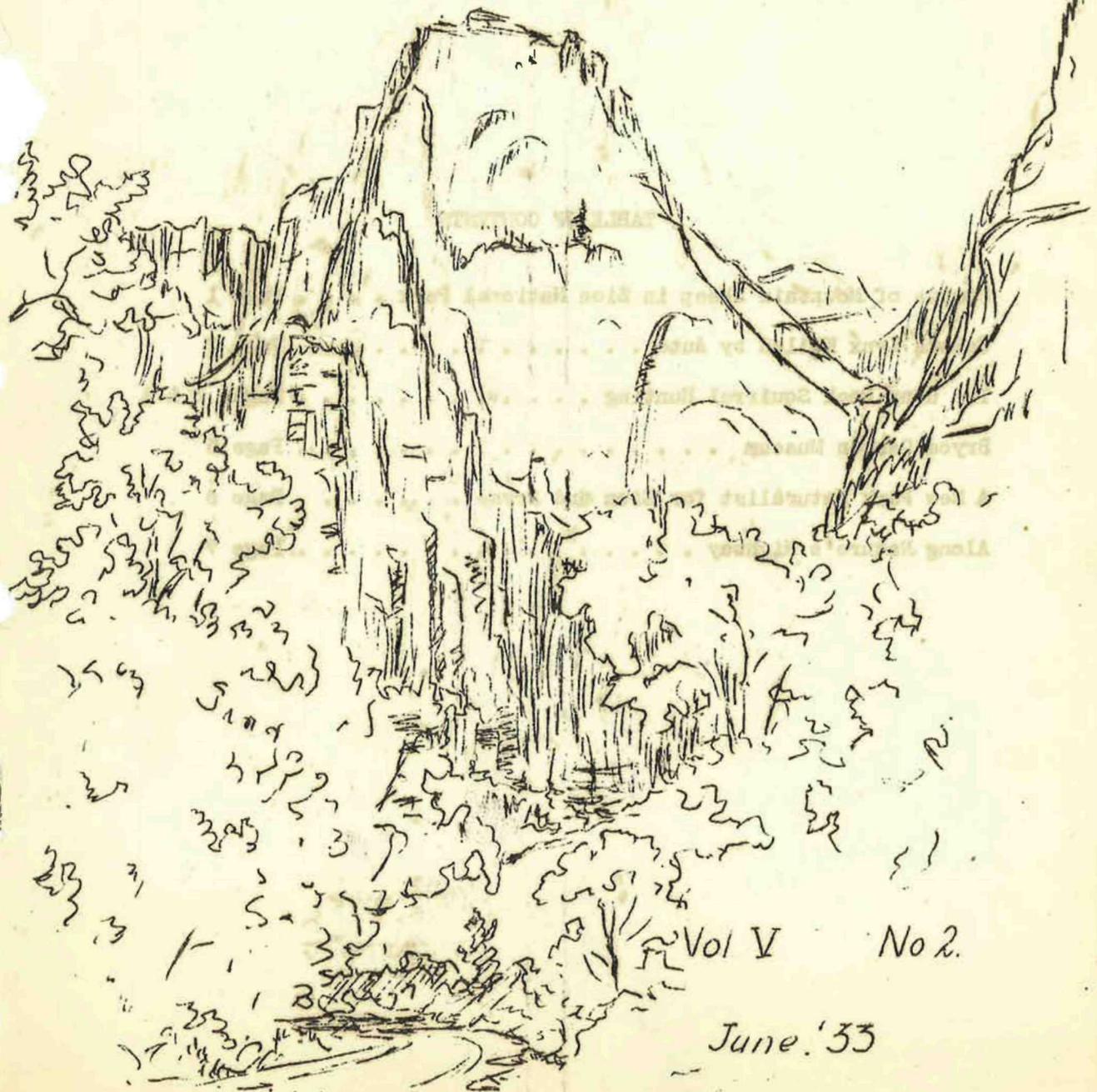


Zion and Bryce Nature Notes



Vol V No 2.

