

Photo from Life, by William L. and Irene Finley

**THE
CHIPMUNKS**

Are among the most likable mammals of the park. This little Chipmunk is apparently absorbed in the mysteries of the camera shutter.

SOME BIRDS AND MAMMALS OF MOUNT RAINIER

* WALTER P. TAYLOR

THE wild life of Mount Rainier, while by no means The Mountain's principal claim to distinction, does form an important item in the list of attractions which so amply justify its national park status. One sees but few birds or mammals in course of the usual hurried visit to the Park, though several are conspicuous. In the vicinity of Paradise Inn harsh-voiced Nutcrackers make themselves heard by all who are in the open. In the neighborhood of Longmire scolding Steller Jays are in evidence, and then, too, there are business-like Juncos and diffident but musical Russet-backed Thrushes. An occasional mammal, such as the Cooper Chipmunk or Douglas Squirrel, may also come to one's notice.

For the most part, however, the world of birds and mammals is beyond the experience of the casual visitor. Scores of busy midgets, Golden-Crowned Kinglets and Chestnut-Backed Chickadees, explore the dense foliage of hemlock and fir. Sturdy Rosy Finches seek food and a place to nest on the bleak and windswept ridges above timberline. Harlequin Ducks paddle about in the waters of The Mountain's rushing rivers, and even raise their

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young in favorable situations. The venturesome Water Ouzel locates its nest, a large mossy sphere with a hole in the side, beneath a waterfall on Paradise River. A busy pair of hermit Thrushes brings up a family within a few feet of the main highway above Narada Falls. Most of the mammals remain in seclusion during the day. Under the friendly cover of darkness numerous members of the fraternity of the bright eye and the shining tooth emerge from their burrows, dens, and nests, and, alert and active, seek food and a chance to work out their destiny. Even where a special effort is made the acquaintanceship of the wilderness creatures cannot be gained in a day. Wherever it is possible the bona fide investment of time and patience in cultivating their acquaintance may be relied on to pay large dividends in interest and in pleasure.

Limitations of time and space preclude our discussing here more than a very few species, either of birds or mammals. Taking the birds first we note that water birds are not numerous within the Park. On the eighth of August, 1919, members of The Mountaineers made the interesting discovery of a nest of the Spotted Sandpiper. The young were just ready to leave the nest. The Spotted Sandpiper is a member of the great order of Shore Birds, and it is a pleasant experience to meet an individual on the mud-bars or among the rocks of some rushing glacial stream, and to watch him as he teeters daintily about, with, apparently, one eye out for a toothsome morsel and the other for possible danger. The bird student, while yet some distance away, hears the Sandpiper's whistle "Whoit toit" and knows that he has met an old friend. Another shore bird occurring on Mount Rainier, but only during the migrations, is the Western Solitary Sandpiper, which travels, alone, over vast distances, and through all sorts of weather. Strangely enough, for these days of ornithological sophistication, the winter destination of the Solitary is not definitely known.

To many persons the White-tailed Ptarmigan is first in interest among the birds of the mountain. Its icy habitat is forbidding enough to the comfort-loving human, but the combination of glaring light, freezing boreal blast, dwarfed and windblown vegetation, and extensive snow and ice fields, found on the pumice slopes near timberline, seem to suit Mr. and Mrs. Ptarmigan very well indeed. Nature provided the Ptarmigan with an effective camouflage long before the word was invented. Amid the snows of winter, as is well-known, the Ptarmigan becomes wholly white; in summer the bird is speckled, harmonizing remarkably with the dark-colored rocks and heather of its surroundings. Furthermore, there is a

marvelous correlation at this season between need for protection and degree of concealing coloration, for the young are best protected by their color, the hens next, and the cocks least.

One evening at Owyhigh Lakes a little owl flew into camp and perched quite unconcerned on a tree near the fire, as if wishing to join the circle. We later learned that this was the Sawwhet Owl, and a remarkably interesting neighbor we found him. His peculiar name is derived from one of his call-notes. On more than one occasion the curiosity, or stupidity, maybe, of these little



Taken on Pyramid Peak, Mount Rainier.

