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1989 Summer Compendium of Wildlife Appreciation Opportunities

COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

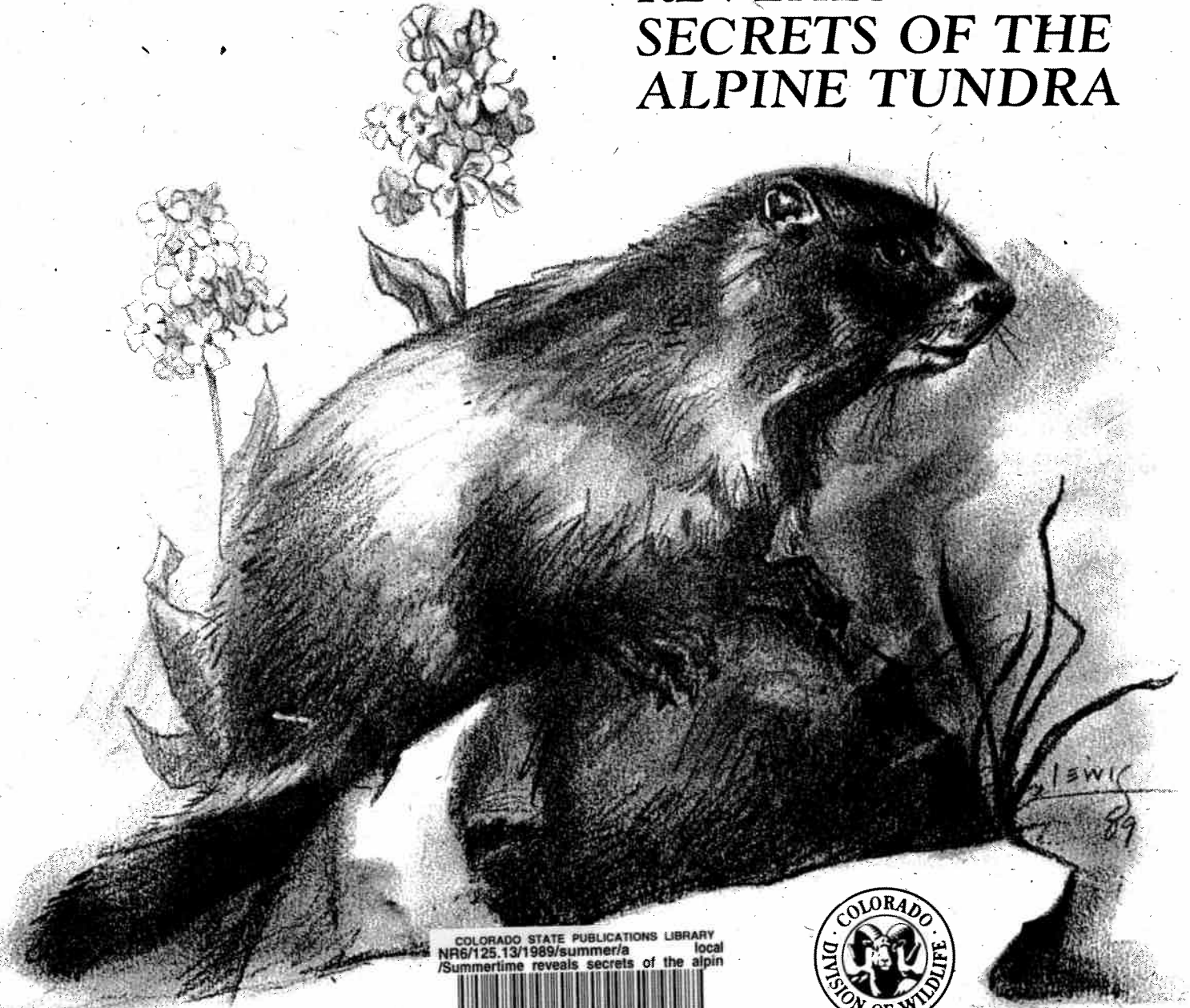
 Nongame and Endangered

 Wildlife Program

 Watchable Wildlife Program

Colorado's Wildlife Company

SUMMERTIME REVEALS SECRETS OF THE ALPINE TUNDRA



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NR6/125.13/1989/summer/a local
Summertime reveals secrets of the alpin



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marmot and Parry primroses

More Driving and Watching for Alpine Wildlife

The same primary life zones (subalpine and alpine) and tundra areas above timberline can be found above 11,000 feet on other mountain roads in Colorado; these areas provide summer homes for the same animals described for the Mount Evans drive. So pick your favorite trip, pack your binoculars, and visit summer animals in high places.

