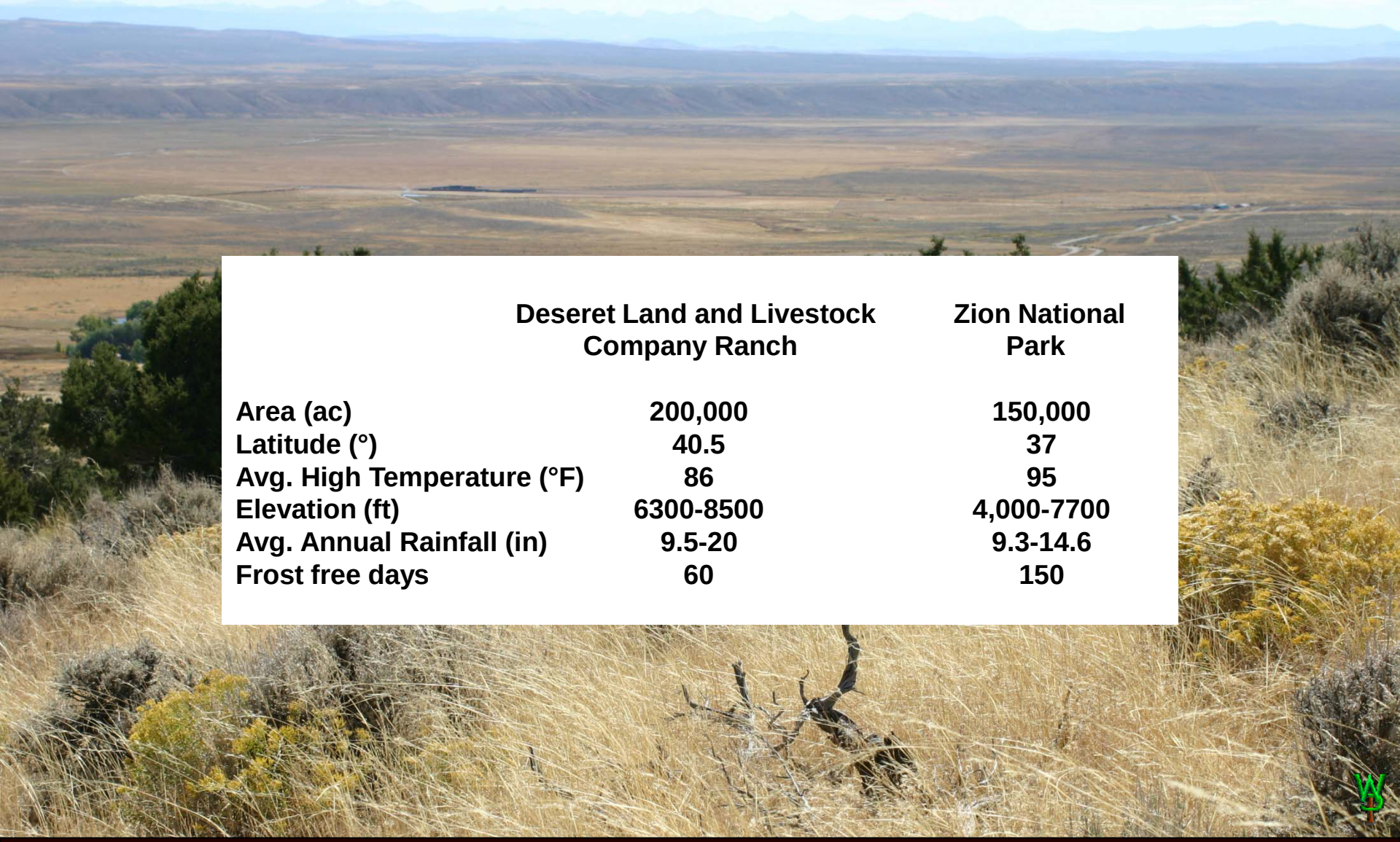
This field of needle grass should look familiar by now, because it is very similar to the vegetation we saw just outside Zion or Canyonlands. Although the Deseret is over 200 miles to the north of Zion, they share a number of very similar attributes. As we go through these slides, however, you will learn that there is a universe of difference.



