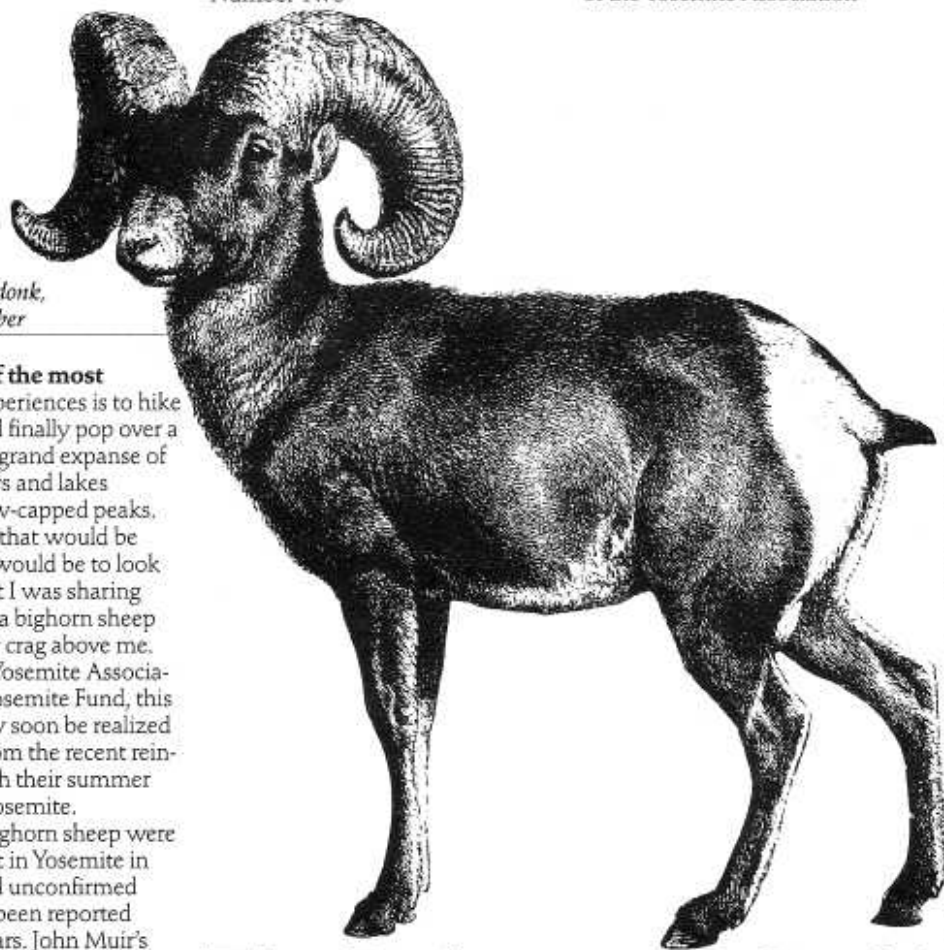


Spring 1986

Yosemite

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of the Yosemite Association



by Van Wagtenonk,
with David Graber

For me, one of the most exhilarating experiences is to hike all morning and finally pop over a ridge to view a grand expanse of alpine meadows and lakes framed by snow-capped peaks. The only thing that would be more fulfilling would be to look up and find that I was sharing that view with a bighorn sheep high on a rocky crag above me. Thanks to the Yosemite Association and The Yosemite Fund, this experience may soon be realized when sheep from the recent reintroduction reach their summer range within Yosemite.

Although bighorn sheep were declared extinct in Yosemite in 1934, occasional unconfirmed sightings have been reported through the years. John Muir's writings indicate that he had seen only three bighorns near Yosemite prior to 1873 and none afterwards. He expressed the hope that the "noblest creatures living in wild nature" would some day return. This, too, was the hope of Dick Riegelhuth, Chief of Resources Management in Yosemite since 1972.

While Dick was stationed in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, he took a great interest in bighorn sheep and became known as a local expert. When he moved to Yosemite, he

outlined the steps necessary to reintroduce sheep to the Park. First, we needed to know whether or not any remnant herds remained in Yosemite. To do this, I contracted with John Wehausen, who had just completed his Ph.D. studying the last remaining herds on Mt. Baxter and Mt. Williamson, in Sequoia, Kings Canyon and the adjacent Inyo National Forest.

For two years John and his crews scoured the Yosemite backcountry in summer and winter looking for any recent sign of bighorn sheep. Every windswept ridge that exposed enough vegetation through the snow was checked, as were the canyons on the east side, but to no avail. John concluded that there were no remnants. His surveys of the canyons, however, led him to believe that Lee Vining Canyon represented the best relocation site within the northern portion of the sheep's original range. The stage had been set for a reintroduction in Yosemite.

An interagency team consisting of personnel from the California Department of Fish and Game, National Park Service, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management, along with Dr. Wehausen, wrote a "Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Recovery and Conservation Plan." It specified that Lee Vining Canyon would receive sheep as soon as the Mt. Baxter herd reached the appropriate population level.

Only one obstacle remained

Cooling off a captured sheep with water and clipping its hobbles into the litter.

The Bighorns Are Back!



MICHAEL DIXON/INPS

Van Wagtenonk is the Research Scientist for Yosemite National Park, and David Graber performs the same function in Sequoia National Park.



in the way. Lee Vining Canyon and much of the surrounding foothills were part of a domestic sheep allotment administered by the Forest Service. Since disease transmission from domestic sheep to wild sheep contributed to the decline of the original wild herds, Fish and Game biologists insisted that there be no possible means of contact. This meant that the owner of the allotment would have to give up his right to it. Nobody would take the first step, however. Frustrated by this stubborn impediment to Yosemite's long-standing dream, I turned to the Yosemite Association for help.

After intense negotiation in the fall of 1985, Association President Steve Medley was able to buy out the allotment using \$30,000 from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and \$20,000 from the Sacramento Safari Club. The reintroduction was on!

At dawn on March 5, 50 men and women representing federal and state agencies, private conservation groups, and assorted media personnel gathered below the wintering grounds of the Mt. Baxter herd near Independence.



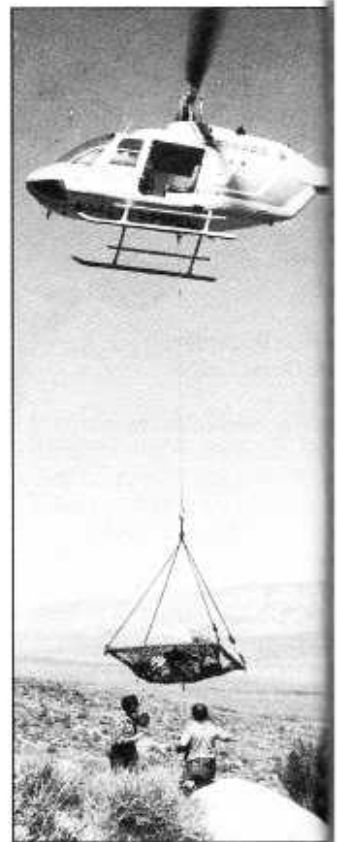
MICHAEL DIXON/NPS

Resource Specialist Steve Botti and Wildlife Biologist Jeff Keay had come over from Yosemite to assist. The night before, crews from Fish and Game had set up large, nearly invisible nets on the rugged slopes.