Northeast and Northwest Regions

Trail Ridge Road: Enter through Rocky Mountain National Park, west of Estes Park or north of Grand Lake. This high altitude drive (reaching 12,000 feet) through the national park will pass through many life zones and offer you numerous opportunities for wildlife watching. Look for deer, elk, bighorn sheep, raptors, pika, and marmot in the alpine areas.

Northeast Region

Cameron Pass: Highway 14, linking Fort Collins to North Park through Poudre Canyon and Roosevelt National Forest, passes through the subalpine life zone. Watch for deer, elk, a large variety of birds, and small mammals including marmot, weasel, pika, snowshoe hare, and pine marten.

On your way to the pass, you'll have a unique Colorado opportunity to see MOOSE on both sides of the pass at lower elevation. On the east side of the pass, follow the Laramie River Road several miles north of Chambers Lake to the West Branch Trail. On the west side of the pass, check out the Illinois River in North Park. Note: cows will have calves with them and can be extremely dangerous if you get too close.

Northwest Region

Independence Pass: Follow Highway 82 between Aspen and the junction with Highway 24 at Granite. This road is paved all the way across this spectacular mountain pass and will offer you good opportunities to see wildlife in the subalpine and alpine environments.

Southeast Region

Pikes Peak: By car, the summit is reached 19 miles on the Pikes Peak Toll Road from State Highway 24 west of Colorado Springs. Another route to the summit, riding the inclined railway from Manitou Springs, also affords wonderful wildlife viewing opportunities. Watch for bighorn sheep, marmot, and pika on slopes adjacent to the track above timberline.

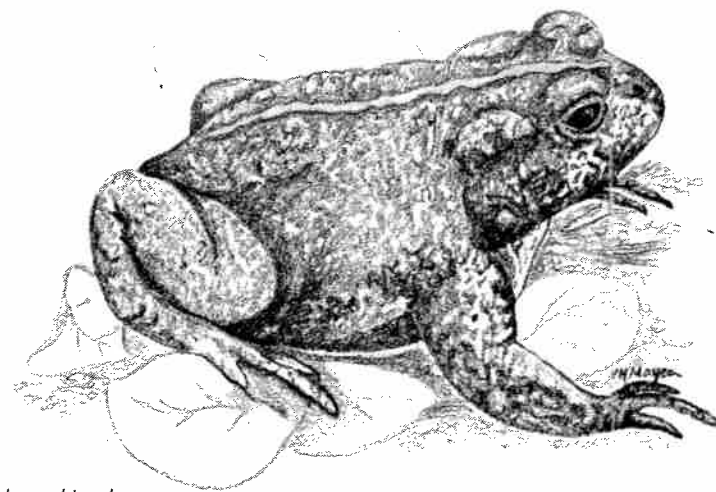
Southwest Region

Million Dollar Highway: Mountain goats and large herds of elk can be seen throughout the high country of the San Juan Mountains. Explore the Million dollar Highway (Highway 550) between Ouray and Silverton this summer. This paved road travels through subalpine and alpine life zones over Red Mountain Pass.

Summer Wildlife Specials

July 5 - 8	Nesting Ecology of Flammulated Owls Cloud Ridge Naturalists (303) 459-3248, Audrey Benedict
July 7 - 9	Close Up Photography Workshop Rocky Mountain National Park Rocky Mountain Nature Association (303) 721-1991, Shattil & Rozinski
July 7 - 14	Peregrine Benefit Art Show Peregrine Falcons and other Hunting Birds Carson Gallery, 1745 Stout Street, Denver (303) 295-0055, Tom Carson
July 8	Native Plant Field Trip Colorado Native Plant Society (303) 329-9198, Jim Borland
July 9 - 14	Institute of River Ecology Denver Audubon Society (303) 499-3647, Susan Foster
July - August	Watch for Peregrine Falcons in Downtown Denver!
August	Wildlife Photography Workshops Shattil & Rozinski (303) 721-1991
October	Sandhill Cranes and Sand Dunes Photography and Animal Tracking Workshop The Nature Conservancy Halfpenny, Shattil & Rozinski (303) 721-1991

Let us hear from you about your Wildlife Specials. We will print all we have room for.



