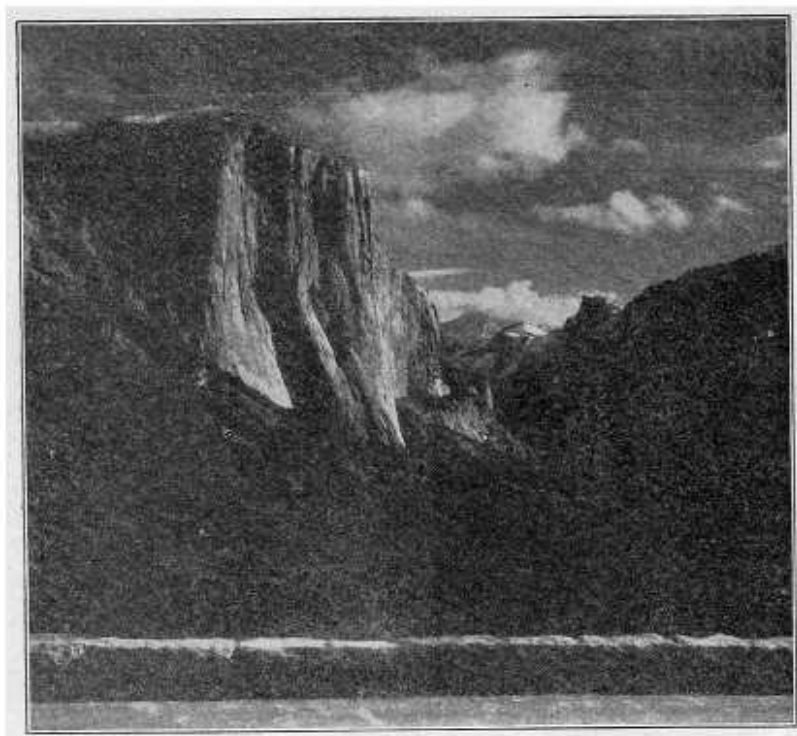


YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



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Ancient Fish-worm Carrier of the Yosemite Indians

(Raymond M. Gilmore)

Ranger-Naturalist

During a fishing trip in May, 1934 with Chris Brown (Lemee), our local Indian dancer, I had the opportunity to watch the construction of a handy implement, accessory to the native Indian fishing technique. This article was a fish-worm carrier (Hu-ken) loosely woven with wild blue grass in bottled form about 10 inches long by 3 inches in greatest diameter. That it is ancient-pre-Caucasian is indicated by statements made by Chris Brown and by the fact that an old specimen exists in the Yosemite Museum and another in the Field Museum in Chicago. These old individual specimens argue for ancient antiquity by being, apparently, remnants of a once common article. The fact that it is unknown by present natives and anthropologists lends additional support and indicates that it is a well-nigh forgotten implement rather than one recently invented or learned.

This fish-worm carrier was put to satisfactory and practical use by the writer and is recommended to trout fishermen as an easily constructed, highly efficient article to use in fishing with live bait. The worms within the grass container are kept cool, aerated, moist and lively.

The construction of this particular fish-worm carrier is as follows: Long stems 30 inches or more in length, of the local blue grass (*Poa pratensis*) were gathered at the base and cut sharply with a knife. After a bundle, 4 to 5 inches in diameter, had been thus obtained, the loose, short, basal leaves were shaken out by grasping the bundle at the terminal end and shaking the whole vigorously. This bundle of uniform thickness, now about 2 inches in diameter when compressed, was then tied tightly

with string at the base and the projecting pieces cut off close to the binding. With the bundle held upright by the base, the stalks were carefully separated in the center and bent outward and downward on all sides of the butt so that a cigar-shaped cavity was created with the butt of the bundle within and at one end. Eight inches from the bend the leaves were again encircled with string and securely tied. Again the leaves were bent back over the tied section and again brought together, outside and around the first bend, so that the cavity now was bounded by a two-layer grass wall. The third tie completed outside and adjacent to the first, the loose leaf-ends severed, the end of the string retained simple or looped for attachment to the belt, and the carrier was complete.

When suspended from the waist, the grass sides of the carrier were conveniently and easily parted at any spot and the worms, with or without wet dirt, were easily placed within, or withdrawn. The stiff grass leaves of the sides always readily closed together after being parted to reach the cavity within.