In the bright morning light, teams of bighorn wranglers were ferried by helicopters to the nets, there to hide behind rocks and

brush. As the crews below prepared to process the sheep, the helicopter pilot located small groups of bighorn and began to drive them toward the nets.

When the drives were successful, the wranglers quickly hobbled,



A litter hauls several sheep from the capture site to the processing area.

blindfolded, and untangled the netted sheep. Using a sling-loaded cargo platform, the helicopter transported the bound sheep to the processing station.

Under the concerned eyes of Fish and Game biologists, crews frantically weighed and measured the sheep, took blood and hair samples, strapped radio transmitter collars around their necks, and released the sheep to waiting trucks. By late afternoon, 32 bighorn sheep had been captured. Twenty-seven were destined for Lee Vining Canyon and four others were radio-collared to join a previously reintroduced herd. One old ewe had a broken leg when she arrived at the processing station; the veterinarian sadly decided to euthanize her. While

Setting up nets into which the bighorns are herded by helicopter.



MICHAEL DIXON/NPS

Yosemite Budget Cuts Reduce Services

Visitors to Yosemite will find a few things missing in the park this year—namely, the number and variety of services normally available from the National Park Service.

The smaller budget available to national parks for fiscal year 1986 which was further pared by the enactment of the Graham-Rudman-Hollings Act, has resulted in staffing reductions that will require cutbacks in interpretive activities, assistance to visitors, standards of maintenance of park facilities, litter pickup and resource management programs. Hours of operation of some facilities, including the Indian Cultural Museum, have also been curtailed.

In the interest of maintaining higher operational levels during summer, when visitation is greatest, the NPS will make this year's cutbacks in winter and spring programs, with additional cuts expected in September. The magnitude of the budget reduction, however, makes some curtailment in summer services unavoidable, including shortening the season. Summer activities will get underway later than in years past.

Operations that will remain largely unaffected by these budget strictures are campgrounds and visitor centers. All park campgrounds will be open this sum-

mer. Visitor centers and information stations will remain open daily, although probably for fewer hours.

The five-year schedule established by the new legislation to eliminate the federal deficit will inevitably bring additional austerity to Yosemite and other units of the National Park System. The park's Division of Interpretation has had its budget cut back 10.6% this year, and that figure is likely to be larger in the near future.

Some small areas may even be closed by 1988 to permit funds for those areas to be distributed to larger parks that have higher public visibility and visitation. However, the National Park Service will continue to strive to protect park resources and to insure a quality experience for park visitors.

In an effort to recoup these budget losses, William Penn Mott, Director of the NPS, has proposed a five-fold increase in park entrance fees. The standard \$2-per-car fee (\$3 in Yosemite) would be raised to \$10 at all of the park system's 11 major areas, including Yosemite. Mott anticipates that these fee increases would enable the system to operate "at a level of quality" through 1987, but fears that 1988 will bring the park closures mentioned above.

Given the considerable impact of these budget cuts on so many Yosemite functions, the importance of the Yosemite Association's fundraising program is heightened. While monies from

Continued page 15

television cameras rolled, the first group of 12 sheep were released the afternoon of the capture. The remainder spent the night in their truck and were freed the following morning.

Since it was hoped, and expected, that bighorn reintroduced into Lee Vining Canyon would eventually summer in Yosemite, the National Park Service committed funds to conduct intensive research and monitoring of the new herd for three years. In the past, although some sheep have been fitted with radio transmitters and periodic censuses of the native and reintroduced herds have been made, knowledge of the fate of the herds and the factors controlling them has been scanty at best.

With no time to spare, Les Chow was hired to lead the field project. Twenty-five collars, including five specially constructed to fit lambs, arrived just weeks before the capture date. The day following release, Chow began daily monitoring of the sheep. How they move about in unfamiliar territory, whether they remain together or break up into separate groups, what they eat, and, most important—who does and does not survive and why—will be Chow's job to determine.

Sadly, in the first three weeks, seven sheep have perished. Although snow storms and strong winds at first kept Chow from observing the sheep directly, mortality sensors on the transmitters that change the pulse beat if the collars remain motionless for six hours were telling him the tale. One old ram fell through snow into a crevasse; a lamb appeared to have died on a windy ledge. But each week, snow and storage conditions are improving the odds for the remaining band.

If all goes well and the bighorn prosper, keen-eyed visitors crossing Tioga Pass or hiking Yosemite's eastern crest may have a new and thrilling spectacle to report.

March 18, 1986

Mr. Steven Medley
Yosemite Association
P.O. Box 545
Yosemite National Park
CA 95389

Dear Steven:

This letter is to personally express our appreciation for the role your organization played in the recent successful reintroduction of California bighorn sheep to the Lee Vining Canyon area of Mono County. The project has received a great deal of positive coverage in the news media. Your organization deserves special recognition for its role in retiring the domestic grazing sheep allotment in the Lee Vining Canyon area.

The cooperation of members of the public, state and federal resource management agencies and interested organizations resulted in a fine example of well directed efforts to accomplish an important wildlife enhancement project. Your organization was largely responsible for the successful outcome.

Once again, thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,

Jack C. Parnell
Director, California Department of
Fish and Game



Release of the bighorn sheep into Lee Vining Canyon, March 6, 1986.

The New Superintendent's Giant Challenge

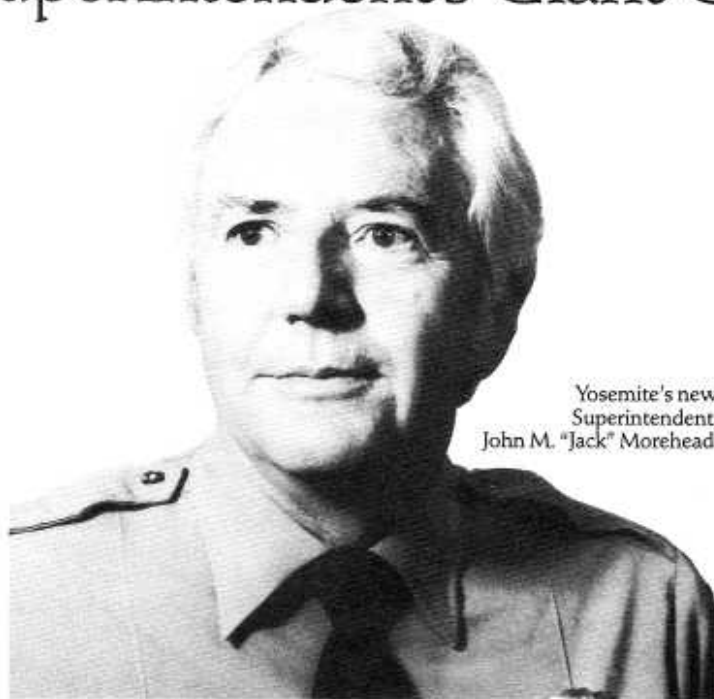
Linda Abbott

In January, 1986, John M. "Jack" Morehead was assigned to the superintendency of Yosemite National Park following the reassignment of Robert O. Binnewies to the Western Regional Office in San Francisco.

