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Bird notes from Rocky Pass and vicinity,
Rocky Mountain forest reserve adjacent to
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1 Title



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BIRD NOTES FROM ROCKY PASS AND VICINITY,
ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOREST RESERVE,
ADJACENT TO JASPER NATIONAL PARK, ALBERTA.

by J. Dewey Soper.

*Mammal notes & from Rocky Pass, Rocky Mountain
Forest Reserve, Alberta. (Start P. 6.)*

The above locality is approximately four or five airline miles south of the station of Mountain Park, Alberta, and almost due east of Mt. Lindsay. General faunal work was conducted here from September 17 to October 3, 1922. During this time I occupied a provincial forestry cabin near the east end of Rocky Pass, through the courtesy of the late Mr. Benjamin Lawton. Most observations were made in the nearby valley of a northern branch of Brazeau River (apparently Cardinal River) and in Rocky Pass, as far west as the eastern boundary of Jasper National Park. In fact, a high proportion of the field work was carried out within one or two miles of Jasper Park. Considerable collecting was done, but chiefly in respect to small mammals.

Altitude of the Rocky Pass cabin at Cardinal River was apparently in the neighbourhood of 6,000 feet, with peaks and ranges of the Rockies rising above this another 2,000 to 2,500 feet. Timberline occurs at about 6,700 to 7,000 feet. The entire district at the lower levels is referable to the Canadian Life Zone, succeeded upward, of course, by the Hudsonian and the Arctic-Alpine Zones.

According to my 1922 notes, the entire country westward of a point a little south of Cadomin (approx. elev. 5,000') is covered with coniferous forest of spruce, balsam fir and lodgepole pine, no poplars being in evidence. The station of Mountain Park lies at about 6,000 feet. Spruce and lodgepole pine predominates. Isolated tracts of typical muskeg are common. At Cadomin a few clumps of aspen and balsam poplar occur, while at Shaw (4,414') areas of such woods are much commoner; they are even more extensive below Coldspur (3836'). The poplars, in this district, appear not to occur at altitudes of much over 5,000 feet. Rocky Pass, proper, lies partly in the upper reaches of the Hudsonian Zone, but some areas of it are clearly referable to the Arctic-Alpine; sections of the pass are well above timberline--much higher than the last prostrate spruces, where comparatively little vegetation exists.

The bird notes, which follow are comparatively few in number and are practically as culled from an old field journal of the year 1922. Any specimens taken are referred to in their proper places.

RICHARDSON'S GROUSE. Dendragapus obscurus.

A single example was encountered on September 25, 1922, along the headwaters of Cardinal River north of Rocky Pass. The species must have been scarce in this locality at that time, as a very considerable area was covered on foot during the two weeks of investigations when only the one bird was observed. The race here is doubtless richardsoni.

SPRUCE GROUSE. Canachites canadensis.

This bird was also low in numbers throughout the district, as only three examples were seen. These were in spruce forest along the Cardinal River a short distance southeast of Rocky Pass. The sub-species inhabiting this region is evidently canadensis.

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN. Lagopus leucurus.

On September 23rd, three of these birds were noted in a boulder-strewn ravine of Rocky Pass some little distance above timberline. They were very unsuspecting and allowed approach to within about 10 feet. Two had much brown mottling in the plumage, while the third was

almost pure white. One was collected (No. 657). The race here is undoubtedly L. l. leucurus.

GREAT HORNED OWL. Bubo virginianus.

Observed on several occasions in coniferous forest in the Cardinal River Valley, both north and south of Rocky Pass. Individuals were heard hooting nearly every night in thick spruce woods near the Rocky Pass cabin at approximately 6,000 feet. It was never seen or heard in the stunted spruce woods of higher elevations referable to the Hudsonian Zone. It is not known whether these birds were subarcticus or occidentalis.

AMERICAN HAWK OWL. Surnia ulula.

Only one individual was seen during the wild life investigations, so the species was probably very scarce. This one was noted on September 30th among fair-sized spruces a little to the east of, and several hundred feet lower, than Rocky Pass. Subspecies is evidently caparoch.

