

# **\*\*ATTENTION\*\***

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## Non-game profile

A high squeaking call from the rock slide across the valley caused the hikers to stop and look around. A movement under a rock focused their attention on a grayish, furry animal that darted out into a patch of alpine plants. Another "eek" called attention to a small silhouette higher on the tallus slope.

The hikers were enjoying a rare treat in Washington's Cascades. The pika or cony, called "rock rabbit" by some, can live only where the rocks are big enough to provide spaces for food storage, dens and protection from weather and predators. They must also have plant material that can be dried and piled for a winter food supply. Subalpine lupine

is a favorite food, but grass and other plants are also spread out in the sun to dry before they are stored for winter.

Pikas are about as long as this page is wide — 200 millimeters (nearly eight inches). Their range in Washington is limited to the Cascades (up to about 1,900 meters or 6,000 feet), the Kettle Range and the Pend Oreille Mountains.

Pika numbers are probably affected most by unusual weather conditions, but because of their limited habitat, any change brought about by humans can threaten this appealing mountain resident.

# **Pikas, high- mountain spirits**

by  
Russ  
Hupe



