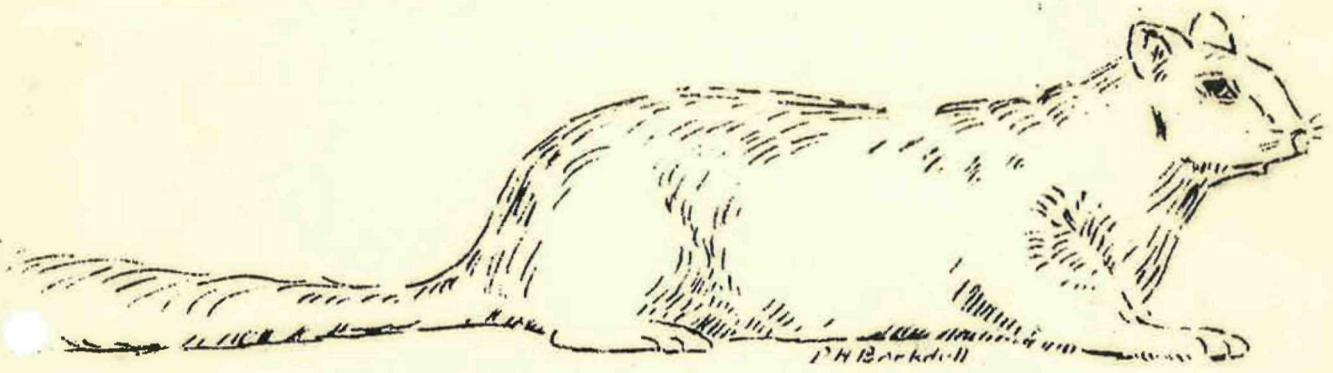


Gregory Wynn

ZION-- BRYCE NATURE NOTES

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ZION-BRYCE NATURE NOTES

August 1930

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This series of bulletins is issued from time to time during the summer for the information of those interested in the educational opportunities, the natural history, the scientific features, or the scenic beauties of the region. PUBLICATIONS USING THESE NOTES SHOULD GIVE CREDIT TO ZION-BRYCE NATURE NOTES AND AUTOCR.

E. T. Scoyen,
Superintendent.

A. M. Woodbury,
Park Naturalist

SUNSET AT BRYCE CANYON

The sun was setting in the west,
Casting forth pure golden rays
And in the Canyon of the Blessed
There spread a faint and silvery haze.
The cliffs themselves grew pale and white,
The stars began to shine,
The moon came up upon the right
Majestic, clear and fine.
The ancient figures carved from stone
Assumed a blackness almost jet,
As they protruded all alone
To form a perfect silhouette.
I gazed upon this splendid sight
And bathed myself in rapture and delight.

--E. D. W. Spingarn,
Temporary Ranger.

BRYCE CANYON IN STORM
By Ranger-Naturalist Maurice Cope.

On July 16 I conducted a party of forty-five visitors on the usual morning trip into Bryce Canyon. The morning was one of those when skies are blue, distant views unlimited and the song of birds fill the air.

Nothing unusual happened until we neared Wall Street, a narrow gorge 350 feet deep cut into the crimson wall, the usual way out on the return. Prior to reaching this point dark clouds were seen gathering and rain was inevitable. By special effort a point was reached where overhanging walls serve as a shelter in storm and a shade in warm sunshine.

A halt was called here and a lady from New York remarked: "Would it be possible to enjoy Bryce Canyon in a heavy rainstorm?"

Hardly had the words been spoken when the storm was upon us. Large hail stones came bouncing from shelf to shelf. Heavy drops of rain fell with increasing rapidity and soon streams of water came pouring down the sides of the 350 foot walls. Small streams soon collected into larger ones. It was then easy to teach the valuable lesson of how the little canyons were carved, how mountain walls are divided, how small canyons are soon transformed into larger ones and how each tiny rain drop plays its part in making for us a Bryce Canyon.

To the joy and satisfaction of all it was a banner day--a new experience for those who travel--and all expressed themselves as having seen Bryce Canyon as few had seen it before.

The storm settled and nearing the top, after some difficulty, the sky cleared, the sun shone brightly, colorings were now intensified and a unanimous cheer from the happy party was: "May we someday live again that real experience of seeing Bryce Canyon in storm as well as sunshine.