NORTHERN FLICKER. Colaptes auratus.

One was observed on October 2nd just below timberline on the divide between the headwaters of Cardinal and McLeod Rivers, northeast of Rocky Pass. The presence of this individual here at an altitude of about 6,900 feet, on such an advanced date, was a distinct surprise. This was the only occasion on which the species was noted in the district.

HORNED LARK. Otocoris alpestris.

No Horned Larks were observed in this district until September 30th, when a small flock of six individuals visited the margin of a pond near the Rocky Pass cabin. One was seen near the town of Mountain Park on October 2nd. Two specimens were collected (No's 685, 686), but these were subsequently lost in a shipment of skins sent to the National Museum, Ottawa.

CANADA JAY. Perisoreus canadensis.

This bird was common throughout the forest along the Cardinal River and was also noted at times practically, if not quite to timberline in Rocky Pass, at about 6,000 to 6,700 feet. Six specimens were collected (No's 630, 636,

655, 656, 658 and 661); they are undoubtedly referable to canadensis as they can be exactly matched with specimens taken in eastern Manitoba and Battle Lake, Alberta.

HUDSONIAN CHICKADEE. Penthestes hudsonicus

Fairly common about Rocky Pass. Seen in thick woods at lower elevations referable to the Canadian Zone and also at higher altitudes in the thinning and scrubby spruce groves of the Hudsonian. Noted almost daily during the period of residence in the locality; the birds were usually in small bands. Two specimens were collected—No's 669-670.

AMERICAN ROBIN. Turdus migratorius.

A solitary individual was noted in the woods along the Cardinal River just east of Rocky Pass on the morning of October 2nd. This was the only robin seen, or heard, during the entire stay in this region. The record is all the more surprising in view of the comparatively cold weather then prevailing and the snow storm which occurred the previous day.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD. Sialia currucoides.

A pair of these birds was seen in the town of Mountain Park on October 2nd. None was noted elsewhere at an earlier date.

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET. Regulus satrapa.

A small flock of these kinglets was observed on September 28th in heavy spruce forest along the Cardinal River near the entrance to Rocky Pass. Other small companies were seen in the same general locality on October 1st and 2nd. On the whole, the species was uncommon. The subspecies is doubtless the type form satrapa.

~~PINE~~ PINE GROSBEEK. Pinicola enucleator.

Several of these birds were seen along the Cardinal River southeast of Rocky Pass on October 1st. At this time they were probably just beginning to move south from more northern breeding grounds, otherwise individuals would doubtless have been observed at an earlier date.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY FINCH. Leucosticte tephrocotis.

On September 21st a small flock was encountered on a bare mountain side well above timberline near the eastern Jasper Park boundary at Rocky Pass. This would be at about 7,200 feet. Another small flock was observed immediately above timberline a little farther east on October 1st. Two specimens were collected—No's 642 and 643.

SLATE-COLORED JUNCO. Junco hyemalis.

These birds were comparatively common in the wooded parts of the country during the stay at Rocky Pass. Following is an extract from my day journal of September 28, 1922: "Near timberline, today, and in the vicinity of a little brawling brook which came down the mountain, I collected a solitary junco (No. 668); it is very brown over the back and with distinctly buffy sides. This is perhaps either oreganus or shufeldti. The common slate-colored juncos have been seen in fair numbers every day, from the thicker woods along the river up to timberline at between 6,000 and 6,700 feet" (The specimen referred to was lost in the same shipment as mentioned above).

TREE SPARROW. Spizella arborea.

This species was observed with fair frequency throughout the investigations in the Rocky Pass district. The birds were more in evidence from September 23rd until early October. The great majority frequented willows bordering spruce woods on the lower elevations of the Cardinal River Valley. The birds were locally common in flocks during the last week of September. One specimen was taken—No. 692.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW. Zonotrichia leucophrys.

