



Explore. Collect. Protect.

Pika Life History Facts

- Pikas are small, egg-shaped mammals with large rounded ears and have no visible tail. Although they are often mistaken as rodents, pikas are the smallest of the lagomorphs (order *Lagomorpha*), which also includes rabbits and hares.
- Pikas range between 6-8 inches in length and weigh approximately 4-6 ounces. They have many distinctive vocalizations, but the most common is the “eeeeep” vocalized when alarmed. They range in color from brownish gray to gray with rust-colored patches.
- Pikas are herbivorous eating a variety of flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees. By mid to late summer (July - September) they begin storing food under rocks, creating “haypiles.” These haypiles can be enormous, measuring up to 3 feet in diameter. These haypiles tend to be built in the same location year after year.
- Pikas are highly territorial and will defend their territories with high-pitched whistles and physical chases. They are diurnal, feeding primarily in the morning and late afternoons depending on the weather.
- Pikas are preyed upon by a variety of predators, including coyotes, weasels, hawks, eagles, owls, bobcats, and foxes. They use their alarm calls to notify other pikas of predators. Pikas are commonly affected by parasites including fleas, mites, nematodes, and bot fly larvae.
- Pika scat is characterized by small, dark oval pellets. If the scat is dry and dark, it tends to be older scat; while fresh scat is typically green and moist. Pika urine is white, and tends to stain rocks where it is found in high concentrations.
- Pika tracks are small and relatively indistinct (less than 1 inch) and are usually found on fresh snow or in older snow banks. Pikas have 5 toes on their fore feet; their hind feet are slightly larger with 4 toes.
- Pikas typically live in rocky, mountainous regions near treeline (in the subalpine and alpine zone). Since they are herbivorous, they depend on meadows or vegetation patches nearby for food.



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NOT Pika!

These small mammals are commonly mistaken for Pika:



Clockwise from top left: (1) Chipmunk (*Photo from Wikipedia*); (2) Yellow-Bellied Marmot (*Photo from Wikipedia*); (3) Bushy-Tailed Woodrat (*Photo from the National Park Service*) (4) Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel (*Photo from M. Dunn*).