

Northeastern Nevada

Wild

An Educational Newsletter from the Nevada Department of Wildlife



Fall 2011

Fall Has Fallen

On Friday September 23rd, fall arrived in the great Basin, and everywhere else in the world. This time is known as the autumnal equinox. The word *equinox* comes from the Latin words for "equal night." That is the time when the earth's axis is not tilted toward or away from the sun. The sun crosses the equator and every point on the earth has twelve hours of day and twelve hours of night. This equal day and night will happen again March 19th, 2012. This date is called the spring, or vernal equinox and marks the first official day of spring.



Fall is when most mammals spend much time eating to store fat for the winter.



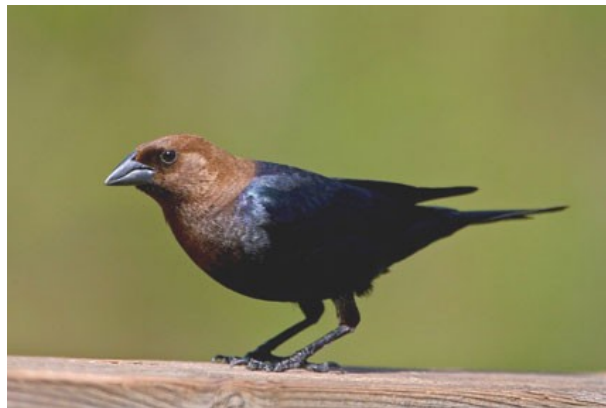
Yellow-bellied marmots hurry to gain weight in summer and fall. If they don't gain enough weight, they won't survive their seven to eight month-long hibernation.



Why Do Autumn Leaves Change Color?

The main reason is the lack of light. As the autumn days grow shorter, the reduced light triggers chemical changes in trees causing a reduction of water and nutrients to the leaf, which causes the green pigment, chlorophyll to die. The (anthocyanin) red and (carotene) yellow pigments that were masked all summer begin to show. The shades of brown in autumn leaves are the result of tannin, a chemical that exists in most leaves.

Peculiar Birds of Nevada



Brown-headed cowbirds don't build nests. Instead they deposit their eggs in the nests of other birds, sometimes up to three dozen a year, . Often called a nuisance bird, it has rapidly increased in numbers, causing other endangered birds to diminish.



A Sandhill crane can stand as tall as a fourth grader. Sometimes they fly so high, they can't be seen from the ground. Buy their distinct trumpeting call can be heard from a mile away.



The Loggerhead shrike, also called the butcher bird, is about the size of a robin. Though not classified as a raptor, it uses its hooked beak to kill insects, lizards, mice, and birds, and then impales them on thorns or barbed wire while it rips them apart.



The rough-legged hawk, named for its feathered legs, migrates to northern Nevada for the winter. Here it is relatively warm, considering it nests on the northern tundra of Alaska and Canada. Lemmings are common prey in the summer and jack rabbits in the winter.



More Peculiar Birds of Nevada

The turkey vulture nests in caves, and vomits on suspected predators to keep them away. They prefer to eat decaying flesh over fresh meat. Some turkey vultures migrate to Argentina for the winter.



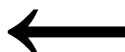
The American dipper uses its wings as a hydrofoil to stay submerged. As it “flies” underwater it also uses its wings to stir up aquatic insects for food.



The burrowing owl is somewhat of a misnomer. It doesn't burrow at all but relies on mammals to build burrows where it nests and roosts. It eats small rodents and insects



Humming birds collect spider web material to make their tiny nests. This allows the nest to stretch, accommodating the growing chicks. Many people assume hummingbirds eat only nectar. In reality, they are insectivores and use nectar only for extra energy.

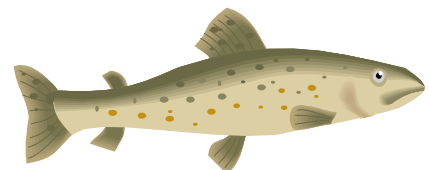


Teacher's Page

Did You Know.....

The Nevada Department of Wildlife has many resources for teachers:

- * Elk Kit
- * Mule Deer Kit
- * Videos and DVDs
- * Pamphlets and brochures
- * Project Wild workshops
- * Trout in the Classroom (Learn more at ndow.org)
- * Classroom presentations
- * Wild Week at Nevada Department of Wildlife in Elko
- * Website learning resources www.ndow.org



Call Norv Dallin 777-2391 for more information.