Morehead is by no means a stranger to Yosemite — this is his third assignment in the park! While he began his employment with the National Park Service in 1951 in Rocky Mountain National Park, his first park ranger career assignment was in Yosemite in 1954. He returned to Yosemite to serve as the Chief Ranger from 1971 to 1974. His Park Service assignments have placed him all around the United States, and his previous assignment was as Superintendent of Everglades National Park in Florida with management responsibilities for the adjoining Big Cypress National Preserve and Fort Jefferson National Monument.

Most Association members probably cannot claim extensive knowledge of Everglades National Park and will not know, therefore, that the Park consists of 1.4 million acres of very unique environment and resources above and beyond the impressive alligator (which is the image that pops into most of our heads). Superintendent Morehead admits that he had never even seen an alligator prior to his arrival at the Florida park, but he quickly remedied his lack of familiarity with the park's ecology. He became so knowledgeable about the area that he received high marks from many sources including the State of Florida and the Florida Audubon Society for his promotion of the area and his efforts to restore the park to its former condition.

Water management was a concern to Morehead and he initiated planning to protect the park from both drought, flood and excess water dumped into the park by the South Florida Water Management District and to achieve a more natural water



Yosemite's new Superintendent, John M. "Jack" Morehead.

flow. His proposals were approved by the Water District management and later became part of the Governor's "Save Our Everglades" program. Morehead was also concerned with the destructive effects of agricultural drainage into the Everglades' eastern boundary from tomato farming in that area.

During this time, he successfully thwarted an attempt by then-Secretary of Interior James Watt to have Morehead fired. Mr. Watt is remembered for his support of commercial development around national park areas and his policy discouraging further protective measures and land acquisitions. In 1984, Jack Morehead was awarded the Stephen

T. Mather award in the southeast region of the National Park System. The award honors those who have demonstrated initiative and resourcefulness in promoting environmental protection, who have taken direct action where others have hesitated, and finally, have risked their jobs and careers for the principles and practices of good stewardship of the natural environment. He was, without question, an appropriate choice.

The highlight of his Park Service career to date occurred as he was departing Everglades for Yosemite. At the park get-together to bid Jack farewell, he was surprised with the presentation of the Department of Interior's Meritorious Service Award. This

Message from the President

It was with great regret that we at the Yosemite Association received the news of Superintendent Robert Binnewies' reassignment to the Western Regional Office. There have been few stronger supporters of the Yosemite Association to have held his position over the years. We will all miss Bob's leadership, insight, humor and charm.

Since his arrival here in 1979, many strides have been made in Yosemite towards the implementation of the General Manage-

ment Plan, a bold new fundraising program has been undertaken, and significant programs have been developed to manage and limit the ever-increasing numbers of visitors to the park. Given the budget-shrinking that has occurred over the years, Bob Binnewies' track record is a remarkably fine one.

We at the Yosemite Association recognize the valuable contributions Bob Binnewies has made to Yosemite National Park and to our own operation. Sorry as we are to see him go, we know he will prosper in his new pursuits, and wish him well.

Steven P. Medley, *President*

is the highest award given by the Department and is presented to honor exceptional service by an individual.

All of this serves to portray a man with a strong management background who has successfully and firmly defended the resource he was given to protect with innovative solutions for old and ever-growing problems. Jack Morehead has also achieved recognition for involvement and interest beyond his assigned duties by participation where his position and expertise would be of value. These are a few of the skills and experiences he brings to his assignment to Yosemite. He arrives here at a time when the park faces the largest budget cuts ever, the most difficult goals to achieve, and a list of problems for which no solutions seem to be readily available. His calendar began to fill long before he ever set foot in the park. Jack is indeed facing a "giant" — challenge, that is!

Jack and his wife, Pat, will reside in Yosemite Valley. Their two children, once pupils at the elementary school in Yosemite Valley, are daughter Shawn, 26, who resides in Detroit, Michigan, and son Mark, 24, a graduate student at the University of Washington in Seattle. Morehead lists his intended "free-time" activity favorites as hiking and backpacking in the summer, and skiing, both nordic and alpine, in the winter. When asked about his favorite area of Yosemite to spend time, his response is "the higher, the better!" He would, however, recommend that the first-time visitor start with an adequate tour of the Valley, with Glacier Point and the Mariposa Grove next.

When asked if he had any comment for the membership of the Yosemite Association, Mr. Morehead said, "I think the Association is doing a fabulous job — please keep it up!" Welcome to Yosemite National Park, Superintendent Morehead, from the Yosemite Association. We wish you continued success and thank you for your support of our efforts.

Another New Hetch Hetchy Development?

Steve Botti

The passage of the Raker Act in 1913 gave the City and County of San Francisco broad rights to pursue water supply and hydroelectric power development projects on the Tuolumne River inside Yosemite National Park. The Hetch-Hetchy System has continued to grow over subsequent decades, and now includes major dams at Hetch-Hetchy, Lake Eleanor, and Cherry Lake, the Canyon Tunnel between Hetch-Hetchy and Early Intake, the Mountain Tunnel between Early Intake and Moccasin, the Valley Tunnel across the San Joaquin Valley, and the Kirkwood, Holm, and Moccasin powerhouses. Ten additional projects are being seriously considered, despite the passage of the California Wilderness Act in 1984 designating 83 miles of the Tuolumne River as a National Wild and Scenic River and including most of the river inside the Park within the National Wilderness system.

The most recent project proposals affecting the Park involve raising O'Shaughnessy Dam (Hetch-Hetchy) by 50 feet, and adding a third generator to the Kirkwood powerhouse. O'Shaughnessy Dam was raised 25 feet in 1938, and raising it another 50 feet would flood designated wilderness areas inside the Park. Although raising the dam is not being actively pursued at this time, the Kirkwood powerhouse expansion will soon be under construction, having been approved by the Secretary of the Interior in November 1985, using Raker Act authority.

The addition of a third generator at Kirkwood will result in an additional diversion of 400 cubic feet per second through the Canyon Tunnel during the spring and summer months. The generator project is designed solely to increase power revenue, and pro-



vides no benefit in supplying water to San Francisco. Although this project would require no additional construction inside the Park, the Park Service has expressed concern that the reduction in river flows will diminish recreational and aesthetic values along the river corridor. The passage of the California Wilderness Act strengthened the Park's mandate to protect these values. After 24 years of controversy and litigation, the City finally agreed in 1985 to minimum instream flows below the dam. At that time, however, the Asst. Secretary of the Interior emphasized that the minimum flows were not to become the actual flows and that protecting the spring spill flows that might be affected by projects such as the third generator was important.

The diversion of an additional 400 cfs without enlarging the Canyon Tunnel inside the Park is possible because the tunnel was originally constructed 258 percent larger than the design specifications approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

In approving the Kirkwood expansion, Assistant Secretary William P. Horn mandated that studies be carried out to assess the project impact on recreational, aesthetic and fishery values. The results of such studies, funded by the City and carried out under the direction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, may result in changes in existing minimum instream flows and in the preservation of part of the existing spring spill flows that are released through or over O'Shaughnessy Dam. These studies will begin in the spring of 1986.