boreal toad

Nongame Check-Off, Alive and Kicking

As of April 30, 1989, Colorado taxpayers had contributed \$310,000 to the Nongame Income Tax Check-Off. At this same time last year, contributions totaled \$244,795. If our calculations are correct, that means 1989 contributions are 27% ahead of 1988 contributions! Based on current trends, this year's Check-Off is projected to generate some \$424,000 for the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program by the end of June 1989. Hey! That's the best we've done since 1984! THANKS FOR CARING! 🐦



water pipit

We Speak the Same Language

Thank you to the hundreds of you who returned Colorado's Wildlife Company shareholder certificates. (An asterisk on your mailing label means we know you want to remain on our mailing list.) We were excited to hear from you and to learn you liked our compendium idea. And we appreciated the checks many of you sent in support of the Nongame and Watchable Wildlife programs!

We also received our first "letter to the editor." In response to Mr. Howard Funk's short, two-page note regarding his mental agitation concerning our admittedly clever title, "What's the difference Between a Duck," heading the article distinguishing between the Watchable Wildlife Program and the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program published in our first issue — QUACK!

Buying Gifts Helps Wildlife

(All proceeds will go directly to the Colorado Division of Wildlife Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program)

Nongame Wildlife Posters Posters of winning photographs from the DOW annual nongame photo contest are still available. All posters are in full color and suitable for framing.

1986 — Bohemian Waxwing by David Leatherman

1987 — Barn swallows by Sherm Spoelstra

1988 — Ferruginous Hawks by W. Perry Conway

Posters are available through all Colorado Division of Wildlife offices: \$5.00 apiece if you pick them up; \$5.50 if mailed. 🐦

Calling all Parts of Colorado

NE Region: Participants in the three spring Watchable Wildlife field trips to Hamilton Reservoir, Poudre Canyon, and Tamarack/Red Lion State Wildlife Areas observed 102 different wildlife species. They were most excited to see an osprey at Jumbo Reservoir and a black-bellied plover at Red Lion. DOW biologists are planning additional trips this fall. Stay tuned!

Help! "We need help locating burrowing owl, piping plover, and least tern populations in northeastern Colorado," says wildlife biologist Jim Dennis. If you can recognize these species and wish to volunteer for surveys, call Jim for more information (303) 484-2836.

NW Region: We need volunteers to help with construction of a nature trail along the Blue River. Please contact Mike Grode at the regional office in Grand Junction, (303) 248-7175.

Central Region: We still need interested birders to help with the Colorado Bird Atlas. Please call Hugh Kingery (303) 333-0161.

SW Region: People interested in developing the Watchable Wildlife program in southwestern Colorado are invited to contact Glen Hinshaw at the regional office, 2300 S. Townsend, Montrose, CO 81401 (303) 249-3431. Public meetings on watchable wildlife issues will be held in the San Luis Valley, Gunnison and San Juan basins, San Miguel and Montrose areas. Call Glen if you'd like to participate in any of these meetings or have other ideas.

SE Region: We are almost finished with our new Mt. Zion elk viewing area north of Leadville. It will offer excellent opportunities to view elk feeding during the winter.

Summertime is the Only Time You'll See Them!

By Mary Taylor Gray

At elevations above 11,000 feet in Colorado, a unique world lies hidden to most people three seasons of the year — the alpine tundra. As the mantle of winter lifts from the Colorado high country, this fascinating area reveals its secrets, offering us a chance to view the creatures who live above timberline.

Summer brings long days and warm temperatures, and the tundra blossoms with activity. Hibernators like the marmot awaken and emerge from their dens to feed, breed and complete the essential rhythms of life before they must sleep again. The small creatures that have been active beneath the snow all winter — the pika, vole, pocket gopher — come forth with the melt to forage industriously. And seasonal visitors like the elk and coyote, who winter at lower elevations, venture across the tundra in summer to sample summertime offerings.

Year-round alpine residents are few. The only all-season bird species is the white-tailed ptarmigan. Feathered white in winter, the ptarmigan's summer camouflage of mottled brown makes it difficult to spot among the rocks, often startling hikers by flushing suddenly from almost underfoot.

Birds that arrive to summer above timberline are more conspicuous. With warmer weather, the tundra is enlivened by the twittering song of the rosy finch and the tail wagging walk of the water pipit, both of which nest almost exclusively on the tundra. Other summer visitors include the horned lark, white-crowned sparrow, Swainson's hawk, harrier, and raven.