Relatively common in the high forest referable to the Hudsonian Zone. A few were seen at lower levels and also at higher elevations where the spruces were degenerated in the form of sprawling shrubs. One was collected in such a situation at timberline (approx. 6,800' at this point) on September 26th. The species was not observed after September 30th. A heavy snowfall occurred on the following day. Three examples were collected—No's 653, 654 and 680.

(On the whole, bird life was scarce in the region, probably owing in part to the combined rather ~~than~~ late^{date} and the comparatively high altitude. A heavy snowfall occurred on the night of October 1st and a half inch of ice formed as the result of a sharp frost).

MAMMAL NOTES FROM ROCKY PASS, ROCKY
MOUNTAIN FOREST RESERVE, ALBERTA

by J. Dewey Soper

Observations were made in the same locality and during the same period as that given for birds in the preceding section. No effort was made during these investigations to take big game mammals, but considerable attention was devoted to the smaller mammals. Collecting was done by means of a .410 shotgun and small museum traps. Subspecific determinations were made by Dr. R. M. Anderson. All the mammal specimens taken on this occasion are now deposited in the National Museum of Canada, Ottawa.

DUSKY SHREW. Sorex obscurus obscurus Merriam.

A single specimen of this shrew (No. 621, female, L- 110, T- 48 -H.F. 13, mm.,) was taken in a hummocky meadow in spruce woods well above the Cardinal River on September 19, 1922. The species was evidently scarce, as with persistent trapping operations over a period of about two weeks only the one individual was secured; this was at

an elevation of about 6,500 feet. No other species of shrew was secured.

AMERICAN BLACK BEAR. Ursus americanus americanus (Pallas).

Occurred sparingly in the region. A few signs were noted in the Cardinal River Valley, but no animal was actually sighted. The species was said to be more common at lower elevations to the eastward.

GRIZZLY BEAR. Ursus horribilis.

According to the forest rangers, a few Grizzly Bears ranged through this district. None was personally observed, but signs attributed to this animal were seen above timberline in Rocky Pass not far from the Jasper Park boundary. It is not known to me whether the subspecies here is bairdi or pellyensis.

CANADA OTTER. Lutra canadensis.

On October 2nd, an undoubted trail of an otter was observed in the snow along a creek on the headwaters of McLeod River southwest of the town of Mountain Park. This was the only sign of the species observed during the period of wild life investigations.

NORTHERN COYOTE. Canis latrans.

One or two individuals were seen in the neighbourhood of Rocky Pass and one on the divide between the headwaters of Cardinal and McLeod Rivers. Heard howling on several occasions. The species was certainly far from common. Subspecies represented here is evidently the type form latrans, rather than incolatus which probably does not come so far south in the Rocky Mountains.

HOARY MARMOT. Marmota caligata.

Not personally observed, probably owing to the relatively late date at which observations were carried out. There can be no question as to its occurrence, however, as the forest rangers stated that the animal inhabited the region in moderate numbers. A Mr. Matthews, a packer of Mountain Park, informed me that he had seen a Hoary Marmot, or Whistler, on September 29th. The subspecies occurring here is undoubtedly the Okanagan Hoary Marmot (M. c. okanagana).

HOLLISTER MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL. Citellus lateralis tesorum

(Hollister).

Found to be sparingly distributed in the district. The animals may have been seen more frequently at an earlier date, as probably many of them had by this time gone into hibernation, or appeared above ground only at long intervals. Two specimens were taken as follows: Sept. 21, No. 632, f, 260-82-41 mm; Sept. 27, No. 660, m, 270-86-42 mm. Both were taken on 45 degree grassy slopes below timberline, with a mixture of boulders and small spruces; altitude between about 6,500 and 6,800 feet.

COLUMBIAN GROUND SQUIRREL. Citellus columbianus.

A single ground squirrel was observed on a grassy bench in Rocky Pass at about 7,500 feet on September 19th. It was well above timberline at this point and, in view of the type of habitat, it is considered that the animal could have been no other than a columbianus. An effort was made to collect the animal, but it was too wary and went into its burrow while still well beyond gun range. I do not know at what date this ground squirrel usually hibernates, but it is possible that the majority had now disappeared for the winter. In view of this, the above date may be of some interest.