June '33

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ZION AND BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARKS, UTAH

Vol. 5
Zion-Bryce Nature Notes

No. 2.
June, 1933.

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

Garson Y. Croft, Acting Park Naturalist

STATUS OF MOUNTAIN SHEEP IN ZION NATIONAL PARK

Mountain sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) or bighorn, are still present in goodly numbers in the wilder sections of Zion National Park. This fact was determined recently by Joseph S. Dixon of the Wild Life Division of the National Park Service, and Ranger Schiefer of Zion National Park, who on May 23, 1933, made an exploration trip to the wild and inaccessible region of cliffs and domes that extends south of the Mount Carmel Highway in the region east of the Virgin River. Between Steven's Canyon and Pine Creek, fresh evidences of two bands of sheep were found. Tracks made since the previous day's rain were the first sign found, and later, near Steven's Canyon, a band of four mountain sheep, three ewes and one lamb, was discovered and watched at close range for over half an hour.

No rams were encountered, but this was not surprising since they range in separate bands by themselves at this season of the year.

All sheep observed were in good condition and it is hoped that their remote habitat will continue to protect them.

No fresh sign of either coyotes or mountain lions could be found in the bighorn habitat.



Watchman

CANADA LYNX KILLED BY AUTO
Gordon Y. Croft

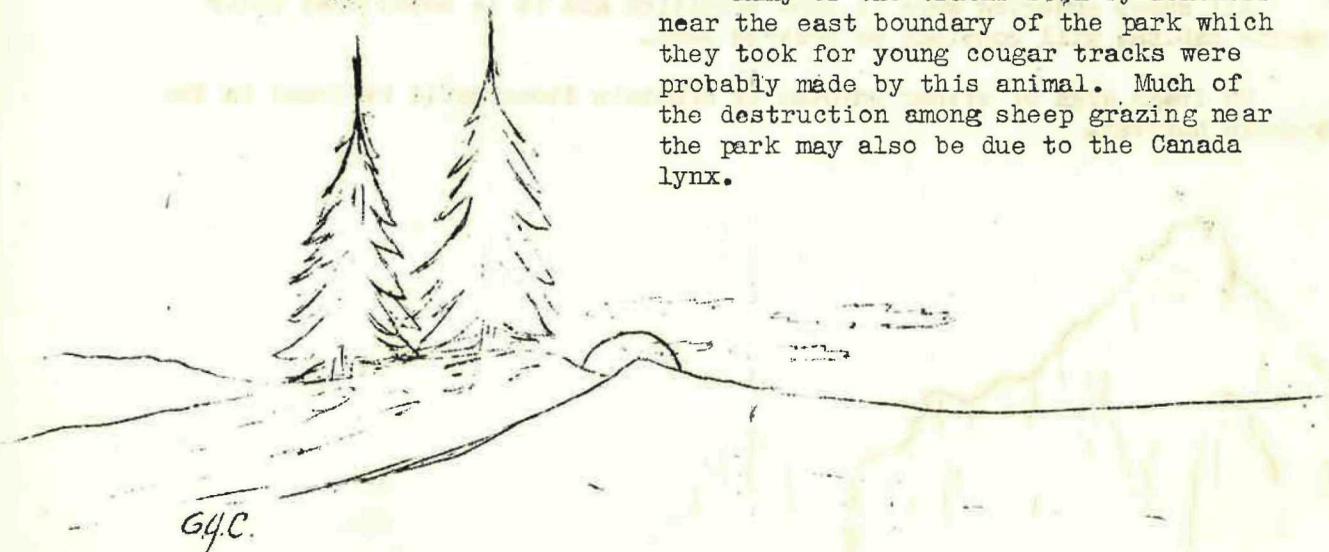
Soon after daylight one morning in early June, a motorist coming over the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway was much surprised to find a large predatory animal, which he took to be a cougar, lying in the road where it had been run over by an auto during the night. It was probably out in search of prey and while crossing the road had become confused by the glare of the light and was struck and killed. He took the animal for mounting to a local taxidermist, Mr. E. H. Cantrell, who identified it as a Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis canadensis*).