The only large mammal living year-round above timberline by choice is the mountain goat. Although beautifully adapted to our mountain habitat, the mountain goat is not native to Colorado and was first introduced to the Colorado Rockies in 1948. White coated winter and summer, they can be seen feeding with sure-footed agility on the steep slopes of the Collegiate, Sawatch, San Juan, and Gore mountain ranges, and on Mount Evans. Other large mammals like elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep prefer to range onto the tundra only in summer to forage on tender vegetation.

Drawn by the populations of small mammals, a number of predators also venture above timberline seasonally. Coyotes, red fox, ermine, marten, and long-tailed weasel traverse the alpine meadows in search of prey. The lack of cover above timberline may afford

glimpses of these naturally shy hunters not possible at lower elevations.

Less diverse are the species of cold-blooded vertebrates found in this limiting environment. Cutthroat trout occur naturally in some alpine lakes, along with other species stocked by the Division of Wildlife. Several amphibians can be found here — the boreal toad, striped chorus frog, and tiger salamander. Through winter, they hibernate in the mud at the lake bottom, emerging in spring when the alpine lakes echo with the mating songs of male frogs and toads. By late July, tadpoles can be spotted in the water, and by the end of summer, adult frogs and toads (some only half an inch long!) start emerging.

You, Among the Alpine Wildlife

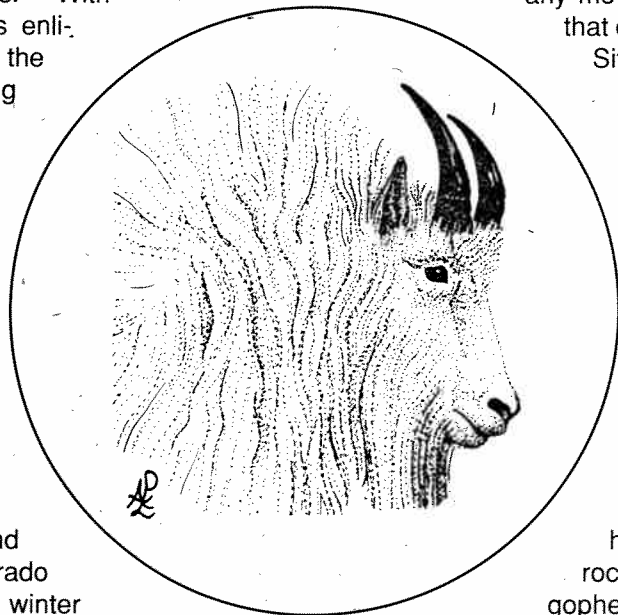
The alpine tundra offers good wildlife watching opportunities because of the lack of trees, but many animals use effective camouflage to remain nearly invisible against the rocky landscape. Watch and listen. Rather than looking for a particular animal, watch for any movement or patterns and colors that do not quite fit the background.

Sit down on a rock, and try to locate animals by the sounds they make. Some, such as the marmot and pika, will loudly whistle or bark at your invasion of their home territory.

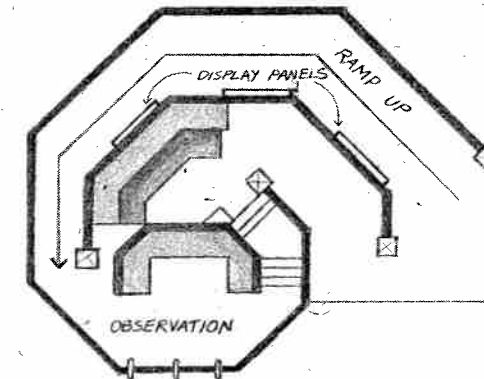
Though the animals themselves are often hidden from you, look for their signs. Droppings and tracks give clues about who has passed. Nests and burrows are obvious signs of habitation. Pika, for example, store grass in small haystacks stuffed between rocks. You'll recognize pocket gopher habitat by the ropelike ridges of soil networking the ground. In winter,

gophers tunnel under the snow along the surface of the earth, pushing loose dirt into the tunnels as they go. This dirt settles onto the ground as the snow melts, showing you patterns of the gopher's winter tunnel system.

P.S. All wildlife, but especially animals living in the fragile and sometimes harsh alpine environment, need you to take personal responsibility for their survival. Stay on trails (plants need your help too), take home any trash you may find, and watch with respect.