	Deseret Land and Livestock Company Ranch	Zion National Park
Area (ac)	**200,000**	**150,000**
Latitude (°)	**40.5**	**37**
Avg. High Temperature (°F)	**86**	**95**
Elevation (ft)	**6300-8500**	**4,000-7700**
Avg. Annual Rainfall (in)	**9.5-20**	**9.3-14.6**
Frost free days	**60**	**150**

Other than summer temperatures (which can be significantly influenced by surface vegetation), there really isn't such a huge difference between these two sites by which to justify the differences you are about to witness. The dry parts of the Deseret look just about like the ranches outside Zion, which have similar rainfall (the parts of the Park with soil effectively get *more* water from runoff off the rock). Deseret, however, has many fewer days without frost, so its growing season is considerably shorter than Zion, while the latter gets more summer rain from the monsoons off the Gulf of Mexico. So let's head down the hill and take a look around.

As recently as the 1970s, the US Soils Conservation Service considered this entire region degraded, with serious erosion problems and dust storms. Not any more! This is a drainage channel in an area subject to the same kind of cloudbursts Zion receives. Note that it has soft shoulders, willow, sedges, and shrubs instead of scarped walls and a rocky bottom. The principle difference is the absorptive properties of the surrounding soils due to an organic (Deseret) versus a fungal (Zion) surface.

As you can see, this drainage is fed by a substantial collection area.

There are gobs of rabbit brush, healthy sage, and grasses.

Further down, these channels flatten out and the water disappears into the soil, but it doesn't sink the way the little rain that penetrates the cryptogamic surface in Zion National Park does. Just watch!

Here it is… September, Utah, ten inches of rain (in this area), dig a hole and there is enough water flowing just beneath the surface to supply a pond all summer! It doesn't dry out on top and sink beneath like the desert. There is more clay in the soil here than Zion, but it is not enough to explain the difference.

This is Lake Naponset, where an irrigation a reservoir serving as habitat for waterfowl. Where there is water, there are fresh shoots on plants. Where there is water and fresh vegetation, there are bugs. Where there are bugs and water, there are fish and birds. The Deseret has 274 species of birds, which is why the Audubon Society has designated this ranch as one of the premier birding locations in all of North America. The ranch has several times the population density of sage grouse as the surrounding Bureau of Land Management land, which has improved in recent years by replicating lessons learned here.

It’s so precious, so unique, so fragile, so special… Don’t you think it should be “preserved” for ever?
Don’t you think this should be
…a National Park?

Over my dead twitching body.
It's that kind of public greed, to "own" something precious without a personal stake in caring for it, that destroyed Zion, Yellowstone, Canyonlands, Arches, Mesa Verde… and is doing the same to Yosemite and Yellowstone.

Deseret Ranch is magnificent wildlife habitat, *because* it is a working ranch, not the other way around.

So, if this is a ranch, where are the cows?

The Deseret runs between 5,000-8,000 cattle and about 3,000 sheep. They rotate grazing locations by a precise plan. The “rest” of the time the wildlife is pretty much left alone, unless they need to cull it (which they do).

This is a white-tailed prairie dog, a listed species of concern of which the Deseret has many. You can bet this little guy assists with rainwater percolation. Without palatable forage, he would not be here.

Elk browsed away the shrubs that were here. What you see now has already had all the cattle grazing it is going to get for the year, so what this forage represents is what has been left for wildlife, not just elk but rodents that feed raptors. But immensely productive grassland is by no means all there is to the Deseret. We've only begun.

This is an artificial landscape. Those stripes of grass are where they ran a patch cultivator to create more grass forage for elk to winter. By creating more lineal edges between grassland and sage, they ended up improving the balance between food and proximate refuge for endangered sage grouse. People learn by observing disturbance.

