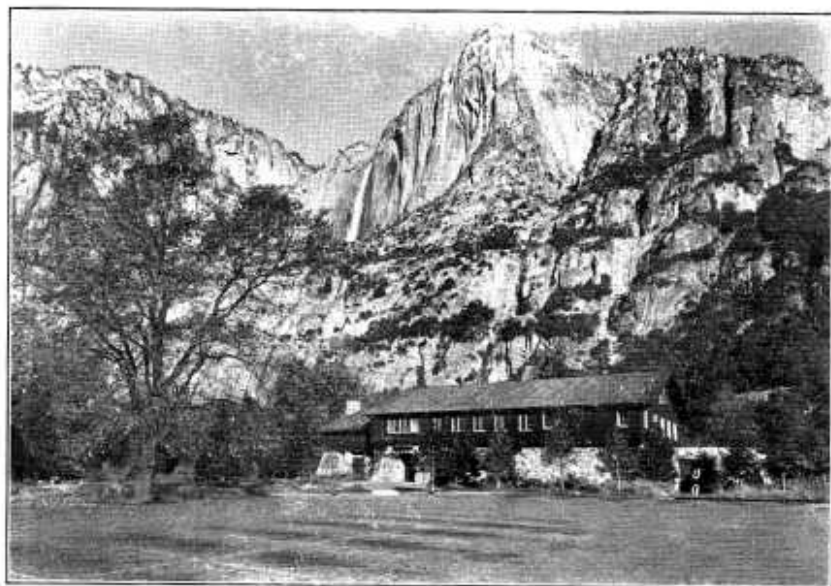


# YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

VOL. XIX

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Yosemite Museum and Upper Yosemite Fall.

# Yosemite Nature Notes

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## "GOOD-BYE TO PARK NATURALIST HARWELL"

By Assistant Park Naturalist M. E. Beatty

Charles Albert Harwell, who has served as park naturalist at Yosemite National Park for the past eleven years, has resigned to accept appointment as California's representative of the National Association of Audubon Societies. His new duties will include the organization of new Audubon Societies in cities and towns in the state where none now exist, coordinating the work of existing Audubon units in the state, promoting the organization of Junior Audubon Clubs in California; lecturing and radio programs; and furthering the conservation and protection of wild birds and animals in accordance with policies of the National Association of Audubon Societies.

Mr. Harwell, a native Californian, received his education in the schools of the state, graduating from the University of California in 1914. After graduate study, which included work at Columbia and Stanford, Mr. Harwell was awarded a Master's degree at the University of California. He entered the field of education and served as principal in the Berkeley, California schools until 1929.

In 1926, Mr. Harwell attended the Yosemite School of Field Natural History. This was the second year of this school. In 1927, he was appointed to serve as ranger naturalist in Yosemite. He was the first graduate of the Field School to receive appointment in the Service. He served again in 1928, and in 1929 was invited to assume the responsibilities of park naturalist at Yosemite.

During the eleven years he has served in this position, Mr. Harwell has directed the museum and naturalist program of this important national park. He has served as Director of the Yosemite School of Field Natural History, which, in training each summer twenty selected college graduates to become the future naturalists of the National Park Service, has gained a nationwide recognition. Mr. Harwell originated a Junior Nature School in Yosemite which has functioned successfully in the park for ten summers. Several other of the larger national parks have organized similar schools patterned on the Yosemite program. He has sponsored the development

of several activities in the park which are now considered essential features of our educational program. Noteworthy are auto caravans, campfire programs, the museum wildflower garden and Indian demonstrations. The many changes he has brought about in the exhibit scheme of the museum have produced much favorable comment.

Mr. Harwell is well-qualified to undertake this newly created post in California with the National Association of Audubon Societies. He has made a lifetime study of birds, especially bird songs. An early interest in whistling and natural musical ability led to bird imitations and bird song writing. He has been much in demand as a speaker for scientific societies, teacher training groups, clubs, schools and on the radio. He has a pleasing voice and personality which make it possible for him easily to combine scientific information and rare entertainment.