Photo from life, by J. B. Flett

THE At her nest in the midst of the heather, presents a wonderfully
PTARMIGAN attractive appearance.

owls drove them into our tent and a weird sensation it was to awaken suddenly from a sound sleep and hear the call of an owl sounding within six feet of one's ear.

The Rufous Hummingbird was found to be fairly common on Mount Rainier. One cannot always judge the quality of the contents by the size of the package. Although the Rufous Hummingbird is one of the tiniest birds in the Park, its boldness would do credit to a far larger species. If an inexperienced Junco unwittingly invades the Hummer's preserves, he is set upon at once by the jealous proprietor, and soon forced to beat a precipitate retreat. The Hummingbird is occasionally found far above timberline, buzzing rapidly over the desolate upper reaches of The

Mountain's glaciated sides, apparently as much at home as in an alpine flower garden.

The jays are a mischievous lot, and are guilty of not a little villainous conduct. They eat other birds' eggs, and have even been known to devour young birds in the nest. But they make up for much of their naughtiness by their familiarity and saucy habits. According to the Indian legend of Hamitchou, Skai-ki, the Steller Jay, is a wise bird, foe to magic. Her singing is said to refresh the honest laws of nature. Her cousins, the Gray Jays, or Whiskey Jacks, are of even greater interest to campers. They have an extensive repertoire of calls and whistles, with which, usually, their first appearance is announced. They are often extremely bold, and will purloin food from the camp table, or even, sometimes, alight on one's shoulders, back, or hat.

To the writer the Gambel Sparrow, a common migrant through the Park, is one of the most attractive of its birds. The eagle, as Professor Shaw says, is emblematic of majesty and power; the crow of craft and knavery; the thrush of evening harmony, but the Gambel Sparrow is symbolic of sociability and happiness. Found in open brushy places, there is scarce a stump or projecting snag but has its Sparrow, while the migration lasts. Its song, while not unusually powerful, is full of optimism and good cheer.

Several warblers occur in the Park, among them the Townsend, the Audubon, the Lutescent, and the Tolmie. All are slender birds, small in size, and with pointed, narrow bills. The term "warbler" conveys the idea of brilliant melody; but the songs of the most of the group are simple trills.

The life of the Western Winter Wren is spent in the shadow. His home is the forest floor. He revels in the mosses, the huckleberry vines, the huge logs and the upturned roots of his habitat, and he is seldom seen more than six feet above the ground. But while he may live in the deep shade, his is a most cheerful disposition, as shows strongly forth at nesting time, when he perches himself on some prominent twig and sings and sings and sings, a tiny tinkling warble, harmonizing perfectly with his diminutive personality.

The Varied Thrush or Oregon Robin, silent, secretive, and of a retiring nature, seems to personify, as does no other species, the spirit of the woods. His song is one of the most elusive of bird sounds. More, perhaps, than anything else, it recalls shadowy forest aisles, with shafts of sunlight penetrating through the branches of giant hemlocks and firs to the damp mossy ground.

Passing now to the mammals, we find the Black Bear probably

the most notable of the carnivores. A large and lumbering creature, one might expect him to be conspicuous wherever he is at all common. But such is not the case. Like most of the other woods folks, he is extremely shy, and one may dwell for weeks where bears are abundant, and never see one. On Mount Rainier the Black Bear is a good deal of a vegetarian, grass, leaves, and berries making up the most of his diet. When the supply of these things