Which Way Watchable Wildlife?



True to its name, the Watchable Wildlife Program is taking a dynamic role in promoting education about wildlife and in enhancing opportunities to view wildlife in Colorado.

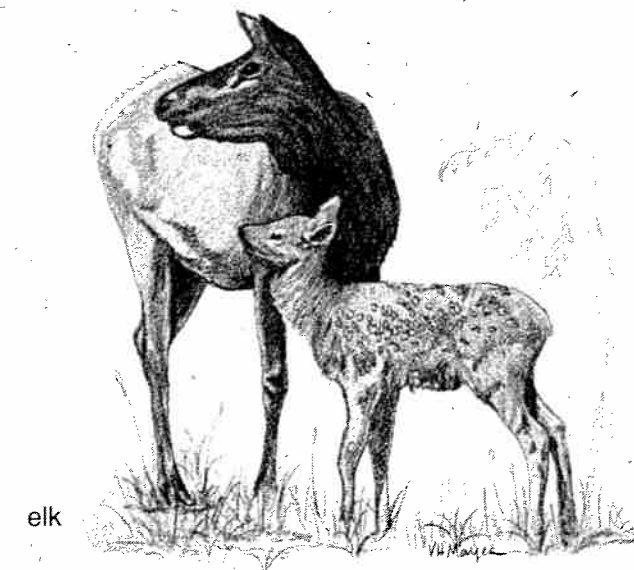
The big news is the bighorn sheep viewing site to be constructed near Georgetown. Bob Hernbrode, program supervisor, described the project with excitement, "It's the most dramatic thing we have done in years!" The structure, designed like a ram's horn, will feature informational displays along a ramp that will curve up to a viewing tower. Telescopes in the tower will be directed across Interstate 70 to explore a popular bighorn wintering site. "This kind of site provides opportunities to view and learn about bighorns while minimizing human disturbance," explained Hernbrode. Construction on the \$85,000 project is scheduled to begin in July of 1989 with opening slated for November.

Hernbrode was equally as pleased to list a number of other sites currently under development for wildlife viewing in Colorado. The Division of Wildlife (DOW) will complete the Mt. Zion elk viewing area north of Leadville this summer, and a waterfowl viewing area will be located at Windy Gap Reservoir south of Granby. Interpretive trails are under construction at two properties near Grand Junction: Walker Wildlife Area and adjacent to the DOW regional office. Lesser prairie chickens can be watched from a lek (courtship arena) observation area developed by the United States Forest Service (USFS) on the Comanche National Grassland. The Division will assist in creating informational materials for this site in the southeast corner of the state near Campo.

A number of publications designed to enhance wildlife watching are in the works. Brochures will soon be completed on bighorn sheep (available this summer), elk viewing, and eagle watching. The DOW Central Region is developing a metro wildlife guide complete with suggested viewing sites. A comprehensive wildlife viewer's guidebook for Colorado is in production and is scheduled for sale to the public by July 1990.

Hernbrode hopes to produce a videotape series on watching wildlife in Colorado. In fact, the pilot program for this series focuses on the wildlife of Mount Evans and will be available from DOW this fall. In addition, the Watchable Wildlife Program is offering wildlife photography classes, working closely with the Urban Wildlife Partnership, and co-producing (with the DOW Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program) the publication you are now reading — *Colorado's Wildlife Company*.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife has lots of plans to help Coloradoans get to know their wildlife. Just watch!



elk

more inside

Mountain Goat

Often seen from a distance on some seemingly inaccessible ledge, the mountain goat's short, spiky black horns and white coat distinguish it from the bighorn sheep. Several groups of these dignified, high-country patrons have been transplanted from Montana, Idaho, and South Dakota, and British Columbia, Canada, to the Colorado mountains since the late 1940s. They can be seen today in Colorado's Collegiate Mountains, Gore - Eagles Nest Wilderness, Maroon Bells - Snowmass Wilderness, Needle Mountains, and Mount Evans.

Goats on Mount Evans often gather close to the road — perhaps to watch people. If photographing goats, **approach only as close as the goats feel comfortable with you.** Watch their body language, and back off if they appear nervous or move away from you.