Mr. Harwell is a member of a number of scientific organizations including: The Cooper Club, American Wildlife Society, the American Nature Society (vice president), the Audubon Association of the Pacific (past president), California Audubon Society (vice president), and of the Sierra Club. He served as chairman of a state committee for the selection of a state bird for California. During the campaign he appeared on an NBC hookup once each week for two years, popularizing the contest. As a result 165,000 ballots were tallied and the California Valley Quail became the popular choice,

later to be proclaimed State bird by the California legislature.



Mr. Harwell is well known as an authority on birds and conservation matters from coast to coast because of his outstanding work with the National Park Service and his radio and lecture work. He has spoken before such organizations as the Museum of Natural History, New York; New York City Kiwanis Club; Academy of Sciences, Chicago; Academy of Sciences, San Francisco; Department of the Interior Series, Washington, D. C.; Biological Society, Washington, D. C.; The Audubon Society of Washington, D. C.; Annual meeting Sigma Psi; Johns Hopkins University; Western Reserve University Group, Gates Mills, Ohio; Los Angeles Breakfast Club, Los Angeles; Cooper Ornithological Club, Berkeley and Los Angeles; California Audubon Society, Los Angeles; Audubon Association of the Pacific, San Francisco; California Teachers Association, San Francisco; Golden Gate International Exposition, San Francisco; Sierra Club of California, San

Francisco, and numerous church, school, college, Boy Scout, Service Club and other organizations.

Last winter while on leave of absence from the National Park Service, he accepted an invitation to deliver a series of forty lectures in New England and Atlantic Coast States.

Mr. Harwell left Yosemite September 7, and departed at once for New York City to familiarize himself with the policies and work of the National Audubon Society. Aft-

er participating in the annual meeting of the Society from October 11 to 15, he expects to return in time to launch the program in California on November 1.

For the present Mr. Harwell's headquarters will be at his home, 2630 Hilgard Avenue, Berkeley, California. His co-workers in Yosemite and his host of friends both in and out of the National Park Service wish him every success in his new position.

### SUNNYSIDE BENCH AND FERN LEDGE

By Walter D. Staaf and Hugh J. Hamilton

The article, **Sunnyside Bench**, by Ranger-Naturalist Verlin G. Baysinger (Yos. Nature Notes, July, 1940, pp. 52-53) has interested us particularly, for we have visited that and surrounding areas several times since 1934.

No one who is an ardent disciple of Yosemite — hence also of John Muir — can fail to be intrigued by the Great Naturalist's reference to ". . . Fern Ledge on the east side (of the Upper Yosemite Fall). . . at a height of about 400 feet above the base of the fall." (**The Yosemite Century**, 1912, p. 28). It was at a point on the extension of this ledge that Muir once found himself directly behind the mass of the Great Fall—and shortly thereafter directly under it! (**The Yosemite**, pp. 40-42.)

We wish briefly to describe a route to this ledge which may be followed by those who, like our-

selves, are of the garden variety of two-weeks-out-of-the-52 climbers.

After following Mr. Baysinger to the southern extreme of "the great bench fronting the upper fall," we head in the general direction of the Lost Arrow, ascending enroute a long slope of finely decomposed granite, until we reach the sheer cliff below Yosemite Point. Here we turn west, following the base of the cliff until the ground beneath us suddenly drops to the northern extreme of Mr. Baysinger's "great bench." There ahead of us, apparently within arm's reach, is the Upper Fall, only two thirds of its plunge completed.

But not quite all of the ground beneath us has dropped away; there remains one slab of granite, pasted to the face of the cliff. Distinctly seen from below, this slab appears to have a vertical thickness of



(left)

JOHN MUIR

★ ★ ★

(cover)

**SUNNYSIDE BENCH**  
 marked by line of trees  
 above roof of Museum.

at least a hundred feet; its horizontal thickness at the top is six or eight feet, and the ledge thus formed slopes inward.