It appears to have been an extra large specimen, estimated by those who saw it to weigh about 60 pounds. The fur was very long and dense, of light gray color with a reddish-brown tinge, somewhat darker on the head and back, and having a black tip on the end of the tail and long upright hairs on the tips of the ears. Its body was round and chubby, supported by long muscular legs with large feet. It was in fact a predatory killer fitted by structure and nature for garnering a living by overpowering other animals.



Old trappers had reported lynx in this region in the earlier days, but were under the impression that they had been eliminated in recent years. The range of the lynx is from northern Canada south throughout the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains to Colorado. The Zion Canyon region is probably the extreme southern boundary of its range.

Many of the tracks seen by ranchers near the east boundary of the park which they took for young cougar tracks were probably made by this animal. Much of the destruction among sheep grazing near the park may also be due to the Canada lynx.



THE GRAY ROCK SQUIRREL HUNTING

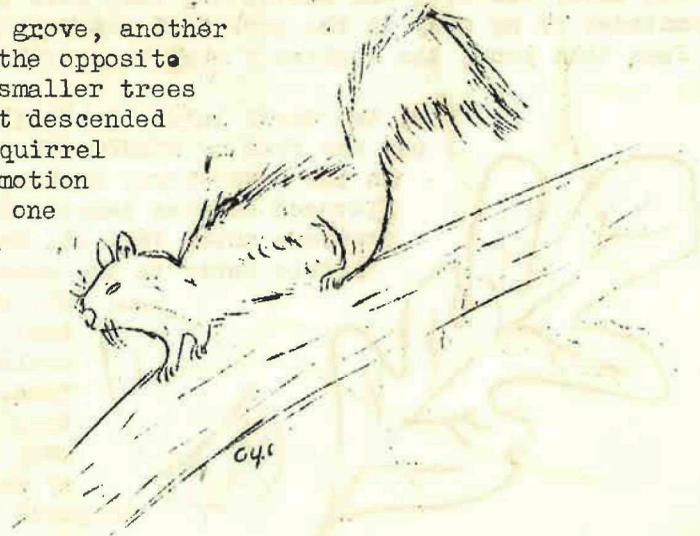
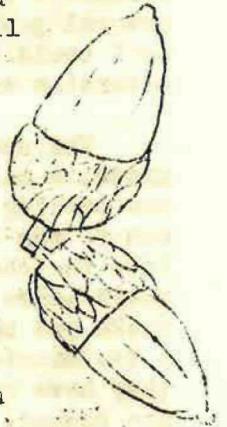
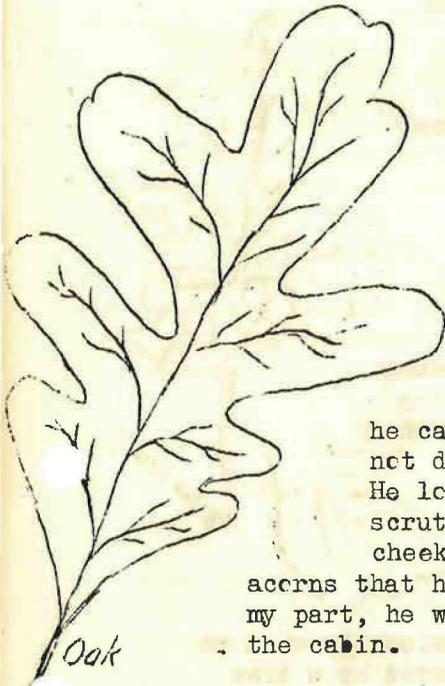
By A. M. Woodbury

One day last fall a large gray rock squirrel was seen nosing around among the dry twigs and leaves on the floor of the scrubby oak grove just back of my cabin. He picked up a freshly fallen acorn in his teeth, sat up, juggled it with his paws and nibbled it with his teeth as it disappeared into a cheek pouch. Resuming his hunting, he soon found a second acorn and sitting upon his haunches, his tail spread out in a graceful curve with end dropping nearly to the ground; he repeated the process of tucking the acorn into a cheek pouch.