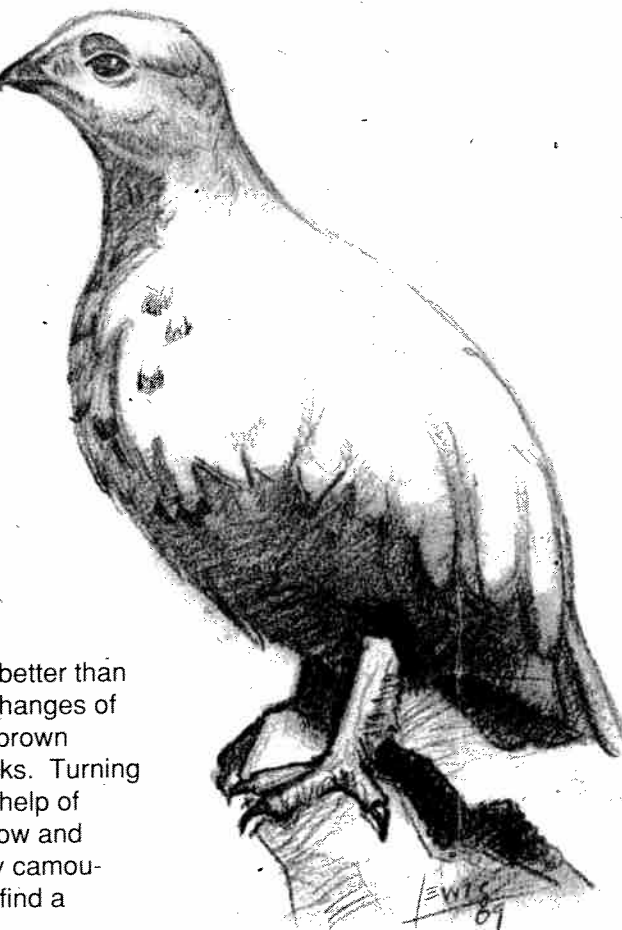
Yellow-bellied Marmot

This large member of the squirrel family, has a woolly brown coat, short legs and a heavy, bushy tail that it waggles as it waddles. A very social rodent, marmots communicate with a series of chatters and whistles and may be seen in groups sunning themselves. They frequently construct a mound around the entrance to their burrows to provide a vantage point. Active during summer days (they hibernate in the winter), marmots are like tourists on a well-earned vacation — they eat and they sunbathe.



White-tailed Ptarmigan

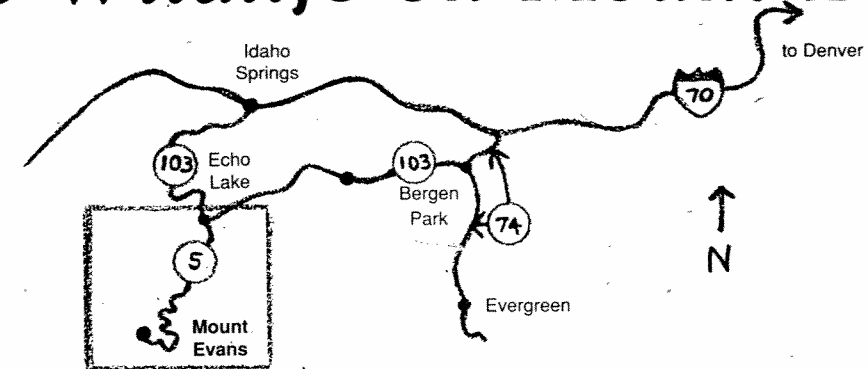
Epitomizing the world above timberline perhaps better than any other animal, the ptarmigan reflects the seasonal changes of the tundra. In summer this mountain grouse's mottled brown plumage makes it almost indistinguishable from the rocks. Turning white with the snow, the ptarmigan gets about with the help of feathery "snowshoes" as it shelters in hollows in the snow and feeds on willow buds and shoots. They are wonderfully camouflaged throughout the year, and patience is required to find a ptarmigan in the alpine.



Pika

The warning bark of the highly territorial pika, a tailless, round-eared cousin of the rabbit, is well known to alpine visitors. About the size of a small guinea pig, the pika makes its home among rock slides and talus slopes. Active year-round, the pika spends its summer cutting grasses and forbs and storing this food for winter in small "hay-stacks" between the rocks. An hour of pika watching is time well spent; they are interesting and highly entertaining.