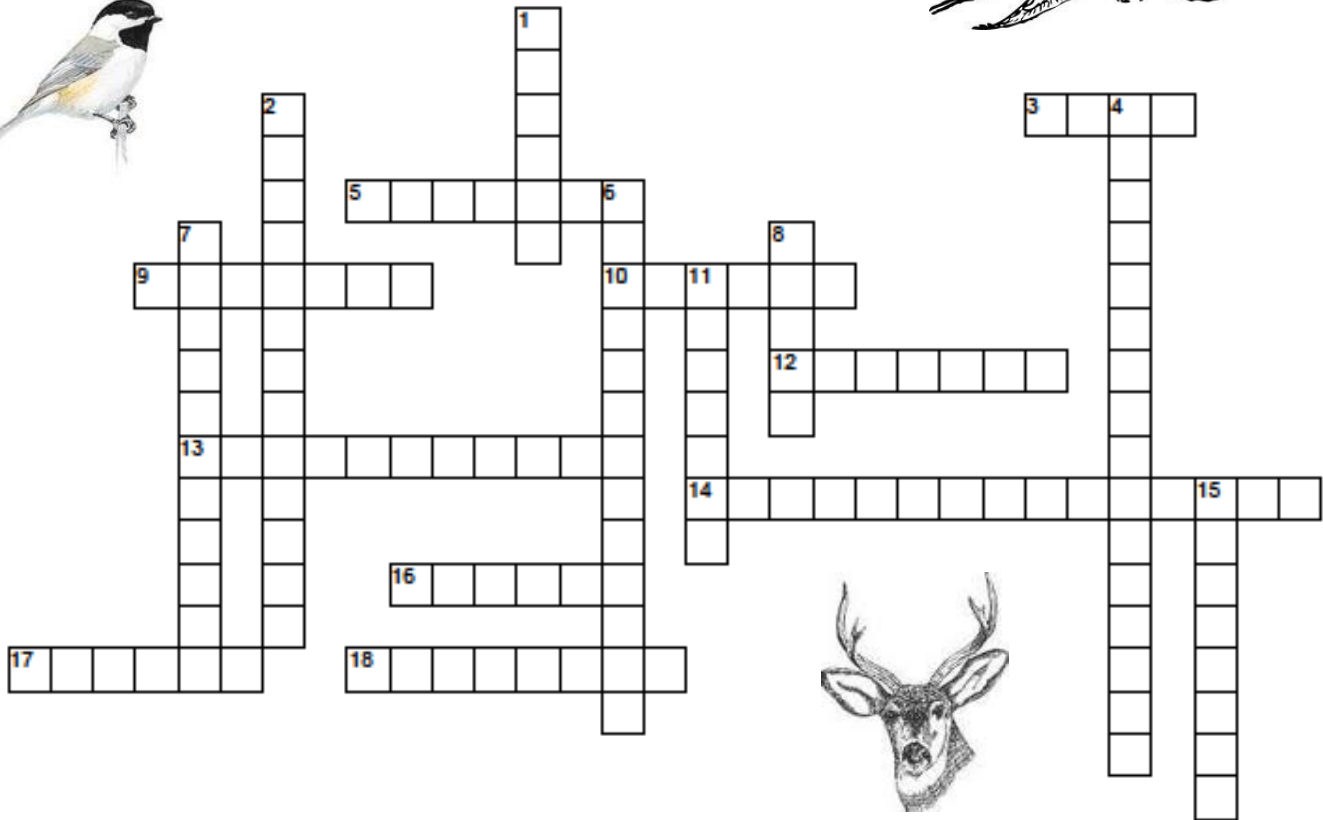
Attention Teachers: **Project Wild**

Project Wild is a popular environmental education program used throughout the US and six other countries. Teachers who attend a Project wild workshop receive a manual with over 500 pages of activities designed to teach students about wildlife and environmental issues. If you are interested in attending a Project Wild workshop, contact Norv Dallin at 775-777-2391



Fall Words

Complete the puzzle using the clues shown below.



Across

3. season that begins with the autumnal equinox
5. make burrows for burrowing owls
9. hummingbirds eat _____.
10. hummingbirds use this for energy.
12. means equal night
13. green pigment in plants
14. bird that migrates to northern Nevada for the winter
16. the American _____ flies through the water.
17. season that begins with the vernal equinox
18. yellow pigment found in leaves

Down

1. _____ equinox, another name for spring equinox
2. vomits on suspected predators
4. butcher bird
6. bird with a distinct trumpeting call
7. red pigment found in leaves
8. where turkey vultures nest
11. nuisance bird
15. _____ equinox, another name for fall equinox