Chris Brown asserted that a straight bone hook was used to catch rainbow trout (*Salmo irideus*). This straight hook (Hunee-mah), about an inch long, was attached firmly at the middle to a milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) line; no perforation was made in the bone for attachment. Worms,

carried in the container described above, were then passed over the entire bone so that the line protruded at one end and the bait hung vertically in the water. It was almost necessary for the fish to entirely swallow this straight-shank hook to insure successful capture, for the bone had to turn with the pull so that it was at right angles with the line.

My informant also claimed to have learned the technique of making the glass container for worms from his father, who utilized it for many years when he fished for the early Valley hotels on a 25-cent-a-pound-of-fish basis. This fishing, though, was done with steel hooks and cotton or linen line, obtained from the whites.

NOTELETS

The Badger Pass area is fast developing into Yosemite's finest ski country and record crowds have been counted there this winter, the road having been kept open all but one week during the heavy storm in January. From December 20th to February 1st, 5,100 people visited the area. On Sunday, February 3, 205 cars and 860 people were counted at Badger Pass.

Lowest temperature this winter was 2 above zero on January 20th. This is a new low record since January 2, 1924, when 6 below was recorded at the Old Village. The average low temperatures are Dec. 22, 26 degrees; Jan. 21, 24 degrees; Feb. 24, 24 degrees.



YOSEMITE TREES

The Stable Tree Falls

By Granville Ashcraft
Park Ranger-Naturalist

On August 28, 1934, the early morning stillness of the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees was sharply interrupted at 7:30 by a long crackling groan as brittle roots were separating, followed by a few swishing thuds as the tops of small fir trees were tossed to the ground, and then with a loud devastating roar tons of massive wood crashed to the forest floor. Thus was another forest king dethroned. In seconds fate destroyed a tree mother earth had carefully nursed for more than twenty centuries. In short the old historic Stable Tree had fallen.

The Stable Tree stood some one hundred yards south-east of the Mariposa Grove Museum. In the days of horse drawn stages, managers were built in a very large burned cavity at the base of this tree and for years the stage horses were sheltered there. This gave

the name to the tree. By the uprooting of the tree a considerable amount of straw was turned to the surface.

In life the Stable Tree towered 246 feet in height above the ground and 24.3 feet in diameter at the base. It now lies prostrate across a small stream bed. In assuming the curvature of the depression the trunk separated into three main divisions—132', 54' and 33' from roots to top respectively. The topmost portion shattered into pieces less than ten feet in length. Almost without exception the limbs broke off flush with the trunk and were hurled as much as one hundred feet to either side. Many were shattered as if they were glass.

As far as could be told the only casualty was the Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel that was caught in the whirl of broken limbs near the top. Other small mammals may be

buried in the debris.

The crash was heard by two early morning visitors who reported it at the Lodge. Their main comment was that a heavy dust had been thrown into the air so as to obscure the tree from good view. They passed by without further investigation. At the Lodge some three hundred yards down the slope the sound of the fall was generally heard. Two girls noticed a sliding door vibrating. The fact that the crash was not heard for any great distance was probably due to the fall being partially broken by the top striking another sequoia at the extreme end of its length. Bruises can be seen for over one hundred feet up the trunk of the tree that was struck.

Mr. Munro, an employee of the Lodge, was perhaps the first to see the tree go down and recognize it as the Stable Tree.

Since the discovery of the grove in 1857 three large sequoias have fallen. All are visible from the Museum porch. In 1873 the Fallen Giant went down. In 1927 the Massachusetts Tree fell and now the Stable Tree.

This ancient pharaoh of the forest need not be sheltered in a pyramid or embalmed with costly spices for in death as in life it will be able to resist the hordes of boring insects and all agencies of decay. This massive sequoia will lie but little altered for centuries, until its children are sturdy giants themselves.

MORTARS

The deer comes from the cedars unmolested
 To browse on the young corn and tender stalks.
 Gone are the Indian braves who once contested
 The land with the white settlers. The Miwoks
 Are gone. Their warriors left no mark to show
 Their prowess with the tomahawk and bow.
 They have been driven away like straws
 Before the wind, but in great flat rocks squaws
 Have left memorials of their race
 In mortars large and small, which deface
 The granite stones. In her simple way the squaw
 Founded her home on the solid rock and saw
 The necessity of constant grinding care
 In providing her family's daily fare.

