

## Pikas Living on the Edge Transcript

We've got some old scat here.

We are looking at pikas as an indicator of climate change because pikas are temperature sensitive. And this is important because they're the canary in the coal mine for climate change. So if we see climate change having an effect on them, we can predict that it's going to have an effect on other species in the long run. And this is extremely important because this could possibly even mean collapses of whole ecosystems and changes of ecosystems that we're not quite sure what the long range impacts will be.

So pikas are being monitored across several different national parks. And we're doing this because it's very important to not only understand what's going on with pika populations within a park, but across the different parks, across the different mountain ranges, and across the different habitat types. And so it's important to monitor pikas over time because with climate change, we're predicting that the impact will get greater and greater over time.

We're holding a training day where we'll have the crews from several different parks, parks like Grand Teton, Yellowstone, Craters of the Moon. And we'll be training them on a standardized protocol on how to do these surveys so that we can collect the data the same way across the different parks. In this training day, we'll talk about how to use surveys, how to identify pika sign, how to age it, how to collect the habitat variables such as vegetation cover, and make sure that each of the crews are taking high quality data.

Basically, we're marking our site in the field using our GPS unit. So each plot is 12 meter radius circles.

There's a pika.

Right here.

[INAUDIBLE]

So then once we sit for a few minutes, we'll start just doing a pika search throughout the entire plot.

Oh, cool. Oh, that's a great one. So this is all scat, all these little pellets.

Pika scat is, they're lagomorphs, sort of rabbits. They're not rodents, so their scat is round. We want to collect some scat samples, some pellet samples for the genetic portion of the project.

So this is all in their hay pile. I'll move it around, but this is what they eat all winter long. They all eat from these piles.

Pikas are especially unique in just the way they draw people to them, I think. And this affects this potential effect of climate change. And I think this is a great opportunity to look at a species that could tell us what climate change could mean, not only for pikas, but for many species in general.

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[MUSIC PLAYING]

