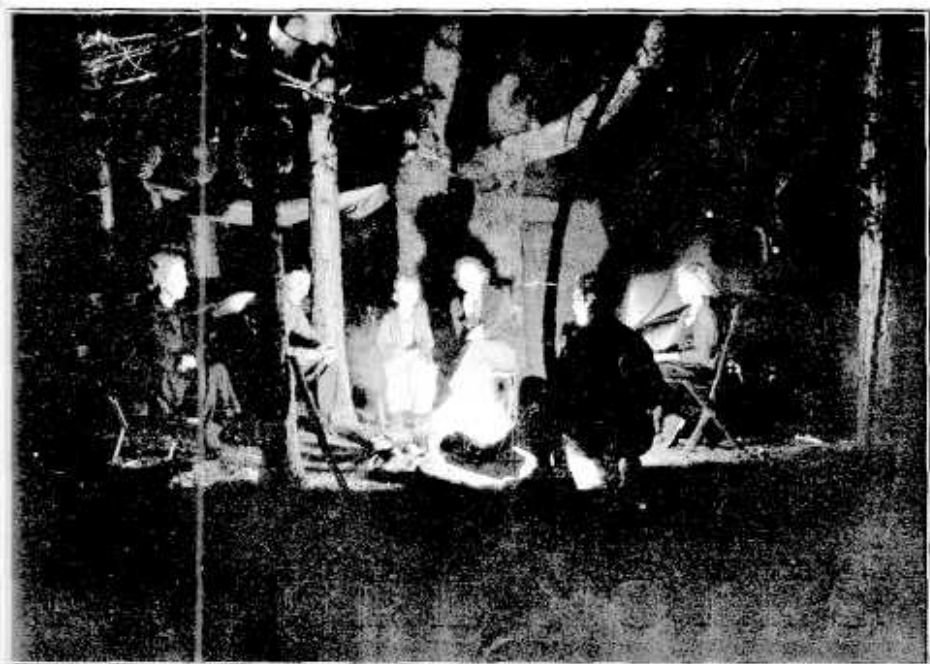


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CAMPER ACTIVITIES IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Ranger Lemuel A. Garrison

An analysis of the travel into Yosemite National Park during 1938 showed that 41 per cent were one-day visitors, 33 per cent stayed at the Park Operator's units, and 26 per cent stayed in the free public camp grounds. However, when the length of stay of all three groups was considered, a totally different picture developed. Out of the 1,233,500 visitor days in Yosemite Valley between May 1 and September 30, the campers in free camp grounds with their longer average stay, accounted for 59 per cent of the total days use; those who stayed at the Park Operator's units accounted for 28 per cent; while the one-day trippers dropped to 13 per cent. Thus, it would seem that in any study of the problem of overcrowding in Yosemite Valley, it would have a direct bearing if we could determine the appeals that brought in the close to 90,000 campers and led them to stay an average of nearly 7 days apiece.

With this thought in mind, during the summers of 1937 and 1938, questionnaires were distributed to the campers to try to determine their interests. If a direct question were

asked—"Why do you want to camp in Yosemite Valley?"—many of the visitors would be unable to formulate a truthful and satisfactory reply. They quite honestly don't know exactly why they come in. Rather, an indirect approach was used—to find out what the campers did and then assume that these things were the ones that interested them the most.

No effort was made to contact all of the campers. In 1938 the questionnaire covered only 1572 cases—about two per cent of the campers. To obtain this many samples, 2140 papers were distributed, giving us a return of 74 per cent which is very high for this type of survey. It is a good indication of public cooperation.

In distributing the questionnaires, a carefully prepared schedule was followed which took account of three variables as determined from the 1937 statistics. First: the percentage of the total population in the different camps, thus allowing for any differences in the quality of population. Second: the week of the camping season in case there should be any difference in the class of campers at

different times during the summer. Third: the day of the week, to distinguish between the mid-week and week-end visitors, and sample them both alike.

When a test of this type is used more than once, the correlation between the results of different samplings, or between the samplings of different years, is a fairly reliable index to the adequacy of the sampling and the reliability of the results. Using this criterion, the correlation of .968 between the 1937 and 1938 results would indicate that this test has measured fairly accurately the activities of the Yosemite Valley campers.

Prior to the listing of the general activities, some questions were included on which information was wanted. Question 1 asked:

"For cooking do you use () Gasoline Stove () Campfire () Both?"