Congressman Richard Lehman, whose 15th District includes the Tuolumne River and part of Yosemite, opposed the third generator project unless the Department of the Interior firmly established that the generator would be the final construction permitted under the Raker Act. In approving the project the Department concluded that "this Department has determined, as a matter of law, that no further expansion of the Hetch-Hetchy

The Hetch Hetchy Valley before the inundation by the Tuolumne River and (inset) afterwards, a recent view from the O'Shaughnessy Dam.

Water & Power System will be permitted by the Department of the Interior within Yosemite National Park. Absent specific future approval by Congress, the Raker Act will no longer be available to expand, modify, or relocate any aspect of this System located on Park lands."

The City replied that "the PUC (Public Utilities Commission) does not necessarily share the interpretation of the Raker Act set forth in your letter . . ." leaving the door open for future legal and Congressional challenges, or for a policy reversal by a future Secretary of the Interior. Consequently, in February 1986 Congressman Lehman introduced legislation prohibiting the construction of new or the expansion of old water and power projects in national parks. That legislation still awaits action by the House of Representatives.

Steve Botti is Acting Chief of Resources Management for Yosemite National Park.

The Powerful Storms of Winter 1986

Jim Snyder

Preservation of the world may well lie in wildness, if only because wildness highlights the defenses human beings erect to confine, disguise, or even to hide it. One of these defenses is the "management mystique" which assumes that ours is a largely manageable world. For many, "management" is nearly equal to "control" in this context.

The management mystique is limited in a national park because natural processes there are largely unmanageable. A storm, flood, rockslides, drought, winds, heavy snows, or fire now and again remind us what a national park is—a political boundary around an area of genuinely wild country. Park organizations for the most part attempt to manage the people who visit the park and to sustain the boundary against an encroaching technology. The major impact of the storms of February and March 1986 made clear the degree to which this wild park is resistant to management.

Rosie Pepito lives at Arch Rock. The rockslides on the road there kept her at home for several days while she watched the river rise. "I'm cut off; what if I get washed away?" She woke up a stranger sleeping in his car outside, hoping for company as the rising river threatened her home. He did not know the road was closed, but announced that he lived in El Portal and would simply walk home, which he did. Rosie was alone again with the swollen river, blasting crews working all around her.

Steve Lyman, painter of "Yosemite Alpenglow," had come to the park between paintings to see more of his favorite place and to work on a collage of John Muir's experiences around the Valley. He left his car in front of Rosie's place at Arch Rock, having broken the key off in the door, and hitched a ride to the Valley. Flooding at Cascades prevented him from getting back, and he



MICHAEL DIXON/NPS

The March avalanche that covered the Tioga Road just east of Tenaya Lake.

suffered through a soggy night in Lower Pines Campground until a local resident took him in. He waited for the Postal Service to deliver a new car key and took in what he could of this winter scene that would have fascinated Muir.

Steve Lyman's car key arrived through the good graces of Rusty Rust, Yosemite postmaster and veteran of many storms, who ran the gauntlet of the Cascades flooding and Arch Rock rockslides to bring in the mail each day. Radio and television transmitters were out and newspapers were not getting into the Valley, so the mail and telephone were the only forms of communication with the "great outside."

Water service was disrupted in the Valley for a day or more. Pat Bryant, having travelled all over the world under many conditions, quickly had every available pot out to catch the rain water to flush the toilet. There was a run on bottled water at the Village Store, and on melted ice after that.

Pat Harley, who sleeps lightly

during storms, was out watching the creekbed behind the old showerhouse at Camp Curry. There was no water in the little creek channel there; soon, a little trickle appeared. The flow grew, in turn, to a small creek, and the slope began to move slowly toward the structure. Pat had turned the flow with a shovel just last fall when it had run in large quantities toward the showerhouse. This time, the waterlogged talus was transformed into a legitimate mudflow which surrounded the showerhouse gently, buried its back wall up to its eaves and then flowed on toward the Camp Curry pavilion.

One caravan evacuating visitors from the Valley had to turn back in the face of the storm. Like the road crews, Ray Wilson pulled trees out of the Indian Creek culverts, remembering flooding from years before in his garage. People from Marin and Napa Counties had come to Yosemite to get away from their soggy problems only to find things as severe and complicated by rock and mud on top of water and flood.

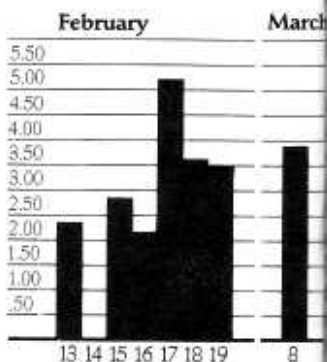
Reintroduction of bighorn sheep into Yosemite had to be postponed because of the storms. WESTCON employees, here

working on the water project in Yosemite Valley, found themselves lending their time and equipment to get the water back on in the Valley and to keep the roads serviceable.

Driving was like trying to get around inside a 24-hour carwash. More water hit the roads than could run off; one did not drive as much as hydroplane to work. The prescribed burn in El Capitan Meadow was quickly doused, leaving the eerie spectre of glowing snags seen through very heavy rain for early morning travellers.

Rainfall statistics were impressive. From February 13 to 19 there were 6 days of rain: 2.40, 2.85, 2.15, 5.20, 3.60, and 3.50 inches, and then another 3.90 inches on March 8.

The widely fluctuating snow



line contributed to flooding and wind damage, but snow loads above about 7,500 feet were equally impressive. By mid-March, runoff in the Merced River drainage was estimated to be 165% of normal. While the low country nearly flooded, the high country was buried in snow. Sunrise High Sierra Camp was invisible. In Tuolumne, only rafter tops protruded above the snow. Bridges at Glen Aulin carried columns of nine feet of snow over the river. Avalanches occurred everywhere after the storms, but those in Tenaya Canyon were startling in their scale.

After several days of ground-soaking rains, the storm front of February 19 brought winds with

The winds were not Mono winds and did not blow with the consistency of those winds which had caused many fallen trees in Camp 6 in recent years. Johnson nevertheless counted 59 trees blown down in Valley Campgrounds alone. Many other trees were weakened by the winds, were cracked or showed the beginning signs of uprooting. Forestry crews had to fell another 533 hazard trees in the campgrounds after the storm.

The park's three million visitors each year and the services they require lend the Valley a civilized appearance it can quickly shed. Yet heavy visitation and the expectations of visitors make it necessary to manage the place more as an urban than a wild locale. Forestry crews have snipped most of the trees around occupied areas of the park and check them regularly for damage by water or wind.