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MR. WOODCHUCK POSES FOR A PICTURE
By Ranger-Naturalist Maurice Cope

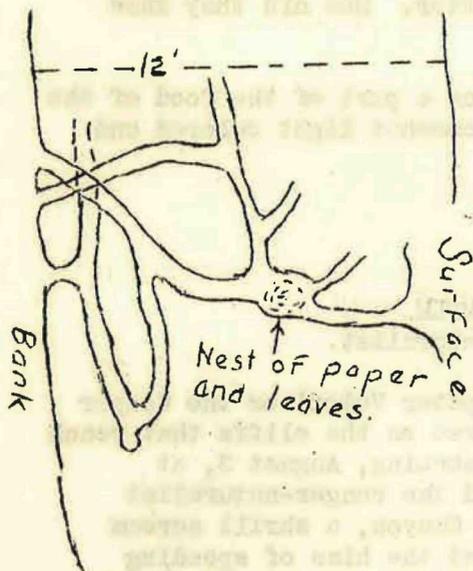
Woodchucks have not been seen near the rim of Bryce Canyon until last year. They have emigrated from the east fork of the Sevier River six miles away. They have great sport climbing near the edge of the canyon and perching on the edge of overhanging rocks.

The other day while at Bryce Point a large one lay stretched out in the afternoon sun upon a large flat stone near the Point. A gentleman with me lifted his camera and Mr. Woodchuck now only a rod away sat up and posed for a few seconds. When the camera snapped he gave us the right-of way.

The woodchuck is becoming one of our most interesting animals and no doubt as they increase will add much to the pleasure and enjoyment of the visitors.

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NEST OF THE GRAY ROCK SQUIRREL
By A. M. Woodbury, Park Naturalist.



In a bank near the Public Auto Camp, a number of the gray rock squirrels, have developed underground homes. In an effort to discover how they live, Ranger Russell and I followed an anastomosing series of underground tunnels through an area about 12 feet long. Three separate openings from the bank and one to the surface were found in that small area.

The nest itself was composed of paper and leaves strewn around on the sand in an enlarged portion of the tunnel. Four different exits led out from the nest. Only one nest was found, but a series of tunnels leading out toward other inhabited ground indicated that they connected with other nests. No food was found at any place, indicating perhaps that they make their caches elsewhere, which appears to agree with observations reported by Mr. Thornton of small temporary caches.

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THE GRAY ROCK SQUIRREL
By H. Russell, Park Ranger.

The gray rock squirrel (*Otospermophilus grammurus grammurus*) is at home in Zion Park. In most of the region, they hibernate. However, in Zion Canyon where the short winters are mild they are seen occasionally when snow covers the ground. Near the Lodge the caretaker reports that squirrels were seen every day during the winter, feeding from the garbage cans. During the summer season they gather and store food for winter. Their food consists of pinon pine-nuts, acorns, berries and roots. This food is first stored where it can be dried before taken into their burrows. Around the auto camp they become very tame. If they cannot find enough to eat outside, they go into the tents of campers. They have been known to gnaw through an all-leather traveling bag in quest of something to eat. They are especially fond of cookies and nuts.

We suspect them of robbing bird nests of their eggs or young. A camper at the Public Auto Camp recently reported seeing a female blackbird following a squirrel, annoying it by occasionally lighting on his back and picking it. This may be evidence of enmity between the two.

They, like the human race, prepare for the rainy day (winter). In constructing roads and trails squirrel caches are sometimes found. At one time a two-bushel sack of Pinon pine nuts were obtained from such a cache. Not a bad one was found in the lot.

Not long ago, I emptied a box of Apricot pits out on the ground where the squirrels could get them. There were two kinds of pits mixed together, sweet pits and bitter pits as they are called. The human eye could scarcely tell the difference between the two, but one was edible and the other distasteful. I hid close by and watched the squirrels sort out the pits, selecting the sweet ones and discarding the bitter. How did they know which pits to take?

These animals are very good to eat, forming a part of the food of the early inhabitants (Indians). Their meat is somewhat light colored and as tender as chicken.

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A BATTLE WITHIN THE TEMPLE

By J. W. Thornton, Ranger-Naturalist.

The prey of the Sharp Shinned Hawk, (*Accipiter Velox*) or the Cooper Hawk, (*Accipiter Cooperi*) must have become scarce on the cliffs that reach skyward. In the Temple of Sinawava on Monday morning, August 3, at about 9:15, as the crowd of "sage-brushers" and the ranger-naturalist were in earnest discussion of what caused Zion Canyon, a shrill scream tore open the impressive quiet of the Temple and the hiss of speeding wings seethed into our ears as the hawk, in murderous pursuit of a small song sparrow, swept swiftly by picking up the fleeing bird in one of his mad dashes. Another shrill scream announced the presence of a second warrior. No sooner had the hawk closed his talons around the bird than his rival pounced upon his back and amid screams, tearing talons, and ripping beaks, forced the release of the unfortunate. Still able to fly the sparrow made for the protecting branches of the nearby underbrush with both hawks now in deadly pursuit, screaming and cursing each other with all the hatred and furious rivalry of their cruel cannibalistic natures. The grove of cottonwood trees nearby hid them from view, but when next seen the hawks were flying along peacefully with nothing to fight over. The sparrow had either escaped or had been killed and let fall into the river below by the battling hawks. On they went, flying low, up the canyon in search of other unfortunates which might be chased down to satisfy their carnivorous appetites.