After several such juggling tricks, he came close to me as I sat quietly watching, not daring to stir for fear of frightening him. He looked my way and stopped a moment for careful scrutiny. As he did so, I could see that his cheek pouches were both much distended by the acorns that he had gathered. Not detecting any movement on my part, he went on his way and slipped under a corner of the cabin.

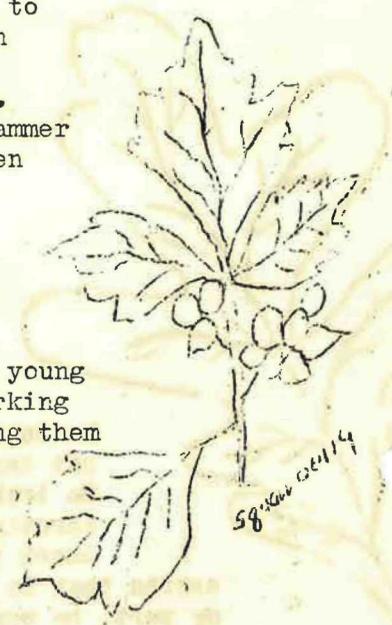
Curious to find out about him, I picked up the camera and stood by the opening expecting to get a picture as he emerged. I was hardly ready when he reappeared. Instead of running away, he turned toward me with an expectant and curious expression. His cheek pouches were now empty and smooth where they had hitherto been bulging. He hesitated between retreat and advance, but after vacillating between the two and not seeing or hearing anything more disturbing than a click of the camera, he finally decided to go on about his business.

As he returned to the grove, another squirrel had entered from the opposite side and was climbing the smaller trees in search of acorns. As it descended from the tree, the first squirrel gave chase producing a commotion in the brush as the second one retreated with loud cries of distress.



A couple of long-crested jays came hunting through the grove and later several of the Woodhouse jays. They appeared to be hunting primarily for insects, as they jumped or flitted from twig to ground and back again, but occasionally one picked up an acorn. One of the Woodhouse jays with an acorn in its mouth flew to a branch close by where I could watch it. Poking its bill into the acorn, the bird proceeded to hammer it against the limb. Repeated hammerings - about a dozen strokes - broke the acorn open. Picking out the nut in several pieces, the empty shell was abandoned. So far as I could determine, the squirrels and birds paid no attention to one another.

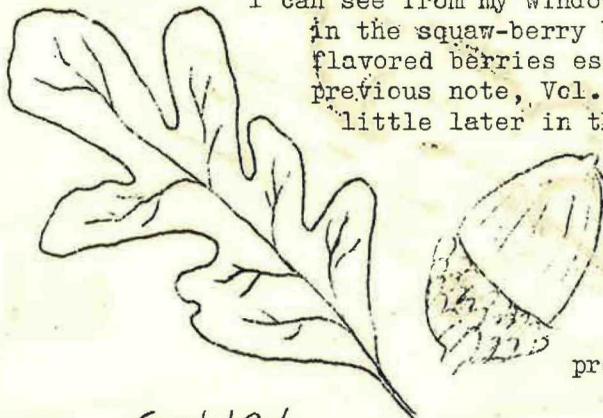
The next day, three squirrels were at work in the grove, a male working alone and presumably a female and young one working together. They were all climbing trees, working out to the tips of the limbs gathering acorns and tucking them into the cheek pouches. Every few minutes each one would leave the trees and disappear among the rocks and boulders on the hillside and reappear a few minutes later with empty pouches. Apparently they have several different places where the acorns are cached. Working in different trees, there was usually but little attention paid to the others, but occasionally when on the ground, the male chased the others away. Once he started up a tree where a second squirrel was working, going up the trunk and stopping at the base of the branch where it was located. A moment later the fugitive jumped from branch to branch, finally reaching the ground and racing away through the brush, closely pursued by the aggressor. A series of excited chirps from the underbrush was the only indication given of the punishment meted out by the gray rock squirrel to trespassers.



