Ogden's Geography and Climate

C1 GQ1 #6

History

Originally named Fort Buenaventura, the city of Ogden was the first permanent settlement by people of European descent in the region that is now Utah. It was established by the trapper Miles Goodyear in 1846 about a mile west of where downtown Ogden is currently located. In November 1847, Fort Buenaventura was purchased by the Mormon settlers for $1,950. The settlement was then called Brownsville, after Captain James Brown, but was later named Ogden for a brigade leader of the Hudson's Bay Company, Peter Skene Ogden, who had trapped in the Weber Valley a generation earlier. The site of the original Fort Buenaventura is now a Weber County park.

Geography

Ogden lies at the foot of the Wasatch Mountains, approximately 10 miles (15 km) east of the Great Salt Lake and 40 miles (60 km) north of Salt Lake City.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 26.6 square miles (69.0 km2), all of its land. Elevations in the city range from about 4,300 feet (1,300 m) to 5,200 feet (1,600 m) above sea level.

The Ogden and Weber Rivers, which originate in the mountains to the east, flow through the city and meet at a confluence just west of the city limits. Pineview Dam is located in the Ogden River Canyon 7 miles (11 km) east of Ogden. The reservoir behind the dam provides over 110,000 acre feet (140,000,000 m3) of water storage and water recreation for the area.

Prominent mountain peaks near Ogden include Mount Ogden to the east and Ben Lomond to the north.

Ogden lies within the geographic area of the United States called the Great Basin. It covers 200,000 square miles (520,000 square km) in Nevada and over half of Utah, as well as parts of California, Idaho, Oregon and Wyoming. Ranges in elevation are from 282 feet (86 m) below sea level in Death Valley to the height of 13,000 feet (3,963 m) at the summit of Mount Wheeler in Eastern Nevada. Throughout the basin, the summers are hot and the winters are cold with an average annual rainfall of just 1.5 inches in Death Valley to 40 inches in the Wasatch Mountains.

Much of the Great Basin, consists of a series of isolated mountain ranges and intervening valleys, a geographical configuration known as the Basin and Range Province. Additionally, the Great Basin contains two large expansive playas that are the lakebed remnants of prehistoric lakes that existed in the basin during the last ice age but have since largely dried up. Lake Bonneville extended over most of Western Utah and into Idaho and Nevada, leaving behind the Great Salt Lake, the Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah Lake, and Sevier Lake. Likewise Lake Lahontan extended across much of northwestern

Nevada and neighboring states, leaving behind such remnants as the Black Rock Desert, Carson Sink, Humboldt Sink, Walker Lake, Pyramid Lake, Winnemucca Lake, and Honey Lake, each of which now forms a separate watershed within the basin.

The Basin and Range Province's dynamic earthquake fault history has profoundly affected the region's water drainage system. Most precipitation in the Great Basin falls in the form of snow that melts in the spring. Rain that reaches the ground, or snow that melts, quickly evaporates in the dry desert environment. Some of the water that does not evaporate sinks into the ground to become ground water. The remaining water flows into streams and collects in short-lived lakes called playas on the valley floor and eventually evaporates. Any water that falls as rain or snow into this region does not leave it; not one of the streams that originate within this basin ever finds an outlet to the ocean. The extent of internal drainage, the area in which surface water cannot reach the ocean, defines the geographic region called the Great Basin.

The Great Basin's internal drainage results from blockage of water movement by high fault-created mountains and by lack of sufficient water flow to merge with larger drainages outside of the Great Basin. Much of the present-day Great Basin would drain to the sea—just as it did in the recent Ice Ages—if there were more rain and snowfall.

Climate

Ogden experiences a hot summer continental climate (Köppen climate classification). Summers are hot and dry, with highs frequently reaching 95 °F (35 °C), with a few days per year reaching 100 °F (38 °C). Rain is provided in the form of infrequent thunderstorms during summer, usually between mid-July and mid-September during the height of monsoon season. The Pacific storm season usually lasts from about October through May, with precipitation reaching its peak in spring. Snow usually first occurs in late October or early November, with the last occurring sometime in April. Winters are cool and snowy, with highs averaging 37 °F (3 °C) in January. Snowfall averages about 22 inches (0.56 m), with approximately 23.67 inches (601 mm) of precipitation annually. Extremes range from −16 °F (−27 °C), set on January 26, 1949, to 106 °F (41 °C), set on July 14, 2002.

Flora and Fauna

Mountain ranges separated by valleys are typical in the geography of the Great Basin.

The Great Basin is predominantly high altitude desert, with the lowest basins just below 4,000 feet and several peaks over 12,000 feet. Most areas are dominated by shrubs, mostly of the *Atriplex* genus at the lowest elevations and sagebrush at higher elevations. Open woodlands consisting of Utah Juniper, Single-leaf Pinyon (mostly southern areas) or Curl-leaf Mountain Mahogany (mostly northern areas) form on the slopes of most ranges. Stands of Limber Pine and Great Basin Bristlecone Pine can be found in some of the higher ranges. Cottonwoods and Quaking Aspen groves exist in areas with dependable water. Lagomorphs such as Black-tailed Jackrabbit and Desert Cottontail and

the coyotes that prey on them are the mammals most often encountered by humans. Ground squirrels are common, but they generally only venture above ground in spring and early summer. Packrats, Kangaroo rats, and other small rodents are also common, but these are predominantly nocturnal. Pronghorn, Mule Deer, and Mountain Lion are also present throughout the area. Elk and Bighorn Sheep are present but uncommon.

Small lizards such as the Western fence lizard, Longnose Leopard Lizard and Horned toad are common, especially in lower elevations. Rattlesnakes and Gopher snakes are also present.

Shorebirds such as Phalaropes and Curlews can be found in wet areas. American White Pelicans are common at Pyramid Lake. Golden Eagles are perhaps more common in the Great Basin than anywhere else in the United States. Mourning Dove, Western Meadowlark, Black-billed Magpie, and Common Raven are other common bird species.

Two endangered species of fish, the Cui-ui sucker fish and the Lahontan cutthroat trout, are found in Pyramid Lake, which is one of the largest lakes in U.S. The salinity is approximately 1/6 of seawater and although it is only 10 percent of the area of the Great Salt Lake, it has about 25 percent more volume. Due to the construction of Derby Dam in 1903 made to divert water to croplands in Fallon, an adjacent town, the Pyramid Cutthroat Trout (a salmon-like trout), became extinct due to the immediate lowered water level, increased water salinity, and lack of fish-ladders on the dam (for upstream spawning runs), and were replaced with Lahontan cutthroat trout from hatcheries. Fish populations are now sustained by several tribally run fish hatcheries.

Large invertebrates include tarantulas (Aphonopelma genus) and Mormon crickets.