, 1934. #

Prairie Falcon. Falco mexicanus. Noted June 15, 1934.

Sparrow Hawk. Falco sparverius ssp? Fairly common throughout.

Dusky Grouse. Dendragapus o. obscurus. Probably a resident, but thus far noted only during September and October, on the rim.

Western Mourning Dove. Zenaidura macroura marginella. Noted June 15, 1934. #

Horned Owl. Bubo virginianus ssp? Fairly common throughout.

Nighthawk. Chordeiles sp? One near Bryce Point, August 23, 1934.

White-throated Swift. Aeronautes s. saxatilis. Common summer visitant. #

Black-chinned Hummingbird. Archilochus alexandri. Common.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird. Selasphorus p. platycercus. Hummers are very common throughout the park in summer, but the relative numbers of the two species here listed is not known. Judging by their distribution in Zion, I would judge the Broad-tailed to be the predominate species on the rim, and the Black-chinned most common in the canyons.

Red-shafted Flicker. Colaptes cafer collaris. Probably the most common woodpecker in the park. #

Lewis Woodpecker. Asyndesmus lewis. One seen on the rim, September 10, 1934, by Adrezy Borell. #

Red-naped Sapsucker. Sphyrapicus varius nuchalis. Common among the oaks and other deciduous trees below the rim. #

Natalie Sapsucker. Sphyrapicus thyroideus nataliae. Common on conifers below the rim. Less common on the rim.

Hairy Woodpecker. Dryobates villosus ssp? Common throughout. It is not yet known whether the form at Bryce should be classified as monticola or leucothorectis.

Cassin Kingbird. Tyrannus vociferans. Noted on June 15, 1934.

Ash-throated Flycatcher. Myiarchus c. cinerascens. A pair nested at the checking station in June, 1934 (Ranger Fagergren).

Western Wood Pewee. Myiochanes r. richardsoni. Noted in June, 1934. #

Olive-sided Flycatcher. Nuttallornis mesoleucus. Noted in June, 1934.

Violet-green Swallow. Tachycineta thalassina lepida. Common summer visitant. #

Northern Cliff Swallow. Petrochelidon a. albifrons. A summer visitant, slightly less common than the preceding.

Rocky Mountain Jay. Perisoreus canadensis capitalis. A few noted in late September and October, on the rim; apparently nests at higher elevations. #

Long-crested Jay. Cyanocitta stelleri diademata. Resident, but nowhere numerous; few stay on the rim during the winter.

American Raven. Corvus corax sinuatus. Common resident.

- Pinon Jay. Cyanocephalus cyanocephalus. Common resident, especially in the lower portions.
- Clark Nutcracker. Nucifraga columbiana. Resident; probably the most common of the Jay and Crow family in Bryce.
- Mountain Chickadee. Penthestes g. gambeli. Common resident throughout. #
- Gray Titmouse. Baselophus inornatus griseus. Numerous at Boat Mountain in October, 1933.
- Rocky Mountain Nuthatch. Sitta carolinensis nelsoni. Common resident throughout. #
- Red-breasted Nuthatch. Sitta canadensis. Rare; one noted on the rim on October 11, 1933.
- Black-eared Nuthatch. Sitta pygmaea melanotus. Common resident in coniferous forest throughout, especially in the Yellow Pines, where it is very numerous; by far the most common bird in the park, except perhaps during migration when some other species may be more abundant for a few days. #
- Creeper. Certhia familiaris ssp? Noted in June on the rim. The subspecies will doubtless prove to be montana.
- Western House Wren. Troglodytes aedon parkmani. One noted in a dead tree stub on the Navajo Trail (Upper Sonoran) June 16, 1934.
- Canyon Wren. Catherpes mexicanus conspersus. Fairly common in the Upper Sonoran Zone, but not yet noted on the rim. #
- Western Robin. Turdus migratorius propinquus. Common summer visitant; and very common migrant, in the fall at least.
- Audubon Hermit Thrush. Hylocichla guttata auduboni. Noted in September both on the rim and below, in heavy timber. Doubtless nests in the park.
- Chestnut-backed Bluebird. Sialia mexicana bairdi. Seen in fair numbers on the rim from June to October.
- Mountain Bluebird. Sialia currucoides. More common than the preceding. #
- Townsend Solitaire. Myadestes townsendi. Common resident; abundant during migration, at least in the fall (Sept.-Oct.)
- Western Gnatcatcher. Poliophtila caerulea amoenissima. Noted June 15, 1934. #
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Corthylio calendula ssp? Several seen on the rim, September 19, 1934.
- Plumbeous Vireo. Vireo solitarius plumbeus. Common summer visitant.
- Cassin Vireo. Vireo solitarius cassinii. Migrant, apparently uncommon. I have difficulty in distinguishing the notes of these two vireos, and seldom get close enough to see their slight, but definite, differences in plumage; hence it is impossible to say whether or not the Cassin is common in migration, although I have been able to identify but one.
- Virginia Warbler. Vermivora virginiae. Noted June 15, 1934.
- Audubon Warbler. Dendroica a. auduboni. Observed from June 15 to October 15, but no evidence of nesting as yet.
- Black-throated Gray Warbler. Dendroica nigrescens. Several seen on the rim June 7, 1934.
- Townsend Warbler. Dendroica townsendi. Migrant; one seen at Boat Mountain, October 7, 1933.
- Grace Warbler. Dendroica g. graciae. A male was seen, and heard singing, near Bryce Lodge on September 19, 1934.