Roads into the park were closed for several days, giving the residents who make the long bus ride to school in Mariposa a brief, if waterlogged, reprieve. The Wawona and Big Oak Flat roads suffered slumps and rock falls. The Merced River road received the only real rockslides with multiple earth movements just below each Rock. The first slide closed the road for three days while road crews blasted and cleared the rubble. Most other road damage was caused by slumping or by that old problem, culvert-plugging. The Big Oak Flat Road was closed in March for over a week by a plugged culvert and wash on the road. Efforts to complete the laying of a new culvert were slowed by rain and runoff. Though one manager, hand on forehead, lamented, "Oh, my poor roads!," those roads did not suffer as much as they have at other times in the recent past, perhaps because the lessons of plugged culverts and the



JIM SNYDER

The Vernal Fall trail was hit hard by the rockslide of February 13.

need for regular maintenance were still close enough at hand to be implemented. Still, repair of storm damage to roads was estimated at about \$700,000.

Worst hit by the storms were park trails below about 7,000 feet. Fluctuating snowlines during the storms increased runoff as rain often washed away fresh snow. Creeks and gullies were so full that, especially on steep Yosemite Valley walls, water loosened creekbed material which unloaded downhill in mud and rock slides. Seven Nevada Falls trail switchbacks below Clarks Point were buried in three to six feet of rock and mud. Old channels changed through the talus all the way to the Valley floor. Water

greased the skids for rockfall on the Vernal Fall trail three times in one month as a total of about 5,000 tons of new granite fell toward the Merced River. In Wawona and Hetch Hetchy, there were no slides, but the heavy runoff deeply rutted trails and the Tuolumne River trail in Pate Valley was buried under tons of sediments and rocks washed down from the walls above. Damage to park trails will cost about \$600,000 and require several years work to repair.

It was not just the runoff that caused the damage, for trails in the park tend to be located in areas less susceptible to damage from water and rockslides. The trails were also damaged because they have not received regular work at standards commensurate with their use or their environ-

mental situations. Of all of the park trails, the Four Mile Trail to Glacier Point suffered most in this way. The trail has little of its drainage system left; parts of it have lost up to two feet of tread material in the last ten years. The storms of February and March greatly accelerated the processes of deterioration, turning the trail into a series of creekbeds and using it as a field demonstration of high angle slope erosion.

Budgets and the other concerns of the management mystique aside, the best we can do is to shoulder our shovels and hike back up the mountain to work. Whether the work is in hazard trees, road or trail repair, or protection and providing for visitors, there comes to be an interesting repetition in the process over time. In the long run, one comes to expect natural violence in certain ways at certain times in certain places under certain circumstances. In watching and living with such events, we also learn slowly to work with the place. Any control we may think we have becomes meaningless when we encounter the power of the elements such as we experienced in February and March of '86.



LENN MCKENZIE

Road crews cleared many rocks like this one from the road below each Rock.

The Ostrander Ski Hut— From the Beginning

Henry Berrey

May 10, 1939

To: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

From: Frank Givens, Acting District Ranger

Subject: Cross-country ski trails

"The most logical route would be from near Bridal Veil, up the ridge to Horse Ridge, from Horse Ridge to Deer Camp and down to the Wawona Road. I have traveled this route with the above in mind. A cabin would have to be built at Horse Ridge, the most logical location being just below the Ostrander Lake. From that center, skiers could ski for days, always on new terrain. The scenery is the best, snow conditions are always good due to the many different exposures."

So wrote Ranger Givens, forty years ago.

Badger Pass, with its downhill skiing facilities, had opened for the winter of 1935, the realization of the efforts of Don and Mary Curry Tresidder. With the help of Jerry Carpenter, head of the California State Chamber of Commerce, put to rest were the fears of those in the tourist business who touted California for its singularly summertime attractions; it became acceptable to admit that snow fell in the Golden State and that the Sierra Nevada could provide excellent skiing.

In addition to the Tresidders' enthusiasm for the Badger development, they were as well caught up in the joys of ski touring, and made winter trips to Tuolumne and to Snow Creek, where they had built a simple cabin for overnight stays.

Records of the decision to build a ski hut at Ostrander are skimpy in the Park Service annals. However, in the Superintendent's narrative report for August, 1940, it is noted that on August 15, "Twenty CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) enrollees, two stonemasons, one carpenter and two foremen were at work on the hut, and that 3600 ski trail markers had been cut and painted."

In the next entry, September,

1940, the Superintendent wrote that the hut was "75% completed," and in his report for the next month, the hut was proclaimed finished and would be ready for occupancy by October 26.

In the N.P.S. "Plan of Operation," the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. was to staff the hut, providing a cook/majordomo, and fees of \$1 per night's lodging and \$1 per meal were approved. The plan went on to specify that when ski tourers fetched their own sleeping gear and provided their own meals, there would be no charge. Proper attention thus was given to those who could not or chose not to partake of the Curry Co.'s hospitality.

The Curry people, led by the Tresidders, wished to pattern the

public relations image while fulfilling the need for a ski touring hut. Although the records don't indicate the number of skier/nights at the hut, by today's expectations it was little used. Until 1952, the Curry Co. hauled passengers from Badger Pass to the hut in "snow weasels" . . . these were WW II amphibious track-laying machines, cursed with a habit of throwing a track at inconvenient places.

In that year, it is recorded in N.P.S. regulations that "no mechanical over-the-snow vehicles could be operated beyond the Horizon Ridge Trail Junction" (with the Glacier Point Road). Thereafter, the weasels were used only for administrative trips (of which there were many).

During the late 40s and early



YOSEMITE PARK & CURRY CO.

Luggi Foeger, Director of the Yosemite Ski School, circa 1940.

ambience of the hut after their High Sierra camps. So, while meals scarcely were elegant, they were substantial and well-prepared. Generally, in the larder could be found a bottle or two of Demarara rum along with a bottle of good cognac, to be taken to ward off frost bite after a day in the snowy wilds.

From a practical standpoint, that is to say profitable, the hut operation did little to improve the Curry Co.'s bank balance. But, in the manner of the High Sierra camps, it projected a wholesome

50s, Ostrander was the scene of a good deal of motion picture filming. Luggi Foeger, who directed at the Yosemite Ski School, was not only a teacher and skier of international caliber, he was as well a fine motion picture photographer, having worked on a number of important European winter films. He was well-qualified then to photograph ski promotion films for the Curry Co. advertising department. With his ski school staff, including Nic Fiore, Foeger made several films at Ostrander, which, in some circles, have yet to be outclassed.

Fiore was a wide-eyed, in-



NPS PHOTO

The Ostrander Lake ski hut.

genous French Canadian who, at Foeger's invitation, came from the Laurentians to join Foeger's staff. On the Ostrander filming trips, Fiore was often the butt of wicked pranks concocted by his fellow teachers. One morning he couldn't find his skis . . . they were hanging from the flag pole on the hut's roof. The contents of his tooth paste tube were replaced with Crisco; after carrying what he thought was an uncommonly heavy camera to the top of Horse Ridge, he found his pack filled with chunks of granite. Nic took it all in stride and when it no longer amused the others to harass him, they left him in peace.