There is only one step which could be described as "nervetrying"—and we are on Fern Ledge. The ledge gradually drops perhaps 30 feet, loses its inward sloping character, develops humps, and gets wetter, till reaching well behind the fall, it would appeal to no one less intrepid than Muir. Small pools of water, deposited by mist and by the fall in its lateral variations, are easily accessible.

At least seven persons, including ourselves, visited Fern Ledge between 1934 and 1939; their names

are in tin cans which we have left from time to time.

We would like to add two remarks to Mr. Baysinger's informative article. First, one may descend by an indirect route from Sunnyside Bench at least in times of low water to the very brink of the Lower Fall. Nature has there provided a guard wall much like that at the head of Vernal Fall, though higher.

Second, the seeming immunity of the Valley to rattlesnakes is not shared by Sunnyside Bench. We have killed three rattlers in and near this area, and have heard numerous invisible warnings in dry years.

In conclusion, we advise that there are now no ferns on Fern Ledge.



### PEREGOY MEADOWS

By Ranger-Naturalist Enid Michael

At the edge of Peregoy Meadows a vanguard of ancient Lodgepole Pines cast a dignified shade. Here blooms today (June 5, 1940) *Lithophragma glabra* var. *bulbifera*, a Mountain Woodland Star. A scarf of these delicate plants fringe the shadow of one of the ancient pines. The plants are about six inches high and the fringed white flower reminds one of a tiny pin-wheel. The leaves, too, are rounded, lacy leaves, a few of which are scattered up the reddish stems whilst more cluster at the base. This is a rare plant in the Yosemite District and seldom met with elsewhere.

The whole ground, hereabout, is lacy with the green, rounded fingered leaves of Larkspur Patens (*Delphinium decorum* var. *patens*), and scattered among them the grass-like leaves of Golden Stars (*Brodiaea ixioides*).

Gathered near the base of the pine are the budded stems of *Fritillaria atropurpurea*. This, too, is a plant seldom found in our district.

Yellow violets appear, here and there, in bright bouquets. Out in

the open, away from the shade, *Hesperocheron pumilus* has commenced to bloom. And further down the meadow slope toward the stream, are beds of low yellow buttercups (*Ranunculus alismaefolius* var. *alismellus*) interspersed with clumps of blue violets. Shooting Stars are scattered over the moist open slopes. Many of these are the fragrant variety (*odoratus*), of the



species *Dodecatheon jeffreyi*.

The sink of the meadow, north of the highway, is bedded with the close set plants of Upside-down Clo-



ver (*Trifolium bolanderi*). One of the charms of this rare, beautiful low growing clover, is the strong violet-like fragrance.

I sit on a boulder in the fringe of pines and every breath is sweet with the mingled perfume of clover and shooting stars. The songs of birds come from the branches overhead. There is the rich warble of Cassin Purple Finch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet's lilting song and mingled voices of Warbling Vireo, Junco, Chipping Sparrow, Olive-sided Flycatcher. Then comes the pure mel-



ody of Hermit Thrush.

The flowers of today are only the first of the rich procession of bloom that through the spring and summer will grace these fair meadows. As I sit musing here I think of other days when early collectors, such as Bolander and Brandegee, gathered here. These meadows were made available in the old days by a roadhouse called Mountain View House and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Peregoy. This road house was situated on the old horse trail from Clark's to Yosemite, and vis-

itors frequently spent the night on their way to or from the Valley. The sweet fragrance of this meadow must have come like the breath of heaven itself to the tired travelers and what a rest to weary, dust-filled eyes the vistas of fresh wildflowers.

