

Y O S E M I T E N A T U R E N O T E S

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THE GIANT SEQUOIA

The fluted cinnamon-brown trunks of the incense cedar are often mistaken for those of the Big Tree by Yosemite visitors. In the Valley, however, there are only a few Sequoias and these have been planted during the last three decades.

The Giant Sequoia grows in scattered communities along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada at altitudes of from 5,000 to 9,000 feet. After many years of field observation John Muir advanced the theory that these occasional groves occupied the fertile western flanks of the range that were never covered by the great glaciers which filled all the main canyons.

Of the three groups in Yosemite National Park the Mariposa Grove is by far the best known and in many ways the most unique of all the twenty-seven known groves. In it stand about 490 mature Sequoias. As one approaches from the west he first enters an impressive family group assembled about the old and well known patriarch "Grizzly Giant." Farther up the mountain slopes are the remaining 364 trees of the grove, and in their midst stands the picturesque cabin built by the beloved old pioneer Galen Clark in the 60's.

The oldest Sequoia of which we have definite record was 3,148 years of age and in all probability some of the standing ancients were seedlings about 2,000 years before Christ. It seems to be human nature to want to magnify facts, and one often hears the longevity of the Big Tree placed at 8,000 or even 10,000 years. Shall we not be content with the ripe old age of forty centuries?

THE WESTERN EVENING GROSBEEK

Late August brings the western evening grosbeak back in numbers after a summer spent at higher altitudes. Perhaps it is the ripening coffee berries that attract them. Certain it is that whole families may be seen feasting on these ripened fruits. When so feeding, the birds are closely enough approached to allow inspection of their bizarre coloration. Black wings with white patches, and black tail are set off, in the male, by the peculiar yellowish green of body, above and below, and the yellow of forehead and rump. The bill is also greenish yellow. The loud ringing call which may be either a plain note or a trill often acquaints one of the presence of this species.

OWLS

Wooded areas usually form the home of owls. Both the largest and next to the smallest owl found in California have been taken in Yosemite National Park. Because of their habit of feeding at night, owls are seldom seen, but if the ears are attuned their calls may be heard. The hooting of the great horned owl (the species made famous by the Owl Drug Company) may be heard nightly.

PUBLIC APPRECIATES NATURE GUIDE SERVICE

The active work of the Nature Guide Service for this season will end on August 26. The greatly increased attendance indicates that the service rendered is appreciated. Nearly three thousand persons followed nature guides afield to learn first hand of living things and 38,000 heard the lectures and camp fire talks, while more than twenty-five thousand visited the flower shows and museum. The all-day Saturday trips to the rim of the valley proved unexpectedly popular, the attendance on most of these trips mounting to over fifty. However, the work should not be measured entirely by attendance but by the interest in nature study developed and by the stimulated public sentiment favoring the conservation of natural resources.

WHAT BIRD LIVES HERE?

In the different nature guide trips along the valley floor the same birds are often seen. The youngest bird student soon learns to look for certain birds in a particular situation. When a pool or stream bank is neared the spotted sandpiper is expected. If a moist canyon wall looms up the ear is tuned for the little bugler, the canyon wren, in such a place.

Often a bird is seen at work but too far away for identification by color or markings. The actions often indicate that the bird is one of the flycatchers and the place where it is found helps to tell the kind. Of the three flycatchers common in the valley the trail flycatcher hunts in the willows and meadows along the streams and the wood pewee hunts among the forest trees while the olive-sided flycatcher, is found high above them both, perching on the tip-top of tall trees along the canyon walls.

Among the warblers we find similar predilections. In the stream willows the yellow warbler sings and hunts the whole day through. The tolmie or Mac Gilivray warbler is hard to see as he skulks in the bracken and underbrush. Above them, in the golden cup oaks of the talus slopes the black-throated gray warbler breeds, while the calaveras warbler is more apt to be found in the black oaks of the valley. If a warbler-like bird is noted in the coniferous trees it may be either the audubon or hermit warbler.

So it is with other birds and animals and even plants; the closer we watch the more we see of their likes and dislikes.



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