In 1968, the Curry people chose to no longer operate the hut, and it became the responsibility of the Park Service. Financially, it was a no-win situation for the N.P.S. because, for when the hut-users paid for their bunk all the revenue went to the U.S. General Treasury. This left the Park Service holding the sack to the tune of \$8,000 each year for maintenance, the cost of making reservations and for the wages of the hut-keeper. Despite this drain the hut was kept open and in



good repair, reservations were handled properly and the hut-keeper stayed on the payroll.

As Park Service budgets grew slimmer, it seemed to some that the sensible move would be to shut the hut, period. But, in 1980, Ron Mackie, in charge of the backcountry matters for N.P.S., came to Y.N.H.A., proposing that the Association become the hut's proprietors. The Association people, always ready to help out, agreed. Bunk fees were raised to \$4 per night, a reservation system was set up, and a caretaker engaged. At the end of the first winter's operation, after the Association paid all the hut bills, paid itself a little for administration costs, it turned over \$4000 to the N.P.S., which represented a total saving to the government of some \$12,000.

Once things got going under the Association's wing and with a little publicity, requests for reservations at the hut increased materially, to the point where it became necessary to conduct a 'drawing' to determine which reservation requests were to be honored. Claire Haley, Association factotum, was in charge of the drawing, which was accomplished simply by putting all the requests in a hat and drawing out the lucky winners. This was perhaps crude, but an honest method. The system was changed at the suggestion of Dr. David Starkweather, a mathematics professor at U.C.B. and a long-time Ostrander aficionado. He was leader of a group of tourers known as the Friends of Ostrander.

Over the years, the group had made many trips to the hut and each year donated some bit of equipment to improve the hut's operation. Starkweather pointed out the flaws in the 'name-in-the-hat' method and came up with a somewhat complex random numbers table, which according to some law of chance,

gave everyone an equal shot at getting the reservation wanted. So, each fall, Starkweather has appeared with his tables and charts and helped with the now-purified drawing.

Starkweather's group has become noted for the meals prepared at the hut, and judging from their menus pinned to the kitchen walls, they dined elegantly on the haut-est of cuisine.

Over the years, the Ostrander Hut has been tended by a number of people, but the most faithful has been Howard Weamer. Weamer, the hut's Muirish guru, has served as its principal keeper since 1974, and has a place in the minds and hearts of countless tourers. He exhibits a territorial attitude toward the hut and its surroundings, and becomes outraged when the hut maintenance is less than perfect. With the visitors, Howard has gained a reputation as botanist, geologist, historian, photographer and an all-around philosopher. There are many nights when he's at the center of heavy conversations. And on many nights, he's gone out on the trail to hunt for late-arriving skiers. What Dr. Carl Sharsmith is to Tuolumne, Howard may be to Ostrander.

For those who may have wondered, Ostrander Lake and Ostrander Rocks were named for Harvey J. Ostrander who came to California to seek his fortune in the gold mines. In the late 1860's, he homesteaded at the junction of the (old) Mono Trail and the Glacier Point Road. His name appears on the Whitney Survey Maps dated 1867.

In addition to furnishing lodgings for ski tourers, the hut is also the locale of a number of winter field seminars sponsored by the Association. These are typically three day jaunts, led by experienced naturalists. A catalog of the programs will be sent on request. And, readers wishing to learn more about the Ostrander Hut and to make reservations may call the Yosemite Association office, (209) 379-2646.

Snow weasels carried winter sports enthusiasts to the ski hut.

Spring on the Wing

Karen Cobb

Each of us had a different reason for our first visit to Yosemite. Some came with interests in botany or wildlife. Others sought relaxation and escape from urban pressures. Some found wilderness adventures and others came simply because Mom and Dad dragged us along on family camping trips. Whatever the reason for that initial experience, we have all come to love Yosemite and in subsequent visits find ourselves becoming more and more knowledgeable about the park and the environment.

Birdwatching, or, "birding" as the initiated say, can be accomplished without making numerous trips to REI or Sierra Designs to spend thousands of dollars for "brand name equipment." Age and gender requirements are liberal and political affiliations are irrelevant. There are no acceptable excuses for not expanding your interests to include such an obvious facet of the environment as the bird life. Best of all, it is knowledge that you can enjoy almost anywhere or any time, and once having practiced in Yosemite, you can take your observations home with you. A pair of binoculars and a field guide are the only needed tools of the trade, and the use of your perceptive powers obviously is essential.

So, for all of you latent ornithologists ready to admit that you might be interested, Yosemite in the springtime is a perfect place to begin birding. This is the season when birds are in their most colorful and easily identifiable plumages. Spring is the time for breeding and nesting, and almost all birds are singing to attract mates or to defend their territories. Attune your ears and eyes to the undercurrent of birdlife in the park and it will add to your understanding of the ecological concert. Here are a few interesting birds to get you started.

The first time you see an Western Tanager, you will say to yourself, "How could I ever have

missed that bird?!" The Western Tanager has a bright red head, bright yellow body, black wings with 2 white bars on each and a black tail. A rather distinctive costume. They are slightly smaller than a robin and you will find them in mature stands of fir, spruce, pine and aspen. During the breeding and nesting seasons (May-July) they generally keep to high, dense foliage where they feed on insects such as flies. That alone qualifies them as environmental allies of humans.

Throughout the rest of the year they eat berries and other fruit. Western Tanagers arrive in Yosemite from their Baja, California and Mexican winter ranges during the latter part of May. This is one of the most visually striking birds in North America, and in Yosemite can be regularly seen on the edges of Cook's Meadow in the Valley.

Dippers (also called Water Ouzels) spend a great deal of time walking around underwater, an unusual lifestyle for a bird. Look alongside a pond or swiftly flowing stream for dippers. Generally, they perch on rocks where they bob up and down 40-60 times a minute—hence the name dipper. They blend well with their surroundings as they are dusky slate-grey and usually 5½-7½ inches long. A dipper will dive from its perch into the water where it swims using its wings or walks along the bottom of the stream bed while holding onto rocks with its long toes. They can "fly" through 20 feet of water to a feeding spot where they look for caddis flies, mosquito larvae and water beetles, to name a few. Dippers are extremely territorial and one pair will control ½-1 mile of stream. Traditionally, a pair of these birds has nested near the Superintendent's footbridge over the Merced River in Cook's



Goshawk.

Meadow. Another likely place to see them is on the river at Happy Isles. They do not migrate and will remain throughout the winter unless frozen water forces them to lower elevations. Dippers are the only aquatic songbird, their clear, year-round, flute-like song being audible even over the noise of rushing torrents.

An ecotone is a transition area between two adjacent ecological communities. For example, low growing shrubs might constitute the transition zone from a meadow to a forest. This also, by chance, is the ecological niche of the Dark-eyed Junco which is found feeding on the ground in these areas. You have probably seen these birds a thousand times but never known their names. They are seed eaters and prefer this open habitat with brushy shrubs, grasses and weeds along with deciduous trees offering shade. While nesting they also consume insects. A black hood, reddish-brown back, rusty sides and a white belly are all identifying marks along with the flesh-colored stubby beak. Another feature which helps distinguish this bird is the white margin on each side of the tail. When approached the birds will generally retreat 10-

15 feet and flit from bush to bush or hop along the ground. They are abundant in Yosemite and groups of juncos can be seen around the Village Mall and Visitor Center.

