

LIFE ON THE MONUMENT: FAUNA

In Celebration of Newberry National Volcanic Monument



Pygmy nuthatch - Photo by seabamirum via Flickr

Exploring Wildlife on the Monument

Written by Gail Whelan

If you have ever been to Newberry National Volcanic Monument you may have noticed that there is not a lot of wildlife roaming around. There are however, some that are worth noting. Some are very elusive, and others are everywhere you look.



Pika Photo Courtesy of University of Washington

Let's start with some of the smaller animals you can see here on the Monument. These little critters are everywhere you look, from Lava Lands to Lava River Cave and the Caldera. Any guess as to what I am going to talk about first? I am sure you have guessed it, it's the ground squirrels and chipmunks. The Golden-mantled ground squirrel can be found all over the monument. They can be identified with two white stripes down their backs, and are about 7-9" long with a 4" tail. The golden-mantled is larger than a chipmunk and hides in the ground when they need to get out of harm's way. Our next little critter is the Yellow-pine chipmunk which is easy to identify by the stripes on his face. They like to be the trees and are smaller than the golden-mantled by about 3". You may also see a Douglas squirrel that is a grayish brown squirrel with a slight orange belly and is usually about 10" long with a bushy tail that can be up to 7" long. The Douglas squirrel is quite loud with the sound of a shrill "squeak squeak" as he jumps from tree to tree, especially when there is a predator or person walking by.



Golden-mantled ground squirrel
Photo by Andy Raego & Chrissy McClarren

A couple smaller animals you may or may not see are the pika and long-tailed weasel. The long-tailed weasel is long and skinny; the body is up to 13" long with a tail almost as long as it's body. They have cinnamon brown fur with a white yellow underbelly, though these weasels will turn white in the winter. It travels low to the ground and moves quickly when needed. They are

beautiful creatures! Pikas are hard to see, you may hear it first with a high pitched "eeep." Pikas typically need to be in high altitudes with cool weather, finding similar habitats in the lava flows throughout the monument. Pikas are part of the rabbit family, with large round ears and a stout body measuring about 8" in size. *Pika's Tail* by Sally Plumb is a fun kids book that is adventurous as well as informative

about this sweet little creature. You can also see a few reptiles such as the western fence lizards and western skink, which is identified by a long blue tail. Garter snakes are also seen on the monument.

In the spring, look for amphibians at Paulina Lake. Look for a toad with a light stripe down its back, rough bumpy skin and up to 5" in size. This species of toad is called a western toad. You can also see the Pacific tree frog which comes in assorted colors but is recognizable by its size of 1-2" as well as a black line through their eyes. You can hear



Western skink - Photo by Gary Chang

the harmony croaking of the Pacific tree frog, which is quite lovely to listen to.

Moving on to the Monument's larger animals; the Newberry Caldera has black bear and mule deer. Black bears have been seen throughout the caldera and can get as big as 5'6" weighing up to 350 pounds. Make sure you put your food away in locked canisters and garbage in bear proof cans. Mule deer's defining characteristic are their large ears, which are about three-fourths of the length of the head. They have a white behind with a short tail that looks like it was dipped in black paint.



*Mule deer -
Photo by Gail Whelan*

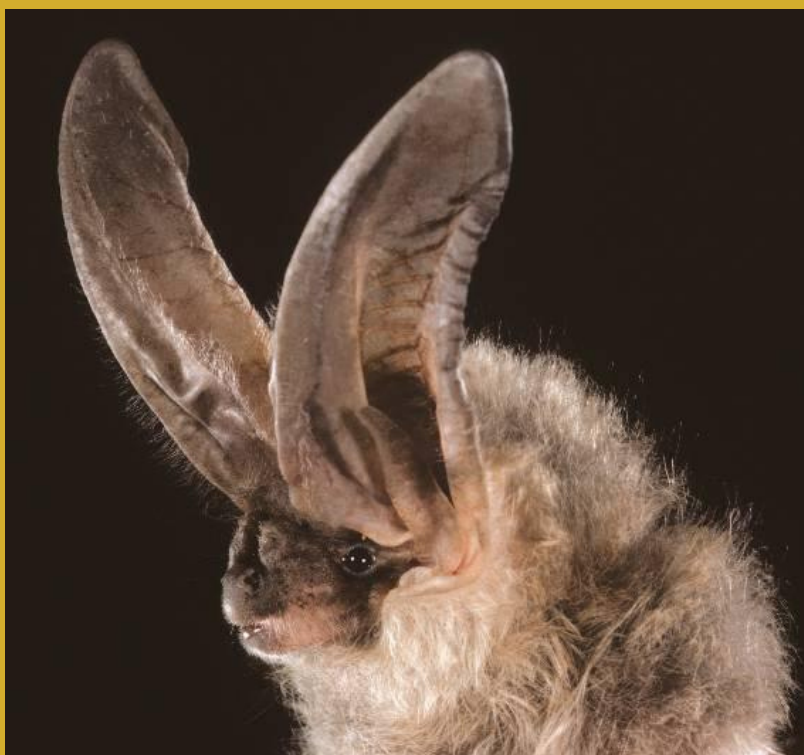
The monument is also a wonderful place to bird watch. There is a bird feeder that is located next to the patio at Lava Lands Visitor Center. There you can see the brightly colored Western tanager, Yellow-rumped warblers, and red crossbills. There are also downy woodpeckers and - my favorite - the pygmy nuthatch, who dances around the trunk of the pine trees. In the Caldera area we have a wide variety of birds, which include osprey, bald eagles and ravens. The gray and black bird visitors often spot traveling through the tree branches and onto picnic tables is the Clark's nutcracker. The Clark's nutcracker likes the cool air of the caldera as well as the seeds from the white bark pine tree, where it will stash the seeds throughout the forest for their winter meals. Clark's nutcracker can also be considered a "camp robber" as well as the gray jay that likes to wait patiently for you to leave your table or picnic blanket before bouncing to get your food or scraps. Make sure you clean up after yourself, so they don't do it for you!



Clark's nutcracker - Photo by Kevin Smith

There are over 15 species of bats in Oregon. Some bats migrate but some decide to hibernate in caves and mines. The Townsend's big eared bat is one of our favorite local bats. It has 1" ears that curl up when they go to sleep, and their wingspan reaches nearly 12". The Townsend is rather sedentary, leaving the roost early in the evening to eat insects such as moths, wasps, beetles and flies. Townsend bats hibernate during the winter in caves and lava tubes throughout Central Oregon. The long-eared myotis is considered to be the bat that is most prevalent on the Newberry National Volcanic Monument. This bat has long black ears, straw colored fur with a wingspan of 10-12". The long-eared myotis can be seen high above the trees in the evenings and throughout the night eating moths, flies and beetles. They fly smoothly and can maneuver in flight quite well as they eat their dinner off tree bark with ease. Since bats hibernate in caves, Lava River Cave closes in October for the winter to protect these amazing animals.

As you can see, Newberry National Volcanic Monument has a delightful amount of wildlife to find during your visit. We ask that you observe from a distance, do not feed, or try to catch or chase the wildlife. The forest is their home, and respecting our creatures is the right thing to do.



Townsend's big eared bat - Photo Courtesy of USFS

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