The results show that 57 per cent of all campers used gasoline stoves exclusively, 16 per cent a campfire, and 23 per cent both. Miscellaneous and no answer—4 per cent. The interesting thing on this tabulation is that 80 per cent of the campers at least had gasoline stoves with them. This figure was exactly the same in the 1937 questionnaire. Of course, the shortage of firewood in Yosemite Valley may have something to do with the number of people coming here who bring stoves with them, and this percentage might not be applicable to campgrounds in other areas.

Part 2 of the same question asked:

"Do you have a campfire of your own in the evening? () Yes () No."

Fifty-two per cent indicated that they had an evening campfire, 42 per cent did not, and 6 per cent did not answer the question. Certainly this is an interesting item. It probably illustrates more clearly than any other one the extreme changes there have been in camping habits in the past twenty years. Formerly



the communal spirit of sitting round an evening campfire, talking, singing, and telling fish stories, was considered one of the prime advantages of going camping. However, the present condition is right in line with modern social trends which do not give much emphasis to self entertainment in the evening, or any other time. Obviously if 42 per cent do not have evening campfires, this same 42 per cent must not stay "at home" in the evening. And, if they do not stay at home, they must go to some of the entertainments provided—

talks, programs, dances, and shows. And, there are some advantages to it. It reduces the number of fires and the consequent scattering of ashes which are detrimental to tree growth. Also it provides an opportunity to expose these visitors to some of our educational efforts.

These figures are particularly interesting in connection with planning any campground layouts. Obviously each camp will not need a cooking type of fireplace. Possibly the best equipment would be a fire layout that could be used either for cooking or an open fire in the evening, with fires confined to these places only.

Question 2:

"Have you ever camped before in Yosemite Valley? () Yes () No. () How many times?"

On the 1938 questionnaire, 54 per cent had camped here before as compared with 51 per cent in 1937. In 1938, 43 per cent had not camped here before, and 48 per cent in 1937. The balance did not answer the question. Average number of times was 3.67 for the 1938 group, and 3.36 for the 1937 group. One interpretation of these figures would be that the percentage of our "permanent" camp population is increasing slightly and along with that is a normal increase in the average number of visits. Apparently those who come in time after time must be satisfied. Figures from the 1937 questionnaire indicate that 11 per cent of all campers had never been camping before. Reasoning from this, it would seem

logical that the acceptance of overcrowding, and the casual toleration of camp surroundings far removed from the normal forest environment they supposedly come to seek, is at least in part a responsibility of the Park Service. The people don't know any better, merely taking what is offered. If many of them were forced to move to a really isolated spot, it would scare them out. Observation further bears this out. In the fall, when camps become scattered, many people move just to be near to other camps.

Also, if this observed increase of the percentage of repeaters is a true increase and not a minor fluctuation due to inadequate sampling, we may expect an increase of campers year by year, assuming that the number of new-comers remains about constant. This makes a study of what they do and why they come of even more interest to the park administration.

Question 3 asked for an indication of age group. Results were: No answer, 2 per cent; over 50, 16 per cent; 31-50, 46 per cent; 26-30, 13 per cent; 21-25, 13 per cent; 15-20, 10 per cent. One reason for getting this data was to determine if the younger part of the campground population—15-20—was really as high a percentage as it seemed or if they were mainly conspicuous by reason of their greater activity, noise, and spectacular dress. A Forest Service Questionnaire used in 1937 gave only 7 per cent for this group. It would have seemed reasonable to

assume that this figure was off by at least 15 per cent. However, these figures indicate that the juveniles are really only a minor part of the camp population picture. By comparison, the 1930 census figures give 9.5 per cent as the number in this age group.

Question 4:

"In choosing a campground, do you prefer one that is () 1, busy and near the center of things, or () 2, quiet, several miles from a recreational center?"

On this question the answers were about even, with a slight majority preferring the "busy" campgrounds. The results in 1937 were the same. There does not seem to be much room for doubt that the Yosemite Valley campgrounds are "Busy and near the center of things" rather than "Quiet, several miles from a recreational center"; and under those circumstances the most obvious conclusion is that about half of the campers do not know what a really isolated campground is like. There have been a number of contributing factors to this situation. Many visitors date their camping experience to the construction of good roads to the mountains, bringing crowds that overloaded the existing campgrounds. And, as new campgrounds were opened, even if there was room for only very few campsites, these were put right beside each other for greater ease of administration. So, again, if many of the visitors think they are in a really quiet and isolated spot when they camp

in Yosemite Valley, the responsibility for this misapprehension is not all theirs. There has been no opportunity to learn anything different.

