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FAUNA OF THE SAN LUIS VALLEY

by

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a brief resume of the animals commonly found in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. For the convenience of both the writer and reader the animals are listed under three major groups: (1) the herpetofauna, (2) the birds, and (3) the mammals. The reader should understand that this is not a complete list. It does not include many species which might be considered as only occasional visitors.

HERPETOFAUNA

The herpetofauna of the San Luis Valley is rather limited. This is due for the most part to the comparatively severe environmental conditions in the Valley. Therefore, only a few of the more hardy anura, sauria, caudata, and serpentes are to be found. There are no testudines in the Valley.

ANURA

Bufo cognatus Say (Great Plains Toad)
Bufo woodhousei woodhousei Girard (Rocky Mountain Toad)
Pseudacris triseriata maculata (Agassiz) (Boreal Chorus Frog)
Rana catesbiana Shaw (Bullfrog)
Rana pipiens brachycephala Cope (Leopard Frog)
Spea bombifrons (Cope) (Plains Spadefoot Toad)

CAUDATA

Ambystoma tigrinum mavortium Baird (Barred Tiger Salamander)
Ambystoma tigrinum utahense Lowe

SAURIA

Eumeces multivirgatus gageae Taylor (Skink)
Phrynosoma douglasi ornatum Girard (Horned Lizard)
Sceloporus undulatus erythrocheilus Maslin (Fence Lizard)

SERPENTES

Crotalus viridis viridis (Rafinesque) (Prairie Rattlesnake)
Pituophis melanoleucus sayi (Schelegel) (Bullsnake)
Thamnophis elegans vagrans (Baird and Girard) (Mountain Garter Snake)
Thamnophis sirtalis ornatus (Baird) (Garter Snake)

MAMMALS

The mammals of the San Luis Valley appear to show overlapping into the valley of some species normally found to the north and to the south of the valley. Examples of this include the wolverine which has been reported at least twice near Mt. Blanca by reliable observers, and the ring-tail cat from the southern limits of the valley. There are several small mammals which are very numerous. These include the Least Chipmunk (*Eutamias minimus caryi*), the Ord Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys ordi*), and *Lepus sp.* along with *Sylvilagus auduboni* (Desert Cottontail).

Eutamias minimus caryi is considered as being endemic to the San Luis Valley of Colorado. It is quite abundant in the chico and rabbitbrush of the valley floor, and is also found sharing the same habitats with the Colorado Chipmunk at higher elevations.

Antilocapra americana (Pronghorn)
Aplodontia rufa (Mountain Beaver)
Canis latrans (Coyote)
Cervus canadensis (American Elk)
Chiroptera (Bats)
Citellus lateralis (Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel)
Citellus lateralis (Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel)
Clethrionomys gapperi (Red-backed Vole)
Cynomys ludovicianus (Blacktail Prairie Dog)
Dama hemionus (Mule Deer)
Dipodomys ordi (Ord Kangaroo Rat)
Erithizon dorsatum (Porcupine)
Euarctos americana (Black bear)
Eutamias minimus (Least Chipmunk)
Eutamias quadrivittatus (Colorado Chipmunk)
Felis concolor (Mountain Lion)
Insectivora (Shrews)
Lepus sp. (Jackrabbit)
Lynx rufus (Bobcat)
Marmota flaviventris (Marmot)
Mephitis mephitis (Striped Skunk)
Microtus montanus (Mountain Vole)
Mustella frenata (Long-tailed Weasel)
Neotoma cinera (Bushy-tailed Woodrat)
Ochotona princeps (Pika)
Ondatra zibethica (Muskrat)
Onychomys leucogaster (Northern Grasshopper Mouse)
Peromyscus maniculatus rufinus (Deer Mouse)
Reithrodontomys sp. (Harvest Mouse)
Sylvilagus sp. (Cottontail Rabbit)
Tamiasciurus hudsonicus (Pine Squirrel)
Thomomys talpoides (Northern Pocket Gopher)