Western Meadowlark. Sturnella neglecta. Rather uncommon summer visitant; one seen at the checking station, June 8, 1934.

Brewer Blackbird. Euphagus c. cyanocephalus. On August 29, 1934, I saw a flock of 15 fly up from the Paria Valley, and over Bryce Point toward the Sevier River.

Western Tanager. Piranga ludoviciana. Summer visitant, apparently not very common.

Rocky Mountain Grosbeak. Hedymeles melanocephalus papago. Noted June 15, 1934. #

Western Evening Grosbeak. Hesperiphona vespertina brooksi. A small flock was seen at Bryce Point, September 11, 1934, by Adrey Borell.

Cassin Purple Finch. Carpodacus cassinii. Common summer visitant.

Rocky Mountain Pine Grosbeak. Pinicola enucleator montana. Observed on the rim during September, but none seen earlier.

Pine Siskin. Spinus p. pinus. Common during summer and fall; winter status unknown. #

Green-backed Goldfinch. Spinus psaltria hesperophilus. Noted June 15, 1934.

Bendire Crossbill. Loxia curvirostra bendirei. Resident on the rim; some wintering in the lower canyons. #

Green-tailed Towhee. Oberholseria chlorura. Common summer visitant. #

Spurred Towhee. Pipilo maculatus montanus. Often seen in the canyons, especially in thickets of Red Birch. It will doubtless be found on the rim, also. #

Western Vesper Sparrow. Poocetes gramineus confinis. A flock of 100 was seen near the north boundary on September 10, 1934, by Adrey Borell. #

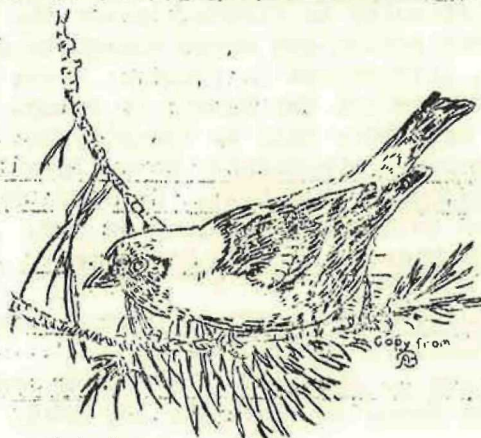
Western Lark Sparrow. Chondestes grammacus strigatus. Several seen on the rim during summer months. #

Shufeldt Junco. Junco s. shufeldti. Common migrant, at least in the fall.

Gray-headed Junco. Junco caniceps. Common during summer and fall; winter status unknown. #

Western Chipping Sparrow. Spizella passerina arizonae. Common summer visitant throughout. #

Gambel Sparrow. Zonotrichia leucocorys gambeli. Migrant, at least in the fall.



Western Tanager

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