So, now that we've seen the plains, let's extend our little visit to "the face of the earth."

And it’s a pretty face at that.
The Deseret has been blessed with impressive biodiversity

It gets steep here. The hillside above is nearly 60° and 1,000 high with no sign of erosion down here.
Is that because they don't graze land this steep?

They surely do. Cows do fine on steep hillsides, and these are better for it.
I am told by the photographer that there was a group of elk behind those rocks to the left.

At the bottom, the Deseret has its streams too, but they don’t look much like Zion.
There are 50 pairs of endangered willow fly catchers along Lost Creek.

Like Zion, it’s steep here, with big collection areas. Like Zion, summer rains are typically short afternoon cloudbursts, often followed by flash flooding. If there was a sedimentation problem here, you would have seen it.

Environmental activists also claim that cows produce nitrate pollution causing algae that harms fish. You can see that the water runs clear here. There are no blobs of green slime along the edges and the rocks under the surface are clean.

Angling Report correspondent Jim Zumbo fished a lake in the Deseret in early April, 1996, and says he was amazed at the size and fighting ability of the trout. He writes: "Four of us caught and released more than 60 fish in three hours, ranging from three to nine pounds." Without nitrate in the system, that does not happen.

This photo touches upon an important issue we will discuss in Yellowstone. These young sprouts from the base of the trees and stumps are aspen clones, an essential winter forage for browsing wildlife. Since the arrival of European civilization, aspen in Yellowstone have declined by 95% due to over-browsing.

So, if there is water and forage, we should see wildlife.

Like this. The photographer here is Steve Rich. Now, Steve is a hefty guy and certainly no active hill-climber. He shot all these photos from his truck. There is enough hunting on the Deseret that the sound of a truck should spook the deer. So to see one in these photos shows that there are many more around.

While the Deseret generates a profit from hunting, **70% of the hunters get free access** (they need the help). There are total of 2,500 elk, 3,000 mule deer, 700 pronghorn, and about 100 moose. They know how many they have, in part, *because* they are a source of income, which is reason to optimize their condition and habitat.

Remember, this is late August-September in a part of the ranch that gets about 15 inches of rain.
After the disasters I've seen, I start to get teary over scenery like this.

Where there's water and aspen, there are beaver. And where there's beaver

There are moose.

And a moose caboose

This is what range scientists call an “exclosure,” designed to observe what happens to the vegetation inside when animals are not allowed access to forage. This one has been here for about 20 years. The grass is thicker and the soil is more active ***outside*** the exclosure. The Deseret hosts numerous scientific study groups.

I just can’t get enough of this.
But where are the cows?

They’re around.

Yup, here are the culprits, what environmental activists disparagingly call, “hoofed locusts.”

September, 8-10” of rain (in this spot), full sun, and no irrigation. To me, this is just amazing. Our ground is getting better, but it’s not this good and we get up to 60” of rain (although none of it in summer). It really is possible to fix this mess, but what needs to change on “public lands” is the ownership of the outcomes.

OK, here comes the speech. I'll bet that a number of readers who have been musing on the difference between National Parks like Zion and Canyonlands and the Deseret Ranch are thinking, "This comparison is unfair. The ranchers have more money. Things would be better if the Parks had proper funding."

There's a logical fallacy underlying that thought. If "preservation" was all that was necessary to assure a flourishing environment, then the land would "heal itself" without human management (a policy that wouldn't require much funding). By that philosophy, the Parks should already look much more vibrant than the surrounding ranches. The problem is**:** Those parks used to look better than they do now. The activists' response has been that that the problems are historic, and the parks are too small for whole ecosystems that contain them to function properly. This is that rationale behind the push for incorporation of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem into the Park. The fallacy behind that rationale is that the Deseret is obviously large enough to support burgeoning wildlife, so just making the space within which a problem exists bigger without changing the way it is managed is likely to make only a bigger problem. As you will see when we look at Yellowstone, you wouldn't want it to get any bigger.