If you have ever noticed bark on the oak trees of Yosemite drilled full of holes and packed with acorns, you are looking at the work of Acorn Woodpeckers. Since this species does not migrate, these acorns are needed to sustain the woodpeckers through the winter when insects are scarce. A unique quality of Acorn Woodpeckers is their co-operative lifestyle. Groups of 4-15 birds practice co-op food gathering and storage in addition to raising young and defending territory.

These birds display a very striking pattern of red, white and black which gives them a somewhat clownish appearance. A vibrant red forms a cap from the forehead to the back of the head. Acorn Woodpeckers have a black back, a white rump and white patches on each wing which are evident in flight. They are not hard to spot as they are 8-9½ inches long with a wingspan of 17 inches and noisily call to each other with harsh notes like the sound of raucous parrots. They prefer an area with two types of oaks since acorns are their mainstay and a lean crop from one species may be off-set by abundance from the other. Look for them in the oak trees in El Capitan Meadow or on the way to the base of Yosemite Falls.

These several birds may open a new door for you and alert you to a world you have never noticed. They represent only one facet of the Yosemite environment, yet they are an integral part of the overall balance of nature. In that context, birding sounds like a weighty subject, however, once involved, you will realize what a pleasant, undemanding hobby it can be. Best of all, imagine how proud you will be when you can spot a robin in the parking lot of Burger King and exclaim to your friends, "Look! *Turdus Migratorius!*"

Books of Interest

The following selection of books are works which chronicle the wide and varied scope of Yosemite and the High Sierra region, or the national parks generally. All can be purchased from the Association at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Bookstore, or by mail order, using the order form on page 14 of this issue. Members of the Association are entitled to a 15% discount off retail prices.

Gunfighters, Highwaymen & Vigilantes

Violence on the Frontier

Roger McGrath.

University of California Press, 1984.

(#10930 cloth \$16.95).

This book takes the first truly representative look at violence on the frontier and in the process tells the stories of some of the most colorful characters and exciting events in the history of the Old West. It looks exclusively at two towns, Aurora (Nev.) and Bodie (Ca.), that were typical of the frontier—the mining frontier specifically—and uncovers every form of violence and lawlessness that occurred in and about their environs. The author strips away the facade of violence that motion pictures, television, and western fiction have long associated with the Old West and shows some long-cherished popular notions about life on the frontier are nothing more than myth. But he also shows that other widely held beliefs, long suspected of being mythical, are well founded in fact.

The Whistles Blow No More

Railroad Logging in the Sierra Nevada, 1874-1942.

Hank Johnston.

Trans-Anglo Press, 1984.

(#18075 cloth \$25.95).

This book is a pictorial account of the glory days of flume and railroad logging in California's southern Sierra Nevada. Lasting intermittently, for just 68 seasons and involving only six operations, they typified nearly everything that was exciting about steam log-

ging in the West. The book provides an overview of the general southern Sierra logging scene of the time and points out the different methods employed in getting timber out of the mountains; illustrates the intriguing juxtaposition of the three great lumber flumes; compares the various railroads, inclines, sawmills, and camps . . . and preserves the flavor of a colorful bygone time.

The Complete Walker III

The Joys and Techniques of Hiking and Backpacking.

Colin Fletcher.

Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

(#14225 paper \$11.95).

Colin Fletcher—the most eloquent, authoritative, readable writer on the subject of backpacking—has revised and updated his classic guide to walking . . . it is filled with his firsthand knowledge, sage advice and outspoken opinion: on equipment, on changes in the backcountry (and its users); on the state of mind that he captures as no one else. Fletcher advises us not to become too caught up in backpacking technique, and reminds us that the prime object of walking is to experience, and learn about the green world.

The Forest Domain of the Pierce Arrow

John Meyer III.

Southern California Region of the Pierce Arrow Society, 1984.

(#10105 cloth \$12.50).

This book documents an era of the transportation services in, to, and around Yosemite National Park. Fleets of the elegant, durable and now very collectible Pierce Arrow passenger touring cars were used in Yosemite from 1915 through the 1930s. In June, 1982, the Pierce Arrow Society of Southern California made a grand tour of Yosemite, Wawona, and the Mariposa Grove, and photographs taken during that event capture the ambiance of touring in the 1920s and 1930s. This is a photographic history as well as a pictorial celebration of



the 1982 trip as 32 classics gathered in the 'forest domain of the Pierce Arrow.'

Wildflowers of the Hite's Cove Trail

Stephen Botti and

Ann Mendershausen.

Pioneer Publishing Co., 1985.

(#18315 paper \$5.00).

Wildflower enthusiasts have long marveled at the richness and diversity of plants and wildflowers that inhabit the canyon of the South Fork of the Merced River. It has become recognized as one of the most spectacular wildflower displays in the central Sierra Nevada. This book is a much needed addition to the literature on the western approaches to Yosemite National Park. The sponsor of this guidebook, The Merced Canyon Committee, is committed to the protection of the South Fork as a National Wild and Scenic River. The use and enjoyment of this book brings out a greater sense of value and belonging and will be a step toward the preservation of the unique values of the South Fork.

The Earth Speaks

Steve Van Matre.

Institute for Earth Education,

1983.

(#9525 paper \$9.95).

This book is a collection of images and impressions recorded by those who have lived in close contact with the natural world . . . a journal of writings of naturalists, poets, philosophers, & scientists,

who chose to go beyond analysis to 'seeing' and rediscovering the sense of the wonder of nature.

A Hiking Guide to the Theodore Solomons Trail

Gary Buscombe.

High Adventure Press, 1983.

(#11390 paper \$5.95).

Named after the man who conceived and pioneered the crest-parallel trail the length of the High Sierra which became known as the John Muir Trail, the Theodore Solomons Trail is the only trail that not only traverses the Sierra Nevada from east to west, but follows the range from south to north, roughly paralleling the Muir Trail along the west slope, beginning at the Cottonwood Basin south of Mt. Whitney and ending at Glacier Point in Yosemite. Theodore Solomons (1870-1947) was an early explorer of the High Sierra—Yosemite, Tuolumne Canyon, Kings Canyon, Evolution Mountains and the Tehipite Valley. Mt. Solomons, (13,016) near the Goddard Divide carries his name.

Families of Birds

A Guide to Bird Classification.

Oliver L. Austin, Jr.

Golden Press, 1985.

(#9695 paper \$7.95).

The most recent addition to the popular Golden Field Guide series, this guide to the framework of bird classification presents thumbnail sketches of the 34 orders and 185 families into which scientists currently group some 9,600 known species of birds in the world. It is designed for those who have familiarity with birds and would like to know more about their relationships to one another. The illustrations are of species selected on the basis of typical family characteristics. A must for students, naturalists, birders and bird lovers everywhere.

THE Yosemite

CATALOG

Seasonal Titles

Sierra Club Guides to the National Parks

(The regional-volume series).

Sierra Club/Random House, 1984.

Desert Southwest

(#5650 paper \$13.95).

Pacific Northwest and Alaska

(#5695 paper \$14.95).

