



Water Canyon

Animal Life

The riparian plant community provides an abundance of resources for many animals. Many animals living in the sparse sagebrush habitat in the areas around Water Canyon may rely on the water in Water Canyon Creek for drinking, the riparian zone for shade and shelter, and/or other small animals visiting Water Canyon for food. Other animals, however, are able to spend their entire lives in Water Canyon because the resources there are so rich.

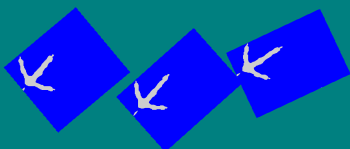
Water Canyon is essential for many birds, both resident and migratory. The birds use the area as a source of food and water, a place to raise their young and as cover from predators. Water Canyon is an excellent spot to go birding. The best time to observe the birds is at dawn and dusk, the time of day when they are most active. If you are quiet, you may have the chance to spot a pair of Cooper's Hawks perched in one of the tall trees or hear the beautiful song of a Western Meadowlark.

If you visit Water Canyon in the summer, you might have the opportunity to see Tiger Swallowtail Butterflies gathered along the muddy banks (a behavior known as puddling) or see swarms of Mormon Crickets marching slowly along the creek. There are also many resident snakes and lizards that are often observed in the summer warming themselves in the sun.

Use caution if you see a wild animal. Keep a safe distance and never follow or approach an animal. Never feed wildlife. Human food is unhealthy for animals and may make the animals dependent on humans for food or make them aggressive. It is also important to keep pets on leashes at all times while visiting Water Canyon.

See the animal cards in this kit for more information about the animals at Water Canyon.





BIRDING NEVADA STATE

Most people's mental image of Nevada is of great expanses of dry desert landscape, covered with sagebrush and blowing sand. The fact that Nevada is the driest state, averaging less than 4 inches of precipitation a year, supports this image. In fact, ranked sixth in the nation for biodiversity, Nevada, a Spanish word meaning *snow-covered mountains*, offers birders much more than barren wastelands.

Located almost entirely in the Great Basin portion of the Intermountain Region, Nevada boasts 51 peaks with an elevation over 9,000 feet. The highest, Boundary Peak, along the California border, towers over 13,000 feet, while the lower end along the lower Colorado River sits at 420 feet. This wide range supports many diverse habitats. Nevada is a state of basins and ranges, with numerous north/south lying mountain ranges separated by valleys. Nevada ranks 7th in area and 35th in population, with a density of 16 people per square mile. Nearly 75% of the population lives in the Las Vegas area.

The bird life is as diverse as the habitats, with a state list hovering around 470 species, nearly 250 of which are known to breed in the state. Located on the Pacific Flyway, Nevada hosts a wide range of shorebirds and waterfowl. In 1999, over 60,000 shorebirds were tallied in both the Spring and Fall counts, with Long-billed Dowitchers, Black-necked Stilts, and American Avocets as the most numerous species. Large concentrations of wintering raptors can be found in the Northwestern part of the state. Eastern Nevada is the only place in North America to see the introduced Himalayan Snowcock, and southern Nevada receives many visitors for Le Conte's Thrasher and other desert species.

The state has two Audubon chapters, Lahonton Audubon in the Reno area and Red Rock in Las Vegas, the Great Basin Bird Observatory, and an active Nature Conservancy chapter. A newly implemented Important Bird Area program has designated several Globally and Continentally Important sites. The Globally Important sites include the Goshute Mountains, Lahonton Valley Wetlands, Ruby Lake NWR, and Walker Lake. Pahrnagat NWR is a Continentally Important site. Other potential Important Bird Areas include Franklin Lake, Humboldt WMA and Pyramid Lake. Nevada is also an active member in Partners in Flight.

With the aid of dedicated volunteers, fieldwork on the Nevada Breeding Bird Atlas has been completed and will be published by the Great Basin Bird Observatory in 2002. Eight MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) banding stations are currently in operation, and new stations are in the planning stages. An ongoing raptor migration project, which includes banding, in the Goshute Mountains in eastern Nevada, is sponsored by HawkWatch International. News of these projects and current local sightings can be found on the Nevada Birding Listserv.

