

The Diet of the Uinta Ground Squirrel (*Citellus armatus*)

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Observations were made only of the squirrel population around the research station in the tall sagebrush area and in the area immediately surrounding the buildings of the station which has a growth of lodgepole pines. The type of vegetation is no doubt influenced by the disturbance of the station activity and by the flow of water from the spring dug to be used as a water supply. Observations were made at various times during the day, but the majority were made after 8:30 A.M. when the temperature began to rise and the squirrels left their burrows to feed in greatest numbers. I found that the squirrels would continue their normal activity if approached quietly and observed from no less than 20 feet. The dates given are those when the squirrels were first observed to be eating a particular food.

July 4 - While returning from trapping at Cunningham's Cabin, three squirrels were observed in the heavily travelled highway eating the carcass of a squirrel which had been hit by a car.

July 10 - At this time the squirrels ate only the strobili of Equisetum laevigatum; however, by August 1 the entire stalk was eaten.

July 12 - Taraxacum officinale (common dandelion) was the vegetation most commonly eaten and the one which was best eaten in captivity. The entire plant, both leaves and buds, were eaten. Even late in the season when most of the dandelions in their feeding area had been eaten, the squirrels would search among the taller grass for new growth on the chewed-off plants.

July 18 - A squirrel was observed sitting on its hind legs eating dried carcass of an unfledged bird which it held in its front paws.

July 22 - When the grasses reached maturity, the grains produced constituted a major part of the squirrels' diet. Poa pratensis (Kentucky Blue Grass) is the most prevalent grass near the station. It was probably introduced in the hay brought in to feed the horses occasionally kept at the station. To reach the grain, the squirrels pull the stalk down in a hand-over-hand fashion. The stalk usually creases about two-thirds of the way up to the seeds so that consequently a field where squirrels have been feeding looks like it has withstood a strong wind storm. Other grasses present in smaller quantities which were also eaten were Bromus marginatus and Stipa columbiana. They also occasionally ate the leaf blades of these grasses.

The buds and leaves of Aster chilensis (a common purple aster) were eaten, sometimes the entire stalk down to within an inch of the ground. There were several other species of aster growing in the area where the squirrels fed, but only Aster chilensis was eaten..

July 25 - The fruits of Potentilla gracilis were eaten by pulling the stalks down in the same manner as the grasses and biting through the sepals on one side to reach the developing seeds. The fruits of Geranium vespicossimum were reached in the same manner, but the entire fruit was eaten. They very rarely ate the leaves of either plant.

July 26 - Lepidium campestre, a member of the Crucifer family grows in the open field near the sagebrush. It was eaten, both leaves and seed pods, to within 1 or 2 inches of the ground.

July 29 - A large patch of Thalpsi arvense, another member of the Crucifer family, grew on the north side of the station behind the cabins. The squirrels ate only the seeds, biting through the flat side of the pod to attain them.

August 7 - The squirrels were seen to eat the leaves of Lupinus parviflorus only this one time.

August 12 - Phleum alpinus (Alpine timothy) was present in small quantities in widely separated areas. Although the grain matured at the same time as the other grasses, it was not touched (although the leaves were eaten) until very late in the season when a large percentage of the other grasses had been eaten and there were few succulent plants to be found.

By August 20, all the squirrels had gone into hibernation. They had grown quite fat and were very easy to trap during this period. The numbers of squirrels began to dwindle about August 10 and the numbers gradually decreased until the 20th when they were no longer seen.