This incident is in line with other observations made previously in the Escalante Desert near Hinkley, Utah. A Prairie Falcon Hawk (*Falco Mexicanus*) had built a nest in a large cottonwood tree that grew on the bank of an irrigation ditch on one of the local alfalfa farms. Two baby hawks were being reared there by the watchful parents which daily brought in rodents for them to feed on. There was continual war on the part of the parents to keep other hawks from robbing the young birds. They always perched close by in readiness to challenge and give battle to any invader.

One noon the meal, (a fat ground dog) had been caught and the parent bird was flying home. Two other hawks were in pursuit. The parent flew direct and swiftly for the nest, but was attacked at the very threshold. Flying above the nest very close, but too fast to light an attempt was made to drop the ground dog to the waiting young below, but the aim was not accurate and the appetizing meal fell on past the nest but before it reached the ground about twelve feet distant the pirate hawk had snatched it out of the air. Flying to a tall post down the field he devoured his stolen noon day meal.

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THE CAMP ROBBERS

By J. W. Thornton, Ranger Naturalist.

"I can't imagine where my cookies are going", remarked a lady at the camp one evening. "I have them in a tin box. No one ever seems to disturb it yet my supply of cookies is fast disappearing."

The ranger advised that she watch carefully and perhaps the mysterious disappearance of the cookies would be solved. It was. A short time later the lady saw a gray tail extending out under the lid of the cookie box. Soon the tail disappeared inside. Everything was in place, lid and all. Nothing indicated the presence of an intruder until Mr. Squirrel gently raised the lid and cautiously slipped out of the box and away, with the delicacy securely held in his mouth. Everything was left exactly as he had found it except that there was one cookie less.

The gray rock squirrel (*Otospermophilus grammurus grammurus*), has a highly specialized taste for the delicacies that the campers bring in. However, if he doesn't find what he wants he takes what there is. He took chocolates from one camp and potatoes from another. He moved four eggs to his cache without any evidence of having broken one. He likes carrots, cantaloupe, cucumbers, corn, apricots, and peaches. No one has reported the loss of any tomatoes, bread, cake, (especially the frosting), peas, beans, rice, nuts, all seem to agree with his digestion.

I saw seven climb onto our camp table while five more took a survey of everything on the ground. These fellows found the bread container which was a waterless cooker. They stood on their hind legs and pushed with their noses against the tight fitting lid. They would work awhile, seemingly taking turns. The lid was gradually being loosened and had there been no interference from our hungry crowd, they would have worked the lid off and carried off the contents.

I watched one enter camp and do his prospecting for food. Not finding any he left and went over into some loose leaves not ten feet away. Here he rooted around with his nose and soon was nibbling at a piece of bread that he had previously cached there. Regardless of the meddling habits of these fellows we liked them a great deal and it wasn't long until one of them was eating choice morsels from our hands and the whole group were making themselves generally at home.

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FRIENDS UNTIL DEATH
By Ranger Maurice Cope

To be taught a real lesson in nature one only needs to walk around the rim of Bryce Canyon one and one-half miles south of the Bryce Canyon Lodge. There, growing on the very edge of the canyon rim are two interesting trees, one a fox-tail pine and the other a Douglas Fir.

The pine is now dead and the fir living. The pine grew nearer the edge than the fir. Erosion had undermined each tree, and it is always interesting to note how tree roots turn toward the soil when exposed. During the growth of the pine and the long years that it has stood upon the very edge of a sheer wall 300 feet high it seemed to realize its danger. One large root grew on one side of the fir tree and another root on the other side. They finally met and the meeting was a union of the two roots. They grafted together and grew on five feet as one foot.

Since that time erosion completely undermined the pine, exposing all of its roots, and death was the result. The fir has only two roots not fully exposed and is still clinging to life.

Being so near the edge of the Canyon both trees are very much tilted and now in their present position the fox-tail pine has its arms securely locked around the fir. Danger awaits them both and some day they shall fall into the canyon 300 feet below. The pine made up its mind long ago not to fall until it can take with it the faithful friend, the Douglas Fir.

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PARK NATURALIST WOODBURY
LEAVES FOR SCHOOL

By J. W. Thornton, Ranger-Naturalist.

August twelfth witnessed the departure of our efficient and congenial Park Naturalist A. M. Woodbury. Higher intellectual accomplishments called him away to the University of California at Berkeley, where he will finish the course that will bring him his Doctor's Degree. Zion Park is yet young, but the educational and museum work of the park is of a high standard. Under Mr. Woodbury's careful supervision and effort the museum has a rich collection of the things that are of outstanding interest within the Park. It has become a mecca of interest to all tourists and the educational work is bringing splendid results. Every good wish of the entire personnel of the Park Service goes with Mr. Woodbury in his winters work.

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