



THE SHOSHONES

AT A GLANCE: THE LAND AND CULTURE OF THE NORTHWESTERN SHOSHONES

Before white settler laws limited their access to their traditional homeland, the Northwestern Shoshones moved with the seasons and traveled throughout the areas that are now northern Utah and Nevada, southern Idaho, and western Wyoming. As they traveled, the Northwestern Shoshones used a variety of foods they harvested from the land. Their subsistence practices were cleverly adapted to the region and time of year.

In the spring and summer months, the Northwestern Shoshones moved around northern Utah and southern Idaho, utilizing the local flora and fauna in the areas they traveled through and made camp in. They gathered berries and collected seeds. As Northwestern Shoshone historian Mae Parry notes, “Gathering seeds was a hard task at times. When seeds were scarce, a woman might spend an entire day gathering enough for only one family meal.” In the late summer, the Northwestern Shoshones hunted small game and used digging sticks to extract roots and bulbs from the beneath the earth.

In the early fall, the Northwestern Shoshones fished at Salmon Lake in Idaho. After drying the fish for winter use, they moved to western Wyoming to hunt for large game, including buf-

falo, elk, deer, and moose, whose meat they also dried for winter. The Northwestern Shoshones became even more efficient at hunting these large animals after they adopted the horse. Around late October, they moved into northwestern Utah and northern Nevada to gather the all-important pine nut from the pinion tree. The pine nut is rich in nutrients and could be roasted or ground up for use in mush, gravy, and soups.

After gathering supplies for the colder months, the Northwestern Shoshones moved to their winter home in southwestern Idaho, near what are now the towns of Franklin and Preston. This location along the Bear River was ideal because it was in a natural depression and willow and brush provided protection from wind and snow. The area also had abundant hot springs that attracted fish and game.

The Northwestern Shoshone people were very mobile and skilled at hunting and gathering. Based on their migration patterns, some experts have claimed that they were among the most ecologically efficient and well-adapted Indians of the American West.