

THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Canada



WelcomeBC



Pikas live in rock piles high in the mountains.
Photo by Alice Weber, Parks Canada

Pikas are tiny farmers

Written by Alice Weber – Glacier National Park

Level 1

What is a pika?

Pikas are part of the rabbit family. They are the size of a very large mouse. Their ears are big and round. Their legs are short and their tails are very small.

Pikas like rocks

Pikas live in rock piles in the mountains of Glacier National Park. They are usually found on the sides of the mountains in rocky places above the trees. The rocks in the park give the pikas shade from the hot sun.

Pikas can also hide from other animals under the rocks.

These rocks also form tunnels under the snow in winter.

Golden and Revelstoke are two B.C. towns near this park.



Natalie Stafl studies pikas for her Master of Science at the University of British Columbia.
Photo by Alice Weber, Parks Canada

Pikas are farmers

Pikas are like farmers. In summer they collect grass and plants. They store these plants in hay piles under the rocks.

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In winter, they use the hay as food.
They use the hay to make beds, too.



Pikas collect plants in summer to use for food and bedding in winter.
Photo by Alice Weber, Parks Canada

Pikas like to squeak

Pikas call out with a squeak.
They squeak when they are collecting hay.
They squeak when they are scared of other animals.
They squeak to keep other pikas away from their home.
They squeak when they are looking for another pika to mate with.



Pikas let out a loud squeak when they are afraid.
Photo by Alice Weber, Parks Canada

Natalie studies pikas in Glacier National Park.

Natalie wants to know if pikas eat less when the weather is hot.
She also wants to know something else.
Do humans in the area change pika behaviour? If a hiker walks by, do pikas collect less food?



Hikers on a trail in the park.
Photo by Alice Weber, Parks Canada

Tiny thermometers

Natalie puts thermometers on rocks and under rocks. She measures how far pika hay piles are from the trail.
Natalie also measures how long it takes for a pika to eat after a hiker walks by.



Alice Weber from Glacier National Park holds one of the tiny thermometers used to record temperatures during the year.
Photo by Alice Weber, Parks Canada

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Natalie uses a tape measure to see how far pika hay piles are from the trail.
Photo by Alice Weber, Parks Canada

Vocabulary:

- **Pikas:** (pee - kuhs) small animals which are members of the rabbit family
- **squeak:** a long noise or cry with a high sound or pitch

Links:

Glacier National Park, Parks Canada:

[http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-
np/bc/glacier/visit.aspx](http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-
np/bc/glacier/visit.aspx)

Pikas, a short video:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2009/09/090904-pika-in-peril-missions-video-wc.html>