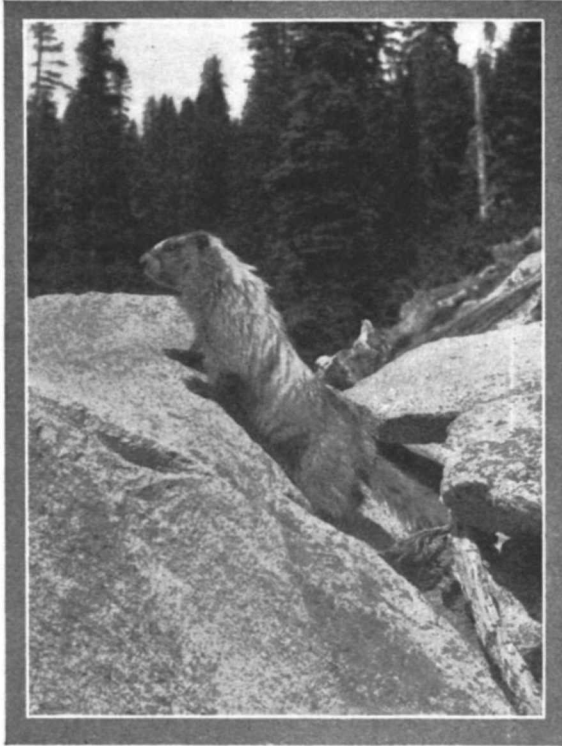


Photo from Life, by William T. Shaw

**THE CASCADE
HOARY MARMOT**

Or whistler is the watchman of the alpine park area. When one's pack-train comes over the ridge the penetrating whistle of the Marmot warns all woods creatures of the approach of something suspicious.

grows lean, he sometimes hunts for scraps or ill-guarded supplies in the vicinity of the camps.

There are few people who do not still have some timidity about camping and tramping in the open, partly because of supposed dangers from wild animals. In Mount Rainier Park, or almost any where else in the West, such dangers, as every Mountaineer knows, are practically non-existent. A whole series of imaginary fears is aroused, as a rule, by the mere mention of the Mountain

Lion. As often described, the call of this beast sounds "like the shriek of a woman in distress, or the pitiful cry of a lost child." Dr. C. Hart Merriam says "An attack of indigestion, the cry of a Loon, or the screech of an Owl, a piece of phosphorescent wood, and a very moderate imagination, are all that are necessary, in the way of material and connections, to build up a thrilling tale of this description." The Mountain Lion's cry, rarely heard, is said to be a sort of roar rather than a scream. The animal itself is seldom seen, being even shyer and more retiring than the Black Bear.

The rodents are the most abundant mammalian denizens of the mountain. Most widespread of all are the Deer Mice, modest, bright-eyed little creatures with a wonderful capacity for adapting themselves to circumstances. The woods are full of them, and an old cabin is almost sure to be overrun with them. They range far up on Mount Rainier and have even been recorded from the extreme summit between seven and eight thousand feet above timberline.

Conspicuous in many alpine parks are numerous pocket-gopher-like mounds of earth, communicating with a network of tunnels and burrows which ramify widely and often embrace a considerable area, especially in moist places. These are the signs of the great alpine Water Vole, a very common mammal in the vicinity of timberline. The young are born in warm dry nests of shredded grass blades a few inches beneath the surface of the ground. A capacity for adaptation is almost as marked a characteristic of this animal as of the Deer Mouse, and I was much surprised to find a Water Vole living under the wall of the stone cabin at Camp Muir, altitude 10,000 feet, far from what would be considered a favorable habitat.

As one enters the capacious mountain amphitheaters in the vicinity of timberline his appearance will frequently be heralded to all wilderness creatures within hearing by the shrill but musical whistle of the Cascade Hoary Marmot. The heavy fat body of the Marmot does not convey the impression of alertness or agility, but he possesses a generous endowment of both. His home is usually located beneath a rock-slide. The young Marmots, two to four in number, are chubby little balls of fur, very juvenile, very grave, and very comical.

The chipmunks, undoubtedly the most popular mammals in the Park, appear to be the happiest creatures in the woods. There are two kinds, one, slightly larger and darker, with margin of tail silver-gray, living by preference in the deep woods below 5,000

feet; the other, slightly smaller and paler, with margin of tail brown, choosing the alpine park country usually above 5,000 feet. Both are of a sprightly and vivacious temperament, and very companionable. Chipmunks live in shallow burrows usually beneath boulders and logs, spending the winter in hibernation.