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As long as the acorns lasted, the squirrels kept busy nearly all day long, but after the crop was harvested, they were but seldom seen during the remainder of my stay in the park that season. When I returned in early June this year, the squirrels were busy with the seeds of grasses.

Now, two weeks later, as I sit compiling these notes, I can see from my window two rock squirrels at work in the squaw-berry bushes gathering the ill-flavored berries essentially as reported in a previous note, Vol. II, No. 3, August, 1930. A little later in the season, when service-berries are ripe, they will undoubtedly turn their attention just as assiduously to gathering them. Thus, as each crop ripens, they harvest it, storing it away for future use in a series of caches, and they are then prepared for the winter periods.



Gambel Oak

BRYCE CANYON MUSEUM

By K. E. Weight

The information and museum building became a reality at its completion the early part of June, 1933. We extend an invitation to all friends that come to Bryce to visit it. The site of the new building is on the hill just north of the public auto campground and about 300 feet to the south of the Utah Parks cafeteria. It is constructed of yellow pine logs and is in harmony with the other buildings in the park.

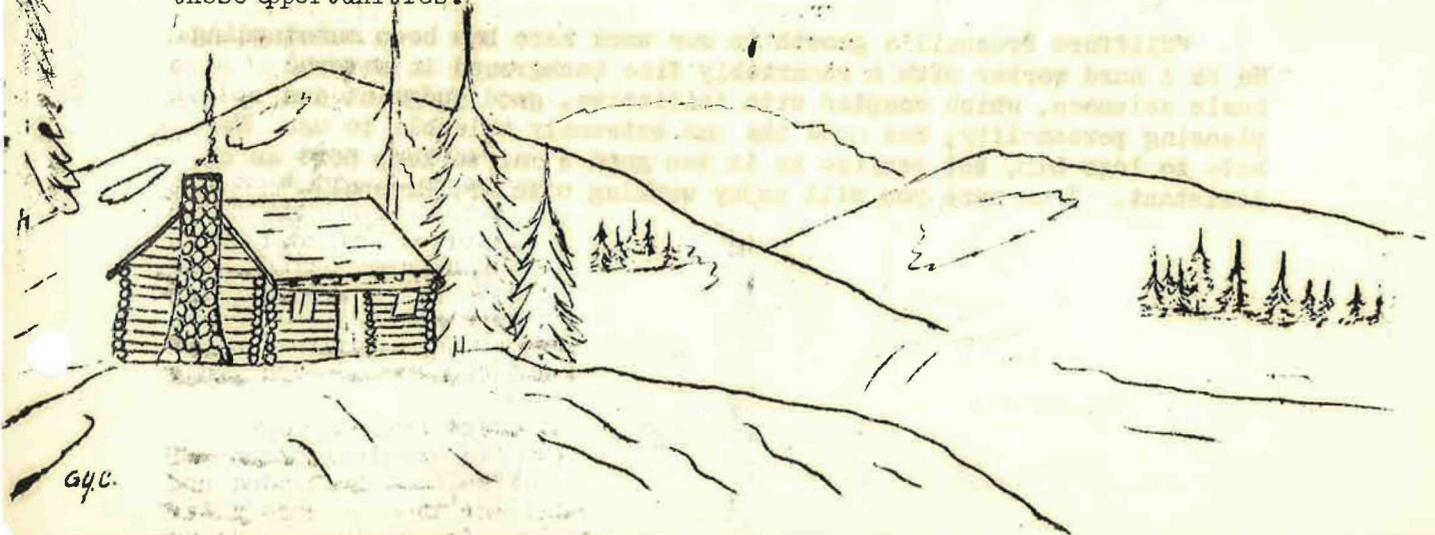
At the present time the one large room will take care of both the museum material and the office equipment. For the present visitors will only be able to view the museum display for three hours a day. This condition is due to the shortage of ranger service.