The reason the ranch has money to invest in habitat improvement IS that it is productive. The Deseret Land and Livestock Company (DLL) makes a steady return on equity that many a manufacturer would envy, indicating that there is room in the market for more land managed in the same fashion. Well, that is actually starting to happen. Local Bureau of Land Management officials are cooperating with local ranchers, Trout Unlimited, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Mule Deer Foundation, and the State of Utah, to apply the DLL method on four BLM allotments as an example of collaborative management. While I can only praise the courage of those local BLM officials, there is reason to believe that the new administration will quash that effort given the predilections of their political benefactors. As you will see, there is too much money and power at stake for the financial backers of the political left to allow the public to witness, yet again, that the entire foundation of the socialist paradigm is destructive to the environment it claims to protect.

Over and over again, you will hear the rhetorical question asked in this book: 'Don't you think the Forest Service, BLM, Park Service, etc. knows better than this?' Well, some obviously do; and they feel just as trapped by the politics as do the producers they apologetically police. Not a few rationalize their participation in this disaster with the certain (and correct) belief that things would be worse for the locals if they quit their jobs and were replaced. Others, and particularly newly minted "conservation biologists" are so committed to the ideology of "preserving nature" that they are perfectly happy with an outcome like thousands of square miles of cryptogamic crusts.

Isn't that obvious?

More Picture Books by Mark Edward Vande Pol

Quick Reads

Range Management

Zion National Park

Canyonlands National Park

Deseret Ranch

Fuels Management, Succession Run Amok

The Cone Fire (the benefits of active forestry)

The Warm Fire (what happens without it)

Fire Aftermath: Mesa Verde National Park

The Croy and Summit Fires

Socio-Ecological Paradigms
Environmental Consequences

Meadow Encroachment in Yosemite Valley

Living Sheepishly
Why we need a culture of animal husbandry

Death by Natural Causes: Yellowstone National Park
Predation management is not an option

Sustained Development
Cities are becoming prisons

Katrina: What Did You Expect?
Environmental bureaucracy can be deadly

Meaty, But More Rewarding

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This is 30 chapters introducing the 28-year native plant restoration project on our property. Here you will learn what was discovered, what I did about it, and how. It also presents newly discovered ecological principles underlying why I chose to do what I did. This gets technical. This book will explain why restoration land management should be a major industry, one that could transform our society and possibly save our country both militarily, socially, and economically. Here you will learn how environmental “protection” is inducing the mass-extinction of the native seed bank. Here you will read the most intensive biological history of coastal California you will ever find, anywhere. Here you will learn newly discovered principles of soils management, that may be widely applicable.

Other Writings by Mark Edward Vande Pol:

Natural Process: That Environmental Laws May Serve the Laws of Nature,

©Wildergarten Press, 2001, 454pp, ISBN: 0-9711793-0-1, LOC Control #2001092201.
http://www.naturalprocess.net

Shemitta: For the Land is Mine,

©Wildergarten Press, 2009. Contains**:** 217pp text, 980pp overall, 14 picture books, 2 tables, 963 photographs, 9 maps, 2 drawings, 2 charts, 145 footnotes, 358 citations, and 216 other source references, not including external Internet links. ISBN 978-0-9711793-1-8. **http://www.shemitta.com**

Articles at Wildergarten Press: collected writings on

- Constitutional history
- Regulatory racketeering by tax-exempt “charitable” foundations
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References

Other Writings

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Suggestions and comments

Washington-Allen, R. A., R. D. Ramsey and N. E. West, *Spatiotemporal mapping of the dry season vegetation response of sagebrush steppe;* Department of Forest, Range, and Wildlife Sciences, Utah State University; COMMUNITY ECOLOGY, Vol.5,1: 69-79,2004 1585-8553.