LITTLE NORTHERN CHIPMUNK. Eutamias minimus borealis (Allen).

These little chipmunks were common and inhabited several types of habitat. Thus, they were found in spruce woods along the Cardinal River; in deep, wooded lateral ravines at higher altitudes; and on wide grassy slopes at, or just below timberline, where only dwarf spruce, various prostrate shrubs, alpine plants and moss were able to exist. The animals appeared to be particularly attracted to such an environment as the latter where boulders occurred in profusion. Specimens were collected as follows: Sept. 21, No. 631, m, 200-100-30; Sept. 26, No. 648, m, 195-78-29; Sept. 29, No. 667, m, 190-85-31; and Sept. 29, No. 671, m, 190-80-29mm. Several individuals were seen actively running about on October 2nd after the four-inch fall of snow which occurred the day before. This locality is apparently too far north and east for either Eutamias amoenus luteiventris (Allen), or E. a. ludibundus Hollister.

MACKENZIE RED SQUIRREL. Tamiasciurus hudsonicus preblei Howell.

Red squirrels occurred commonly in suitable coniferous tracts of forest throughout the district. In some localities they were actually abundant. Specimens were taken as follows: Sept. 19, No. 624, m, 310-120-48; Sept. 27, No. 659, f, 310-128-50; Sept. 28, No. 665, f, 295-117-47; Sept. 28, No. 666, m, 298-110-50; Sept. 30, No. 683, m, 300-110-45; and Sept. 30, No. 684, f, 320-120-47 mm. So far as I can recall, there is no sign of intergradation of these specimens with T. h. columbianus, which is found in the Canadian Rockies farther south.

BOREAL WHITE-FOOTED MOUSE. Peromyscus maniculatus borealis (Mearns).

This mouse was abundant at the time of the 1922 investigations. On one or two occasions from 8 to 10 individuals were taken in a single night from 40 traps. The animals inhabited practically all types of habitat from the spruce-balsam forest in the Cardinal River Valley at about 6,000 feet up to or about timberline around 6,700 to 7,000 feet. Many were secured in boulder-strewn alpine slopes or benches interspersed with stunted spruces. The following specimens were preserved: Sept. 19, No. 620, m, 152-74-19; and No. 623, m, 150-70-19; Sept. 20, No. 627, f, 160-70-20; Sept. 25, No. 646, m, 160-72-18, and No. 647, f, 160-72-19; Sept. 28, No. 662, m, 175-78-22, No. 663, f, 167-75-20, and No. 664, f, 155-76-21, and Sept. 30, No. 682, f, 152-70-20 mm. After the snowfall of October 1st, numerous tracks of the animals were seen in various parts of the country.

GRAY BUSHY-TAILED WOOD RAT. Neotoma cinerea cinerea (Ord).

A specimen (No. 633, m, 320-140-44 mm.) was taken at the Rocky Pass forestry cabin at Cardinal River on September 21, 1922. This was the only point at which the species was detected in the district.

CHAPMAN LEMMING MOUSE. Synaptomys borealis chapmani (Allen).

Occurred sparingly in the Rocky Pass locality. Traps set in apparently favourable places from September 18th to 30th failed to take any specimens (total of 520 trap-nights) so that the animal could be considered almost rare. On October 1st two specimens were secured in a moss-and grass-grown alpine meadow some little distance on the mountain side above the Cardinal River. These are: No. 687, m, 122-17-18; and No. 694, m, 114-20-17.5 mm.

ATHABASKA RED-BACKED MOUSE. Clethrionomys gapperi athabascaae (Preble).