Grizzly Bear



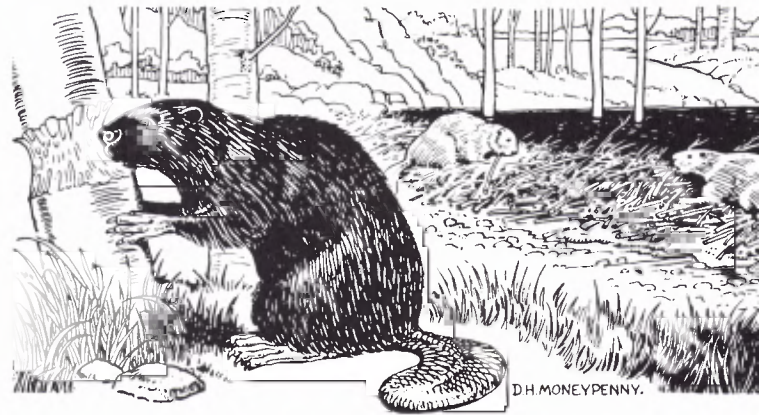
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BIRDS

The San Luis Valley affords some of the best bird-study areas to be found in the Rocky Mountain region. The chico and rabbitbrush of the valley floor, the rushes and cattails, the cottonwoods and willows along stream banks, the conifers at higher elevations, and the water all combine to

make this area a home for many diverse species. Marsh species are quite abundant and include such species as ducks, rails, wrens, blackbirds, yellowthroat, snowy egrets, black-crowned night herons, black terns, avocets, marsh hawks, and short-eared owls.

There are two large national wildlife refuges in the valley (at Monte Vista and Alamosa), which provide high-quality nesting and feeding habitat for mallard and other waterfowl. The Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge bird list contains 172 species ranging from abundant to rare. Some of the abundant species include the mallard, teal, and ring-necked pheasant. The rare species include



Beaver and Beaver Dam



Mule Deer

the white-fronted, snow, and blue geese; also the peregrine falcon, caspian tern, belted kingfisher, and poor-will to name a few.

The following list includes those species which an observer might normally expect to find during the late spring and summer months.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| American Avocet | Common Grackle |
| American Bittern | Common Nighthawk |
| American Coot | Common Raven |
| American Goldfinch | Cooper's Hawk |
| Bald Eagle | Crow |
| Band-tailed Pigeon | Downy Woodpecker |
| Bank Swallow | Eastern Kingbird |
| Barn Owl | Evening Grosbeak |
| Barn Swallow | Gadwall |
| Black-billed Magpie | Golden Eagle |
| Black-crowned Night Heron | Gray-headed Junco |
| Black-headed Grosbeak | Great Blue Heron |
| Black Tern | Great Horned Owl |
| Blue Grosbeak | Green-tailed Towhee |
| Blue Grouse | Green-winged Teal |
| Blue-winged Teal | Gray Jay |
| Brewer's Blackbird | Hairy Woodpecker |
| Broad-tailed Hummingbird | Horned Lark |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | House Finch |
| Brown Towhee | House Sparrow |
| Burrowing Owl | House Wren |
| Canada Goose | Hummingbird |
| Canvasback | Killdeer |
| Cassin's Finch | Lark Bunting |
| Cassin's Sparrow | Lesser Yellow Legs |
| Cinnamon Teal | Lewis' Woodpecker |
| Clark's Nutcracker | Loggerhead Shrike |
| Cliff Swallows | Long-billed Curlew |

Long-billed Dowitcher
 Long-billed Marsh Wren
 Mallard
 Mountain Bluebird
 Mourning Dove
 Pied-billed Grebe
 Pine Grosbeak
 Pine Siskin
 Piñon Jay
 Pintail Duck
 Redhead Duck
 Red-shafted Flicker
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Ring-neck Pheasant
 Robin
 Rock Dove
 Ruddy Duck

Rufus Hummingbird
 Sage Thrasher
 Sandhill Crane
 Say's Phoebe
 Short-eared Owl
 Shoveler Duck
 Snowy Egret
 Sparrow Hawk
 Spotted Sandpiper
 Starling
 Steller's Jay
 Swainson's Hawk
 Townsend's Solitaire
 Turkey Vulture
 Vesper Sparrow
 Western Grebe
 Western Kingbird
 Western Meadowlark

Western Tanager
 White-crowned Sparrow
 White-faced Ibis
 Williamson's Sapsucker

Wilson's Phalarope
 Wilson's Warbler
 Yellow-headed Blackbird
 Yellow Warbler

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