Driving and Watching for Alpine Wildlife on Mount Evans



The drive to the 14,264-foot summit of Mount Evans, one and one-half hours west of Denver, affords an easily accessible opportunity for wildlife watching above timberline. The road is paved all the way to the summit, but it is narrow and lacks shoulders in many places. Be cautious when viewing and stopping. (Note: The road past Summit Lake may be closed for part of the summer for construction, but you will have wonderful opportunity to see all alpine wildlife, including mountain goats, below Summit Lake. So, go anyway!)

1) Once on the Mount Evans road (Highway 5), a good first stop is the Mount Goliath Natural Area, about three and one-half miles from Echo Lake on your left. The gnarled trees here are bristlecone pines, among the oldest living organisms on earth.

2) Two miles above the natural area is a small pullout and trail head for the Alpine Garden Trail. This short (1 1/2 mile) trail will walk you across rocky slopes inhabited by pika. Elk, sheep and goats may be spotted on the open areas across the drainage.

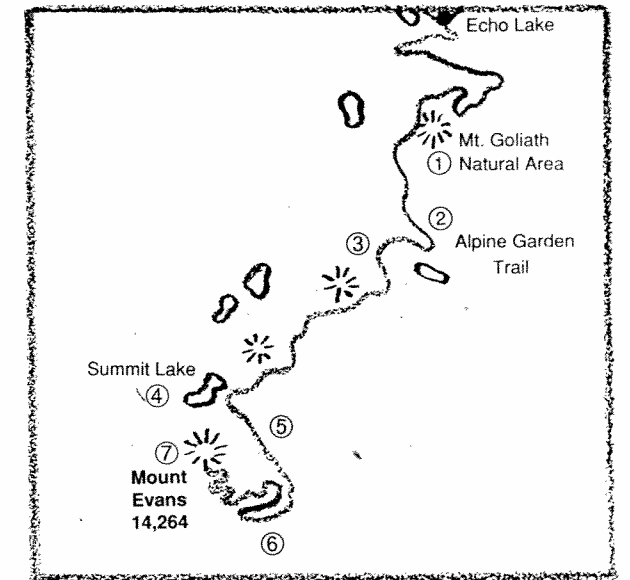
3) Back in your car, you will enter the alpine zone as you leave the last areas of tree growth. Start looking for mountain goats as you head up toward Summit Lake (some 1,000 feet below the actual summit).

4) At Summit Lake, another short trail leads past the shelter house to overlook Chicago Creek Basin. This is a great place to see mountain goats perched on narrow ledges; take your binoculars or spotting scope. Look sharp for pika and ptarmigan around the lake and on the slopes above it. Watch for the dipping flight and tail-bobbing walk of the water pipit, and keep an ear tuned for the various calls of other birds that summer here.

5) Leaving the Summit Lake area, you'll notice that Mount Evans exhibits true arctic tundra characterized by pools of water held by permafrost — frozen soil six to ten feet below the surface that prevents drainage. Most tundra in Colorado is primarily dry and, therefore, considered alpine rather than arctic.

6) On the final drive toward the summit, watch the rocky slopes of the switchbacks for marmots that you might see standing up on their hind legs like high-altitude prairie dogs. Bighorn sheep and mountain goats are seen frequently right on the road. Early morning and late evening are the best viewing times for these large mammals. They usually spend the warmer parts of the day sleeping in the shade of rocks or cliffs.

7) From the summit you'll have a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains. You'll find numerous birds and sometimes mountain goats up there with you. Look into the fire damaged basins below where you might spot elk feeding on tender shoots of new growth. The summit of Mount Evans is exactly that; it has not been developed and features only its own magnificence. Congratulations . . . you have made it to the top of one of Colorado's fourteeners.



Colorado's Wildlife Company

is brought to you by the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program and Watchable Wildlife Program. This 1989 Compendium of Wildlife Appreciation Opportunities has been mailed to you because it has come to our attention that you might very well enjoy knowing about and participating in these opportunities.

The Compendium will be published quarterly – Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter – and will focus on wildlife and activities associated with the Nongame and Watchable Wildlife programs. It is mailed free of charge to anyone interested in Colorado's living wildlife heritage.

If we were correct about your interest and you want to remain on our mailing list, or if you want to add a friend's name to our list, please complete and return Colorado's Wildlife Company shareholder certificate below.



marten

Colorado's Wildlife Company

Colorado Division of Wildlife 6060 Broadway Denver, CO 80216

Yes. I want to keep receiving the Compendium.

If there is an asterisk on your mailing label, we have received your request to remain on our mailing list.

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