Red-backed Mice were fairly well distributed in the locality under discussion. Most of the animals taken were trapped in the mossy-floored spruce woods along the Cardinal River. A few were secured at higher elevations where the spruces were thinner and more dwarfed with a considerable amount of boulder drift. Conditions here were nearer to those typical of the Hudsonian than the Canadian Zone. Preserved specimens are as follows: Sept. 19, No. 622, m, 112-31-18; Sept. 21, No. 634, f, 122-30-18 and No. 635, sex?, 120-30-18; Sept. 26, No. 649, f, 144-38-18, and Oct. 1, No. 691, m, 122-31-18 mm. Individuals continued active after the snowfall of October 1st.

DRUMMOND MEADOW MOUSE. Microtus pennsylvanicus drummondii (Aud. & Bach.).

This mouse was fairly common in most favourable situations and in some areas was abundant. It inhabited grassy flats and meadows in the Cardinal River Valley and an occasional specimen was taken in fairly dense spruce forest at the same elevation. The animals were also trapped in muskeg-like patches on benches of the mountain slopes several hundred feet above the river. At another point, several were secured in a hanging valley near timberline where conditions were Arctic-alpine in character. Following are details of the specimens preserved: Sept. 19, No. 619, m, 112-29-16; Sept. 20, No. 625, m, 119-30-17, No. 626, m, 135-35-18, No. 628, m, 125-30-18 and No. 629, m, 125-28-17; Sept. 24, No. 640, m, 132-42-18 and No. 641, m, 142-45-18; Sept. 26, No. 650, f, 148-50-18, No. 651, m, 141-45-19 and No. 652, f, 115-25-17; Sept. 30, No. 681, m, 130-26-18; Oct. 1, No. 688, f, 149-35-18, No. 689, m, 160-44-18, No. 690, m, 161-45-18, and No. 693, f, 128-30-19 mm.

CANTANKEROUS MEADOW MOUSE. Microtus mordax mordax (Merriam).

Mordax was not very common in the Rocky Pass locality, but by dint of persistent trapping in likely places and frequently shifting portions of the trapline, several specimens were secured. Two individuals were collected in an alpine meadow of the Hudsonian Zone several hundred feet above the Cardinal River; the elevation would be approximately 6,500 feet, or probably a little more. The spruces were rather widely scattered and not far from actual timberline. The other was taken in a grassy and mossy situation in semi-

open spruce woods along a creek at about 6,200 feet. The specimens are: Sept. 24, No. 638, m, 180-62-19 and No. 639, sex?, 155-48-19; Sept. 30, No. 679, f, 145-48-20 mm. This animal was much less numerous than M. p. drummondii.

YELLOW-HAIRED PORCUPINE. Erethizon epixanthum.

The forest rangers asserted that this animal was sparingly distributed in this region. Not a single one was personally observed, though a few signs of the animal's presence were seen. Such were particularly notable at an old, abandoned cabin in the locality, where the floor and other items were considerably chewed up as though from the presence of salt.

VARYING HARE. Lepus americanus.

In 1922, these animals were very scarce throughout the district. One was observed on September 28th—the only one detected throughout the investigations. A single trail was seen in the snow on October 2nd near the Cardinal River.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN PIKA. Ochotona princeps princeps (Richardson).

The pika was comparatively common on rock slides of the mountain slopes in and about Rocky Pass. The following specimens were collected: Sept. 24, No. 637, f?, L-170, H.F. 30; Sept. 25, No. 644, m, L-168, H.F. 30, and No. 645, f, L-170, H.F. 28 mm.

MULE DEER. Odocoileus hemionus.

This deer was not uncommon in the Rocky Pass-Cardinal River locality during my investigations in 1922. About six or seven were personally seen during the two weeks there and others were heard in timbered areas which were not actually sighted. After the snowfall of October 1st many fresh trails were seen in the Cardinal River Valley and north over the divide south of the headwaters of McLeod River. The subspecies here is evidently the type form hemionus.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIGHORN SHEEP. Ovis canadensis.

These sheep were noted on many occasions at and above timberline along the Cardinal River; in Rocky Pass; and along the Jasper Park boundary to the south. In some localities they appeared to be common, if not abundant, and their well-worn trails were conspicuously in evidence. The race represented here is undoubtedly O. c. canadensis.

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