—Gertrude A. Casad.

The Black Widow Spider

(By IRENE C. ROBERTSON)

Reprinted from "Hobbies"
Buffalo Museum of Science

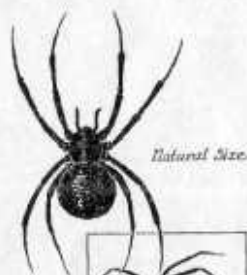
(Editor's Note: This article is of particular interest to residents of the Yosemite region, as several specimens of Black Widow Spider have been taken at El Portal and will possibly be found within the park boundaries at some future date.)

For pure, unadulterated venom, the black widow, or hourglass spider, *Latrodectus mactans*, carries off the honors. This dapper little ebony-hued arachnid, whose native home is in the southern states, has earned a reputation for the virulence of its bite equal to that of the tarantula. It deserves the reputation far more than the tarantula, since investigation shows that almost all fatalities from spider bites may be traced to the black widow and its near relatives in the genus *Latrodectus*.

While the serious effect of the bite of a black widow long has been known, it has aroused little concern among dwellers in the north and east of the United States. However, within the past few years, this area has been invaded by the venomous creatures which have been brought here with fruit and vegetables from the warmer sections of the country. There are on exhibition in the entrance lobby of the museum some specimens which were found with grapes imported

from California.

The black widow is not a large spider. With outstretched legs it rarely measures more than an inch and a half from tip to tip, and the entire body is barely half an inch long. The shiny black abdomen is like a round shoe button and is marked on the underside by a characteristic red hourglass design, the most constant feature of its markings, which otherwise vary greatly. The mature female often possesses a series of red dots on the back, with one or more over the spinnerets, but these are not constant in number or occurrence and



Natural Size

BLACK WIDOW SPIDER

Inset shows characteristic hour-glass marking on underside of abdomen.



© 1924

they are sometimes entirely wanting. The male is more elaborately decorated than the female, having in addition to her markings, four pairs of stripes along the sides of the abdomen. He is much smaller than the female, which has earned

the name of black widow through her custom of devouring her mate.

Since immature females frequently are marked like the males, the presence of red spots on a round black body may be considered a warning.

The web which this spider spins is characteristic too, being of very coarse silk in an irregular mass. The female lays about 1,200 eggs in a season, so that when conditions are favorable these spiders multiply rapidly. Undoubtedly the extreme cold of our winters will aid in destroying the invaders of this territory.

The Indians of California rank the black widow with the rattlesnake as a source of poison for their arrows. This poison is used alone or as an ingredient with other poisons for a particularly virulent concoction. Since the bite of this spider may be fatal, it is gratifying to know that a serum for the treatment of victims, believed to be the first, has been developed by Dr. Fred D'Amour, professor at the University of Denver.

NEW EXHIBITS FOR THE YOSEMITE MUSEUM

By C. A. Wagner
Junior Park Naturalist

New exhibits are being prepared for the Geology Room, and the Glacier Point Lookout. The former consists of a large relief map

showing the Sierra from the foothills to the crest and from Lake Tahoe south to Mt. Whitney. The map is in three sections, each measuring 10 by 12 feet. The first one shows the Tahoe region, the second the Yosemite region and the third the Sequoia-Mt. Whitney section. The scale is 2" to the mile and the maps occupy the entire north wall of the geology room.

This map will be used in our geology talks and as an orientation guide for the whole southern Sierra. It shows every stream, lake, trail and highway, and we believe it will be an active and efficient salesman for the High Sierra.

The maps were made in the CCC laboratories of the Berkeley office of the National Park Service. They were cast in sixteen separate sections, and these were later joined in units of four for shipment. Upon arrival the four units were joined and the whole installation of three large sections completed. The maps are being given the final touches, that is, painted and labeled, by the museum staff.

