



Call of the Canyon

Fall Calendar of Events

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SEPTEMBER 16, 2009

Johnson Canyon 'Heritage Hike'

Celebrate Ivins City *Heritage Days!* Join us on this two-mile, roundtrip hike and learn more about the human history of the canyon.

Thurs., September 24
10:00-11:30 a.m.

Monsters in the Desert

Gila monsters are one of the most mysterious and endangered creatures of southwest Utah. Join Ann McLuckie, Wildlife Biologist, as she discusses the biology of these fascinating lizards. Find out how Gila monsters are studied using radio-telemetry and try radio tracking for yourself!

Sat., September 26
9:00-10:30 a.m.

Bats: Masters of the Night

Eighteen species of bats call Washington County home. They are creatures so sophisticated and so misunderstood! Join Keith Day, Wildlife Biologist, and learn more about bats—maybe even get a chance to 'see' their calls recorded on an Anabat detector!

Fri., October 9
6:30-8:00 p.m.

Nature Sketchwalk

Join guest artist, Arlene Braithwaite, S.U.U. Associate Professor of Art & Design, and explore the fun of nature sketching on this 1.5-mile, roundtrip hike! (Art experience not required).

Sat., October 17
9:00-10:30 a.m.

Scorpion Search

Have you ever wanted to see a scorpion up close? Join us as we learn more about these amazing creatures and search for resident scorpions!

Fri., October 23
7:00-8:30 p.m.

Halloween Storytelling Trail

Come show-off your costume and enjoy a short Halloween night hike of storytelling fun sprinkled with a dash of fright! This activity is designed for children ages 5-12.

Thurs., October 29 &
Fri., October 30
7:30-8:30 p.m.

Starry Nights & Starry Tales

Join Laura Cotts, S.U.U. guest astronomer, for an evening of stargazing and

Native American stories about the night sky! Learn several fall constellations and how to use a star chart.
Fri., November 6 &
Sat., November 7
7:30-9:00 p.m.

Simple Campfire Desserts

Join us around a toasty fire to bake and sample some simple campfire desserts. Leave with recipes for your next camping trip.

Fri., November 13
7:00-8:00 p.m.

Sunset Hike

Admire the changing colors of early evening during a two-mile roundtrip hike.

Sat., November 21
4:30-6:00 p.m.



A roadrunner's track is zygodactyl, meaning two toes point forward and two toes point back.

All listed events are free and open to the public. Space is limited; registration required. Program registration is held two days preceding the scheduled event.

Register by phone or in person. For more information or to register for a program contact park staff at (435) 628-2255.

Johnson Canyon ranger-guided hikes will be offered weekly during October.

Children's ROCKIN' UTAH (Reaching Out Connecting Kids In Nature) programs will be held each Wednesday evening starting in October.

Program times will vary week to week; please call (435) 628-2255 for registration information and current weekly schedule.

Snow Canyon State Park

1002 Snow Canyon Drive
Ivins, UT 84738

Phone: (435) 628-2255
Fax: (435) 628-9321
Email: snowcanyon@utah.gov
Web: www.stateparks.utah.gov

Utah State Parks:

Providing opportunities to enhance the quality of life by preserving natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

Species Spotlight: *The Greater Roadrunner*

One of the more recognized creatures of Snow Canyon State Park is the greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*). Known for their swift speed and their star role in Warner Brothers cartoons, they are pretty comical in appearance. An unusual looking bird, the roadrunner has black-and-white mottled feathers, a long upright body and a distinctive head crest. It has strong feet, an oversized bill, and a long, white-tipped tail that sticks almost straight up. Standing about 10-12 inches high, they are 20-24 inches in length from beak to tail. When standing still the roadrunner may jerk its tail from side to side or up and down; if curious it raises the bushy crest of feathers on its head. When the roadrunner senses danger or is traveling downhill, it flies, revealing short rounded wings with a white crescent. But, it cannot keep its large body airborne for more than a few seconds, and so prefers running or walking, usually with a clownish gait.

Don't let their amusing appearance fool you—roadrunners are excellent

hunters! Racing full speed they can reach speeds up to 17 mph (however, contrary to the cartoons, they are *not* as fast as *Canis latrans*, the wily coyote)! The roadrunner eats a variety of animal foods, including snakes, lizards, mice, scorpions, birds and insects. Its extreme quickness allows it to snatch a hummingbird or dragonfly from mid-air! Also, the roadrunner is one of the few animals that prey upon rattlesnakes. Using its wings like a matador's cape, it can snap up a coiled rattlesnake by the tail and crack it like a whip!

In fact, roadrunners can catch snakes up to two feet long! They will swallow their prey whole, although often unable to swallow the entire length at one time. This does not hinder the roadrunner however, as it will continue its normal routine and meander about with the snake dangling from its mouth; consuming it one inch at a time.

Roadrunners are non-migratory birds that prefer desert scrub and pinon-juniper habitat. A member of the cuckoo family, the roadrunner is uniquely suited to the hot, desert environment of southern Utah. With a diet that offers a large supply of very moist food, it reabsorbs water from its feces before it's eliminated. Excess salt is excreted from its nasal glands instead of the urinary tract like most birds. As well, it reduces its activity by 50% during the heat of midday.

Though an odd and quirky desert-dweller, the roadrunner along with its eccentricities, is endearing to the hearts of many.



Greater Roadrunner, photograph by Rick Fridell