

## Grand Canyon National Park's Ranger Audio Tour Stop # 6 **Yaki Point**

Breathe deep and look around. The view from Yaki Point is commanding. Below you descends the South Kaibab Trail to Phantom Ranch and all around you the park is teeming with wildlife.

In autumn, Yaki Point is one of the park's best locations to watch migratory birds in action. Hawks and eagles are spotted hourly on their journeys to winter homes. With over 300 bird species noted at the canyon, chances are good that you will see activity in the blue skies overhead, or even below! Frequently seen are ravens, jays, nuthatch, and the most endangered bird at the park, the California condor. So, listen for the sounds of birds at flight. And if you're lucky perhaps a peregrine falcon will zip past you at 200 miles an hour.

As you gaze into the canyon below, it's easy to understand why there is such biologic diversity in this 1.2 million acre park. Besides birdlife, almost 100 mammals, 50 reptiles, and thousands of invertebrates call Grand Canyon home. Below you are deserts and riparian zones and across the canyon are mixed fir forests. At Yaki Point, elevation 7000 feet, you stand in the midst of the pinyon-juniper forest.

This is a hearty resilient forest. The short stubby trees of pinyon pine and Utah juniper create habitat for wildlife. Notice the clusters of tiny stiff needles on the pinyon pine. This tree provides nuts rich with calories and fat that sustains wildlife such as birds, squirrels, ringtail and deer.

Ringtail, the Arizona state mammal, are tiny nocturnal relatives to the raccoon. Look for the black and white tail. Coyotes devour juniper berries and are common residents on the South Rim and the rest of the park. Bobcats are sometimes seen hunting rock squirrels in the twilight hours. Elk tend to prefer the more open ponderosa pine forests. It's the mule deer which are abundant and likely to be seen in this dense forest. Look carefully over the edge to see bighorn sheep - desert bighorn sheep. The mountain lion, the canyon's top predator and most secretive animal, survives on this and other large game.

Wildlife is smart and always finding ways to adapt. Coyotes have been known to stand in the middle of the road and beg for food. Ravens will even join this effort. Please help us keep our wildlife wild by not approaching and never feeding them. With your help they can survive into the future.