The new exhibit for the Glacier Point Lookout is to consist of three 32in.x38in. relief models showing the Yosemite region during the period of maximum glaciation, the Yosemite region during the last ice invasion, and the Yosemite region today. These models will be fastened to the west wall of the Lookout and immediately in front of them will be a narrow table with seats. Fixed to the table will be four books of identical drawings and text, telling the complete geological story based on Matthes studies of the formation of Yosemite Valley.



Annual Bird Census

By M. E. BEATTY
Assistant Park Naturalist

As in former years, the Christmas Bird Census was taken by the Naturalist Staff assisted by a number of local residents. The result of this census and similar ones from all over the United States are collected and compiled by the National Audubon Society in an effort to make an accurate check on bird population. The local census was taken on December 20, 1934, with the following observations:

Participants

Mrs. Mary Tresidder, Mrs. Della Hoss, Mrs. Grace Ewing, Mrs. Ruth Knowles, Mrs. D. A. Miller, Mrs. William Nelson, Miss Lou Foster, Mrs. Ethel Beatty, Everett Harwell, Herbert Ewing, Calvin R. Willette, C. A. Harwell, Park Naturalist, M. E. Beatty, Assistant Park Naturalist and C. A. Wagner, Junior Park Naturalist.

Birds Observed

Fared Grebe, 1; California Great Blue Heron, 4; American Merganser, 2; Western Red-tailed Hawk, 4; Golden Eagle, 2; Western Belted King-fisher, 3; Red-shafted Flicker, 12; Western Pileated Woodpecker, 1; California Woodpecker, 65; Modoc Woodpecker, 11; Willow

Woodpecker, 3; Northern White-headed Woodpecker, 8; Black Phoebe, 1; Blue-fronted Jay, 17;



Short-tailed Mountain Chickadee, 162; Plain Titmouse, 3; Slender-billed Nuthatch, 23; Sierra Creeper, 41; Pallid Wren-tit, 4; Dipper (Water Ouzel), 4; Western Winter Wren, 3; Dotted Canyon Wren, 3; Rock Wren, 2; Western Robin, 10; Western Bluebird, 49; Western Golden-crowned Kinglet, 82; Western Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 23; Audubon Warbler, 3; Sacramento Spotted Towhee, 4; Sacramento Brown

Towhee, 43; Rufous-crowned Sparrow, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 5; Thurber (Sierra) Junco, 104; Gambel (or Intermediate) Sparrow, 4; Fox Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 2.

Total, 38 species, 813 individuals.

Although the number of species observed were two less than the previous year, nearly twice the number of individuals were recorded due mainly to the large number of observers.

ing the period of observation so identification was based on cries, behavior, and color of underparts.

This is the first time that Killdeer have been reported from Yosemite Valley in the winter, although they are one of our occasional summer visitants in the valley and a regular summer visitant at Soda Springs in Tuolumne Meadows.

STRANGE WINTER VISITORS HOVER OVER YOSEMITE

By C. A. Wagner
Junior Park Naturalist

Just before dusk February 8, 1935 I heard the shrill, plaintive cry of "kill-dee, kill-dee," and absent-mindedly listened to it—being reminded of happy days spent on the marshes around San Francisco Bay. Suddenly I realized I was in Yosemite and there was several feet of snow on the ground.

Ear and eye finally located the birds circling over the meadow behind the Rangers' Club. By the white underparts, actions, and cries I identified them as Killdeer (*Oxyechus vociferus vociferus*).

They continued to circle the meadow as I watched, but the closing in of dusk and the foggy sky soon blotted them from sight although I heard their cries for some time. The birds did not alight dur-

NOTELETS

Snowfall in Yosemite Valley this winter has been 88½ inches up to February 15th as compared to 26 inches for last year. While this has been a winter of plentiful snowfall and fine winter sports, it has not set any records as we had 165 inches of snow for the same period in 1932.

Precipitation, which includes rain and snow, is now 26 inches for the season to date as compared to 13.5 inches last year. Normal to Feb. 15 is 21.8 inches.

Last year Yosemite had 309,431 visitors, 97 per cent coming in by private car, 2 per cent by stage and about 1 per cent by rail and other means. An average of 50,000 people come in during the winter sports season. Biggest travel day for the winter period was Feb. 21, 1932, when 1411 cars and 5411 people checked in at Arch Rock.





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Dan Anderson