



2013

Natural Resource Monitoring at Pipe Spring National Monument



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Winsor Castle and garden, Pipe Spring National Monument.

The Northern Colorado Plateau Network

The Northern Colorado Plateau Network (NCPN) covers a geologically and biologically diverse region comprising 16 national parks in four western states. These parks contain desert grasslands, shrublands, forests, caves, large rivers, perennial streams, seeps, springs, and striking geology. Invasive species, trampling and grazing by livestock, and adjacent land-use activities are some of the most significant threats to NCPN parks. The NCPN is designing and implementing a long-term monitoring program to measure key indicators of ecological integrity, or “vital signs.” Multiple monitoring efforts will help inform managers of the health of park resources and provide early detection of potential problems. This brief describes recent NCPN activities at Pipe Spring National Monument.

Updates to Species Lists



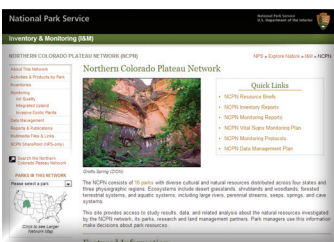
Black phoebe.

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NCPN staff has recorded 45 NPSpecies updates to vascular plant species at Pipe Spring NM based on Walt Fertig's 2012 [addendum report](#), including 39 occurrence updates and six abundance updates. Of the 39 occurrence updates, the status of 29 species was changed to Present in Park, six to Historic, and four to Falsely Reported. In addition, three bird re-

cords were updated to Present in Park based on NCPN landbird monitoring: black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), Eurasian collared-dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), and sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*). The updated species lists can be accessed via the NCPN website at <http://go.nps.gov/NCPNspecies>.

Website Re-design



It's now easier to find everything you need from us at the [NCPN website](#). The network staff has completed the website re-design process planned for all 32 I&M networks. The result is a streamlined site that is easier to navigate. Each network park also has its own page where users can go to find out what the network is do-

ing at that park and access all NCPN products and publications relative to that park. The site continues to offer interactive features, such as the ability to retrieve a current park species list, and is more tightly integrated with the IRMA Data Store, which allows new publications to be posted to the site more quickly.

Landbirds



American kestrel.

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Birds play an important role in the flow of energy through ecosystems and are sensitive to habitat changes, making them good indicators of habitat quality. The NCPN is partnering with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) to assess breeding bird species trends in three habitats across the network. At Pipe Spring NM, the NCPN adjusted existing protocols to fit the park's small size and the specific concerns of park managers. The methods employed by RMBO will enable park managers to follow bird trends as they change management practices, and be comparable to those used in the larger NCPN bird monitoring study.

In 2012, staff conducted four point counts and four area searches twice at Pipe Spring NM, detecting a total of 328 birds of 31 species. To date, 987 birds of 60 species have been detected. In 2012, we recorded four species that had not been recorded by RMBO in previous years (but were not new to the park): American kestrel, black-headed grosbeak, hairy woodpecker, and warbling vireo. Long-term monitoring will continue to be necessary for interpreting population status and trends for avian species of the NCPN.

NCPN on Facebook



Since its inception in July 2012, the [NCPN Facebook page](#) has quickly become the most popular I&M page on the site. What started out as an effort to keep park staff better informed about our activities has turned into an opportunity to talk to several hundred people each day about science in the national parks and our contribution to it. Photos and posts from the field (our most popular content) help people to know who we are and what we do, and put

a human face on our program. As of October 2013, the NCPN page had 975 followers. Most lived in the Colorado Plateau area, but 16% hailed from 44 foreign countries. We usually reach about 1,000–1,500 people each week, but that number has risen into the several thousands on occasion. The goals of the page, and the barometers by which we gauge success, are evolving, but to this point we feel that the rewards have been worth the effort.

Budget Sequester Impacts



U.S. Capitol.

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Sequestration took place in March for Fiscal Year 2013. This had a large impact on NCPN monitoring activities. NCPN had discussions with each park about which vital signs needed to be suspended in 2013. At smaller parks, such as Pipe Spring NM, fewer vital signs are monitored and the network did not need to cut any field monitoring activities. However, if the

sequestration budget cuts are continued into Fiscal Year 2014, then network staff, park staff, the Technical Committee, and Board of Directors will have to have a detailed discussion that re-examines all vital signs and develops a strategic, longer-term approach to monitoring activities under the reduced funding levels.

Additional Efforts

In addition to the projects described in this brief, the NCPN also monitors landscape dy-

namics and land surface phenology at Pipe Spring National Monument.

For more information

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