Further along this line, the campers in camps 12 and 11 furnish the majority of those voting for a "quiet" campground. Relatively speaking, camps 11 and 12 are more quiet than camp 14, yet they are still short of an ideally isolated camp. Thus, we have campers coming in here because it is a busy place with many things to do located in one area, while others come in sincere in their belief that because they go across the river or the road to camps 11 and 12, they are in a quiet place. It provides considerable insight into the mental processes of the campers to learn this.

Question 5:

This question listed 15 campgrounds in Yosemite National Park, outside the valley, and along automobile roads, and asked if any of the campers had at any time used these campgrounds. Twenty per cent checked one or more of the outlying camps. The most popular of these camps in the order named were: Tuolumne Meadows, Mariposa Grove, Tenaya Lake, Glacier Point, Wawona, White Wolf, and Yosemite Creek.

Part 2 of the same question asked reasons for camping in the valley this time if the camper had checked the first part of the question. Eight reasons were given for checking, with write-ins requested. Of the 8 listed, the 3 most outstanding were:

more diversified recreation for all the family, more conveniences, and a more extensive naturalist program. Following were: better recreation provided for children, more company, dances, bears less bothersome than in outlying camps, and better advertised. The write-ins were sporadic, totaling only 25. Of these, 7 wrote in "I like it," evidently a vague, nostalgic sort of feeling towards the place.

These results tend to prove what was suspected—that the lure of the Yosemite Valley campgrounds are mainly in the things to do, and the conveniences provided. Good roads, piped water, and modern comfort stations seem to outweigh the call of the wild in most campers' minds. The easiest thing to do is the one that gets done. Consequently, the easiest place to drive, and the one where there is the least thinking to do about recreation is the one that is used. This throws some light on the problem of encouraging the use of the outlying camps. To accomplish much along these lines it will probably be necessary to make these camps seem as attractive as Yosemite Valley. This attraction would not be limited to the provision of all the physical details of a well equipped camp, but would include things to do—drives, hikes, and programs. After all, one of Yosemite's chief charms is that it is almost an ideal camping place for families. There are recreations geared to every age group. If the outlying camps are to compete with the valley attractions, either these

same attractions must be installed in reasonable amount, or the valley entertainment curtailed.

Question 6:

This question listed 23 activities and asked for check marks to indicate in which of them the visitor participated while in the valley. Since the correlation between this list in 1938 and the one in 1937 is .968, the 1937 list is omitted, and only the 1933



Yosemite Museum Much Visited

rating given here. Museum Visits came first in visitor participation with 80 per cent. This was followed by Hikes With Own Party, 75 per cent; Drives to Scenic Points, 71 per cent; Bear Feeding and Talks, 69 per cent; Just Resting, 62 per cent; Camp 14 Program, 57 per cent; Visit Museum Garden, 55 per cent; Campfire Program, Own Campground, 53 per cent; Camp Curry Program, 53 per cent; Visit Indian Demonstration, 51 per cent; and Swimming in the River, 50 per cent.

Following these first 11 items, there was a definite break in the percentages. Fishing interested 21 per cent as did Dances. Twenty per cent Read in the Museum Library. The same number—17 per cent—went Bicycling and Attended Nature Hikes. Sixteen per cent joined the Auto Caravan, and 13 per cent Swam in the Lodge or Curry Pool. Ten per cent went to Movies, and 5 per cent on Horseback Trips. Three per cent played Tennis, and 1 per cent took Tours by Bus. Only 5 Played Golf—less than one-half of 1 per cent.

When these items were listed by campgrounds the average correlation between the camps was .955. This is so high that it is safe to assume that there is no great difference between the various campgrounds as to the amount, extent, or priority of participation in the various activities. While the visitors in camp 11 voted 81 per cent in favor of a quiet campground, they then took part in nearly as many activities as those in

camp 7 who voted 65 per cent in favor of a busy camp. Also there is no appreciable difference in the quality of the activities they like. This further bears out the idea that the majority of those who state that they favor a "quiet" campground, really don't know what they mean.

The average number of activities per person was 8.03. On the basis of age groups, the number of activities showed a steady increase from 7.40 for those over 50, to 8.83 for those 15-20. There was no significant difference between the various campgrounds as to the number of activities.