As a close second to the chipmunks in popularity comes the Douglas Squirrel. Bright-eyed, active, saucy, and handsome, he often seems to be hurling down imprecations on one for disturbing the peace of his quiet woods. Fortunately he does not appear to harbor animosity for long, and his loquacity may be due rather to excitement than to anger. His extraordinary activity and energy are indicated by an incident related by Mr. J. B. Flett. At Long-

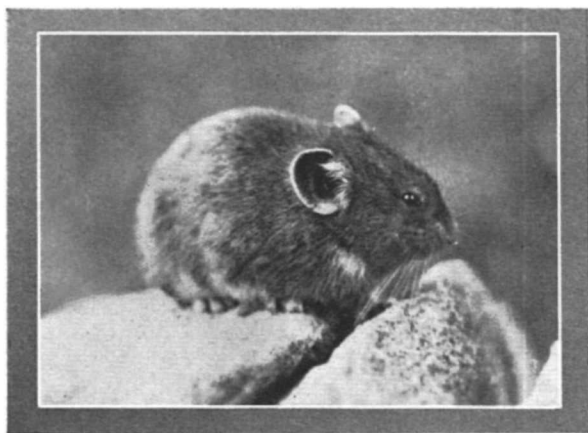


Photo from Life, by William L. and Irene Finley

**THE CONY
OR PIKA**

A soft-furred rabbit-like little creature: is perfectly at home among the jagged boulders and rocks of the talus slopes of Rainier's mountain amphitheaters.

mire, in the fall of 1920, a single squirrel cut 1,167 Douglas Fir cones in three days, and in addition carried many others, not counted, under the house. It has been recently shown that the Squirrel is an important factor in reseeding the Douglas Fir in the burnt areas of the Northwest, and no wonder!

Shyest and most secretive of the family is the Flying Squirrel, which, although seldom seen because of its strictly nocturnal habits, is quite common on Mount Rainier. When examined by day it proves to be a very attractive creature, with soft fur, prominent ears, and large round eyes. As is well-known, the skin on its sides can be expanded so as to greatly increase the area of the under surface of the body. The tail is broad and flat. The animal cannot fly by propelling itself through the air with its "wings", but, as described by Professor W. T. Shaw, launches forth from high in one tree, sailing by a long downward curve, nearly to the

ground, then catching itself by a sudden movement, and alighting gracefully on the trunk of another tree.

"The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks," says the Bible (Prov. 30:26), and this statement is true of our own Conies, which, however, are not related to those of Bible lands. The Cony, Pika, or Little Chief Hare is a neighbor of the Marmot, living in the rock-slides in the high alpine park country. Small and weak in appearance, and rabbit-like in general dullness of personality, one cannot help wondering how the Cony has survived the vicissitudes of the seasons and of enemies through the long ages. He is nothing if not active, and can usually be observed at intervals through the day, and sometimes heard



Photo from Life, by Walter P. Taylor and George G. Cantwell

THE FLYING SQUIRREL Is a lover of darkness and is never seen by day except by accident. Note the broad, flat tail, and the prominent fold of skin at the side of the body.

through the hours of darkness. He divides hay-making honors with the Mountain Beaver. Piles of green or partly dried vegetation, to be used later for food or bedding material, are frequently seen under some sheltering boulder. The Cony does not hibernate, but remains active all winter in his rock-slide habitat under the snow.

One is probably as likely to see a Black-tailed Deer along the road between Longmire and Paradise as in any part of the Park. The meadow country about the springs at Longmire is another favorite place of resort. These graceful wild creatures, so hand-

some in their natural environment, are among the most valuable assets in wild life to be found on the mountain. It is all the more to be regretted, that, after becoming tame under the protection of the Park authorities, they wander over the boundaries in autumn and winter and fall an easy prey to hunters. To provide for the maintenance and increase of the Park deer, it is important that a game preserve, sufficient in size to include the deer's fall and winter range, should be established outside the Park.

The Mountain Goat occupies a pre-eminent place among the mammals of the Northwest. He is remarkably light on his feet for so heavy-bodied an animal, and is able to negotiate ice, snow, and rock slopes of unbelievable steepness. In the Rocky Mountains the Goat is said to spend the winter on the high ridges above timberline, feeding on the vegetation exposed by the wind. Climatic conditions on Mount Rainier make this impossible. When the first severe storms come, the Goats descend into the timber and brush about the altitude of the ends of the glaciers, or sometimes even lower, depending on the depth of the snow. Mr. Flett has seen them at the altitude of Longmire. They remain at these lower levels until able once more to occupy their boreal habitati.