Bryce Canyon National Park has been fortunate in having several generous friends who have made valuable gifts of geological, biological and historical material to the park. Most of the material on hand is gifts from the residents of Tropic, Cannonville and Henrieville, Utah, representing many years of collecting on the part of some of these people while scouting and herding livestock. Many of the cliff dwelling houses of the Paria River system have been seen only by a few of these people. Indian relics, such as arrowheads, axes, hammers, hoes, skinning knives, etc., have been found and donated freely to the park.

Four general types of displays may be seen upon entering the museum. The geological exhibit represents the various types of rocks, fossils and petrified wood of the park region. The Pioneer and Indian displays bring back some of the interesting tools and weapons used for protection by these early people. A rather extensive herbarium of the park flora is available for interested people, and a good start has been made in the collecting of insects and reptiles of the region. Several of the smaller mammals have been mounted and add a great deal to the biological display.

In the near future a wild flower garden is to be started in the small areas at the north and east of the building to serve as a living exhibit of the native flowers of the region.

The museum and the nature guide service are operated by the National Park Service free to the public and all are invited to take advantage of these opportunities.



A NEW PARK NATURALIST FOR ZION AND BRYCE

The appointment of Mr. Clifford C. Presnall as Park Naturalist of Zion National Park has been announced by Superintendent Patraw. Mr. Presnall's appointment to his new position was made by promotion from Junior Park Naturalist in Yosemite National Park, California. It is expected that Mr. Presnall will report for duty at Zion National Park on June 26.

Clifford C. Presnall, who has spent most of his life on the Pacific Coast, was graduated from Oregon State College in 1923, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree. He entered the National Park Service in 1929 after having attended a session of the Yosemite School of Field Natural History during the same year. During the last two and one-half years he has served as Junior Park Naturalist in Yosemite National Park, assisting with all the varied educational activities there, and specializing in preparation of exhibits. His most outstanding work in Yosemite was the establishment of the Mariposa Grove Museum, in which he was assisted by his wife, Ruby Presnall, who is an art student of promising ability. This museum, housed in a replica of an old log cabin which has stood in the heart of this famous grove for half a century, contains the most complete exhibit of Big Trees to be found in any museum in the country. The original nature of these Big Tree Exhibits, his Yosemite experience in building nature trails, and his general work as a Museum man has given him an enviable reputation among the Museum Preparators of the country.

Every Naturalist has hobbies; special fields in which he is most interested. Presnall specialized on mammals at college, now he is especially interested in birds. He has just completed a bibliography on the birds of the Great Basin region which should prove valuable to him in his new position. He is a clear and forceful lecturer on numbers of natural history and National Park topics and a clever writer in the nature field.

In commenting on Mr. Presnall's transfer, Superintendent Thomson of Yosemite National Park states:

"Clifford Presnall's growth in our work here has been outstanding. He is a hard worker with a remarkably fine background in several basic sciences, which coupled with initiative, good judgment and pleasing personality, has made the man extremely valuable to us. We hate to lose him, but realize he is too good a man to keep here as an assistant. I am sure you will enjoy working with Mr. Presnall."

Along Nature's Highway

A fine large ringtail or bassarisk was discovered sitting in the lower limbs of a pine tree near the C. V. C. camp on the Kolob Plateau near Blue Springs by Assistant Superintendent Parker and Captain Haddock. Since the ringtail is nocturnal in its habit, it is thought that it must have been perched there for the day. All efforts at catching the slender graceful creature were unsuccessful even though it did not appear to be very wild or much frightened.

The live reptile collection at the museum has grown rapidly during the month, our cages being full at the present time. The exhibit includes: ring-necked lizard, sagebrush swift, desert scaly lizard, chuck-walla, banded gecko, and checkered race-runner among the lizards, and the following snakes: Boyle king, Great Basin gopher, red racer, and the Great Basin rattlesnake.

It is fawning time for the deer in Zion. On June 21 a visitor stopping at the foot of the Great White Throne was surprised to be approached by a young fawn not more than a few days old. This is the first record this year of fawns being seen.

A western red-tail hawk has been observed several times lately flying over the museum, usually going to or coming from the Grotto. The question of whether or not it has a nest in cliffs above the Grotto is occupying our attention at the present time.

