

Outdoor Recreation *is* Outdoor Education



The watchful eyes
of a
Rocky Mountain
bighorn sheep

For many animals, the world they see is mostly shades of gray. Deer, elk, pronghorn, rabbits, beaver, porcupine and even black bear are like this.

In color blind species, other senses are usually superior and more than make up for the lack of color. For instance, a black bear may be able to smell a dead animal from 20 miles away.

When it comes to mammals, seeing in color is dominated by primates, but some ground squirrels (like our Mexican ground squirrel) can see colors.

What other animals can see color?

To determine what other animals see color, think about groups of animals that display bright colors - the pinks and blues on the sides of rainbow trout, the orange and green on a collared lizard or orange of a rufous hummingbird. The vast majority of those groups of animals (fish, lizards and birds) can see color. And many of these species can see into the ultraviolet spectrum, which we humans cannot.

Turtles see color, but not snakes, although pit-vipers (like our rattlesnakes) can “see” infrared thanks to a different sensory organ in their faces.

If a species displays intense color beyond browns, black and grays, you can make a good guess that it can probably see in color.



A side-blotched
lizard displays
oranges and blues

Birds have keen vision. All raptors (birds of prey) have excellent eyesight, but our eagles - the bald eagle and the golden eagle - stand out. An eagle can see eight times further than a human, allowing them to focus on a rabbit from up to two miles away!

When it comes to poor eyesight, although not blind, bats see very poorly and instead rely on echolocation (“seeing” things by sending out a supersonic call and interpreting how that sound bounces back to them) to perceive their environment.

The “Eyes” Have It



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