Wildlife

Heads of Balsamorhiza sagitata and Wyethia melitica are a choice morsel in this rodent diet on the range.

During the past few weeks rodent grazing has suddenly become very much in evidence on all parts of the area on rocks, logs, and stumps. Heads, stems and leaves of Wyethia, Balsamorhiza sagitata can be found. Practically all bunches of Balsamorhiza have at least 35% of the heads missing. It is believed that the Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel is responsible for most of this clipping as it has been seen in several instances chewing on the seeds.

Examination of the remaining heads on clipped plants and heads left on stumps and rocks indicate that the squirrel picks those with the seeds in dough. More clipping has been done on Wyethia-melitica Balsamorhiza sagitata than on Wyethia because the former is developed more. Few of the leaves of Balsamorhiza are clipped as the slender stalks can be bent down by the rodents where the heads can be reached.

The heavier stemmed, leafy Wyethia is treated in a different manner. The stalk is too thick for the rodent to bend so it is clipped off at the base and leaf and all dragged to
a sunny, spot prominent spot point. In some cases all leaves and flowers of Wyethia are cut off close to the ground in a group of fascicles so evenly that it appears to be the grazing of some large animal until the individual stems are examined and then the slanting cuts of the rodent can easily be seen.