Pacific Southwest and Hawaii

(#5675 paper \$11.95).

Rocky Mountains

(#5685 paper \$12.95).

Midwest and East

(Not Yet Published).

This country's forty-eight national parks contain natural wonders more varied and extraordinary than those found in any other nation on earth. Recognizing the need for park guide books that are practical as well as beautiful, this series has been created.

The five regional guides take you through each of the national parks of the United States. Leading nature writers and photographers, experts in their fields, have provided text and photographs that work together as a tour of the parks. One chapter is devoted to each park, including an up-to-date facilities chart, trail guides, and park and trail maps created especially for the book. An extensive full-color appendix of the most commonly seen animals and plants is included at the end of each book.

Sierra Sunrise

Following the Muir Trail.

John and Lynn Wilson.

Sierra Printing & Publishing, 1985.

(#5055 paper \$8.95).

This exciting, beautiful photographic journal volume retracing an enormous 67-day hike along this most famous High Sierra trail by the authors/photographers. Starting in Yosemite Valley and culminating with a triumphant descent to Whitney Portal, the book shows the highlights of their path in nice photo images and a lively, detailed text.

Yosemite and the High Sierra

Randy Collings.

Adam Randolph Collings, Inc., 1985.

(#18625 paper \$12.95).

Herein is an enthralling journey of exploration through these famed mountains and parklands of California, celebrating the beauty, uniqueness, and crucial importance of preserving this high country legacy. A welcome addition to the library of anyone who has fallen under the spell of the Yosemite, it affords both an educational and entertaining experience that could only be surpassed by actually spending months of study and travel in the Sierra Nevada itself.

National Parks Trade Journal

Dave Anzalone, editor.

Taverly-Churchill Publishing, 1986.

(#13725 paper \$7.95).

America's number one guide to living and working in the national

parks, describing seasonal and career opportunities in over 330 beautiful locations. The book features information on 30,000 jobs, describing availability of specific types of jobs, employment requirements, low cost housing and meal programs available, with stories, interviews, articles and photos of living and working situations in our national parks.

Cowboys of the High Sierra

Peter Perkins.

Northland Press, 1980.

(#9070 paper \$2.95; originally \$12.50).

Yosemite Association has purchased a large quantity of this book from the publisher at a greatly reduced price, and we've lowered our retail price accordingly.

A well designed and printed book, this work chronicles an interesting and different facet of the Sierra Nevada, that of the contemporary working cowboy. With tape recorder and camera in

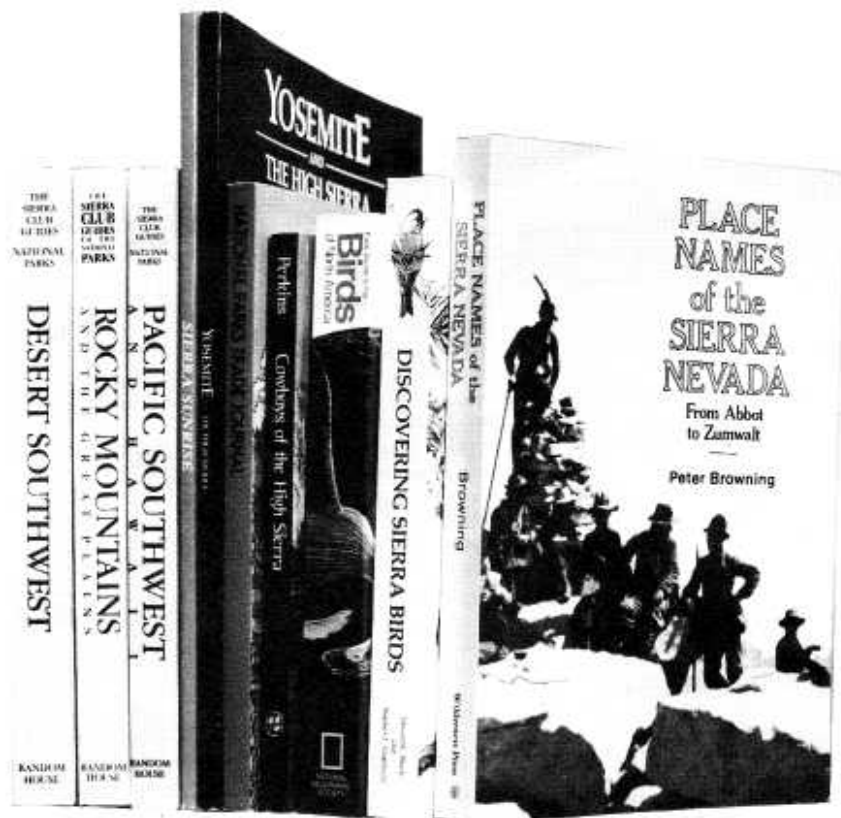
his saddlebags, the author spent two years recording this lifestyle. He travelled throughout the Sierra to ranches stretching from Sequoia Forest in the south to Lassen National Forest in the north. No other documentation of this type, for this century, exists today. Illustrated with fine black-and-white and color photographs.

Field Guide to the Birds of North America

National Geographic Society, 1983.

(#9875 paper \$13.95).

Through an exclusive purchasing agreement, National Parks associations are the only source, aside from National Geographic Society direct, for selected National Geographic Society books. We're pleased to offer our members this fine title. The guide includes all species known to breed in North America, as well as those that spend their winter here or pass through on regular migration routes. Accurate descriptions,





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Join the Yosemite Association

You can help support the work of the Yosemite Association by becoming a member. Revenues generated by the Association's activities are used to fund a variety of National Park Service programs in Yosemite. Not only does the Yosemite Association publish and sell literature and maps, it sponsors field seminars, the park's Art Activity Center, and the Ostrander Lake Ski Hut.

A critical element in the success of the Association is its membership. Individuals and families throughout the country have long supported the Yosemite Association through their dues and their personal commitments. Won't

you join us in our effort to make Yosemite an even better place?

Member Benefits

As a member of the Yosemite Association, you will enjoy the following benefits:

- ☆ *Yosemite*, the Association bulletin, published on a quarterly basis;
- ☆ A 15% discount on all books, maps, posters, calendars and publications stocked for sale by the Association;
- ☆ A 10% discount on most of the field seminars conducted by the Association in Yosemite National Park;
- ☆ The opportunity to participate in the annual Members' Meeting held in the park each fall, along with other Association activities;

☆ A Yosemite Association decal; and

☆ Special membership gifts as follows:

Supporting Members: Matted print from an illustration by Jane Cyer in "Discovering Sierra Trees";

Contributing Members: Full color poster of Yosemite's wildflowers by Walter Sydorik;

Sustaining Members: Matted color photograph of a wildflower by Dana Morgenson;

Life Member: Matted color photograph by Howard Weamer of a Yosemite scene; and

Participating Life Member: Ansel Adams Special Edition print, achivaly mounted.

Membership dues are tax-deductible as provided by law.

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Moving?

If you are moving, or have recently moved, don't forget to notify us. You are a valued member of the Association, and we'd like to keep in touch with you.

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Dan Anderson