Question 7:

This question asked for double-checking of the 3 items in which there was the most frequent participation. It represents the repeat value of any activity. Obviously a visitor might like to go fishing every day, while one auto caravan might satisfy him—not that he has seen it all, but he has seen all that interests him. Thus, there is a qualitative difference



that might normally be expected to show up in these tabulations. Also, the length of stay has considerable bearing on the results of this question, but inasmuch as there were some campers who stayed the full 30 days and double checked 4 or 5 items, as well as those who stayed only one or two days and double checked none at all, it was felt that this factor would about average up for the data as a whole. The percentages given represent the number of those participating in an activity who then double-checked it, and have no direct relation to the total number checking an item.

Hikes with Own Party, 45 per cent; Fishing, 45 per cent; Swimming in River, 44 per cent; Drives to Scenic Points, 41 per cent; Camp 14 Program, 39 per cent; Naturalist Conducted Hikes, 37 per cent; Campfire Programs, Own Campground, 36 per cent; Dances, 35 per cent; Just Resting, 34 per cent; Curry Program, Horseback Trips, and Tennis 23 per cent. The rest tapered on down to the Visits to Indian Demonstration, with 6 per cent.

In applying these figures, it would seem reasonable that the activities having a high repeat value should be those stressed in any development of outstanding campgrounds planned to relieve the load in Yosemite Valley. Trails for hikes— heavy planting of fish nearby—a good swimming pool in a lake or stream—drives, and a campfire program area.

Of this list, fishing seems to be the

item which is most likely to misinterpretation. Observation indicates that usually the man of the family is the one who goes fishing while the rest of the group takes in other activities. Thus, since father is presumably the boss and must be consulted in choosing a vacation site, fishing would play a far more important part in the general picture than might be indicated by the number fishing.

Further, in planning developments elsewhere, care must be taken to include items having an appeal to the whole family. Of this list, the educational opportunities for children offered would be quite important. There are few incentives more powerful in influencing parents than that of offering educational advantages for children.

Written comments were asked for on every page. Thirty-nine per cent wrote a comment of some type. Nearly half of these implied general approval by some phrase such as "Swell!", "O.K.", "Perfect!", or "Well pleased." The rest of the comments were divided among criticisms of sanitation, roads, Yosemite Park and Curry Company operations, praise for rangers and ranger-naturalists, and a general miscellany of odds and ends. Here, as in most of the items on the questionnaires, the public cooperation in filling them out was highly satisfactory.

From special tabulations the following data are taken: (1) Of all campers, 40 per cent had children of school age. (2) There was an aver-

age participation of 50 per cent in the "Indigenous" activities; 46 per cent in the "Educational" activities; and 18 per cent in the "Exotic" types of activity. These figures were exactly the same on the 1937 study. (3) If only one activity was joined, "Just Resting" was the most frequently indicated. If two were marked, "Hikes with own party" were added. If three activities were checked, there was time for "Museum Visits," or "Drives to Scenic Points." If four activities were indicated, "Visits to the area below the Old Village to see the bears and hear the talks" were added to the list.

In conclusion, probably one of the most interesting results of this study was the amount of camper cooperation received. Most of the campers are substantial, reasonable individuals with a feeling of love and respect for Yosemite. The manner of presentation of any problem to them will largely determine the response, as they start with a very friendly attitude towards the Park Service and would be glad to be of help in supporting moves that seem reasonable. In other words, it might well be possible to increase the quality of use in Yosemite Valley by a well thought out, aggressive, educational campaign. Certainly some of the problems now facing the National Park Service, both in the campgrounds and in other areas, might be ameliorated by presenting them and a proposed solution to the people who create them.

Certainly campers are human beings with human, understandable ways of thought and action. It is interesting to know what they consider worth doing on their visits to Yosemite Valley, and still more interesting to get some insight into their mental reactions to the conditions they meet while here.

TABUCE ON SALAMANDERS By Ranger-Naturalist Lowell Adams

In Yosemite when we are interested in getting a unique slant on natural history we go to old Tabuce. When a plant or animal is brought to her attention she sometimes has an Indian name for it and often she has an interesting anecdote to tell—some experience that she has had "long time ago."

One day Tabuce came into the Museum and I showed her some preserved specimens of Mount Lyell Salamanders. She looked at them intently for some time and then recognized them. "Oh, sure!" Then, "Long time ago way down by El Portal, we go hunting Indian Wild Grass. We see 'that one' (meaning the salamander). He walk along very slow (gestures with arms to imitate a walking salamander) like him not go far. He (an Indian companion) say not kill that one. Him bad one. But I not know that so I picked up a stick and kill him. Right away hoop-oo-cha (rain) come. We get all wet!" Here was conclusive proof for Tabuce that the salamander was a "bad one."



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Dan Anderson