### VIEW OF MT. LYELL FROM THE NEW TIOGA ROAD

By Ranger-Naturalist C Sharsmith

The new Tioga Road from Tuolumne Meadows to Tioga Pass is in general at a slightly higher level than is the old road. It is usually believed that a view of Mt. Lyell from the new road is no longer possible. This impression is affirmed if one travels too rapidly upward and fails to know precisely where to look. Mt. Lyell is, however, visible along a few hundred foot section of the new road just exactly one mile above the new government contact station at the main entrance to the Tuolumne Campground. By watching carefully one's speedometer and stopping at one mile going east, the upper part of the mountain is visible in a notch in the skyline toward the southeast. By climbing up on the roadbank at this point, both Mt. Lyell and Mt. Maclure stand framed in this notch as twin mountains of apparently equal height, Mt. Lyell being the mountain on the left. For a view of its glacier, however, it is necessary to climb the hillslope considerably higher above this point.

## NOTES FROM THE HETCH HETCHY REGION

By Ranger-Naturalist Vincent Mowbray

The road between the Mather Ranger Station and Hetch Hetchy Reservoir varies in elevation from 4,000 feet to 5,000 feet which should, normally, be in the Transition Life Zone; however, in this particular section, Upper Sonoran types are found to predominate. The Digger Pine (*Pinus sabiniana*) is the most noticeable of the Upper Sonoran plants found here, and in several sections it is found intermingled with the Jeffrey Pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*) which is to be expected at elevations above 6000 feet. On the particular ridge where these two species are found mixed together the elevation ranges from 5000 to 5200 feet. The crest of the ridge has a fairly good stand of Western Yellow Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) above the Jeffrey Pine-Digger type. The undergrowth consists almost entirely of Manzanita.

In this section there are also a number of Upper Sonoran species of birds which I believe nest here and, if they do, constitute new nesting records for Yosemite National Park. I have visited this section twice during the year, first on April 19, 1940, and then again on June 24, 1940. On my first trip I was surprised to find three Ash-throated Flycatchers (*Myiarchus c. cinerascens*), one Long-tailed Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*) and one Wren-Tit (*Chamaea fasciata*). Although the area offered suitable habitats for these species I had not expected to

see any of them at such a high elevation. When I returned to this area on June 24, the first thing that I heard as I stopped the car was the song of a Wren-Tit some distance above the road.

Further investigation showed that there were four of these birds in one Manzanita bush and this leads me to believe that it was a family, or part of a family, which had nested in the area. I was unable to positively identify any of these birds as young of the year, but the fact that there were four of them together seems to be sufficient evidence that it was a family group. While watching this group I heard another Wren-Tit singing down below the road, indicating at least one other singing male was present in this section. The next bird that I saw was a lone Ash-throated Flycatcher, which was perched in a nearby Digger Pine, and shortly afterward a Long-tailed Jay flew overhead and perched in the top of a Jeffrey Pine. In this same section I also saw such Tran-



Western Tanager

sition and Canadian life zone species as Mountain Quail, White-headed Woodpecker, Short-tailed Chickadee, Cassin Solitary Vireo, Calaveras Warbler, Audubon Warbler,



and Western Tanager. The other two observations which I have been able to find for this region are of a Long-tailed Jay observed by me on July 14, 1939, at an elevation of 4900 feet on the north side of the Tuolumne Canyon near the head of Poopenaut Valley and two Ash-throated Flycatchers observed on the same date in Poopenaut Valley (elevation 3500 feet) by George Petrides. The probable presence of these three Upper Sonoran species of birds in the region near Hetch Hetchy from April 19 to June 24

would seem to indicate that they are nesting species in Yosemite National Park and, in the case of the Wren-Tit, there is at least some evidence to substantiate that conclusion.

This article is based on only a few observations but it gives some indications of the mix up which is to be found in the life zones of the Hetch Hetchy region. In order to get a better understanding of the flora and fauna of this section a complete study would have to be made over a period of time.

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### ARCTIC THREE-TOED WOODPECKER

By Ranger-Naturalist Enid Michael

The nest-hole of an Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker was four feet above the ground in the dead wood of a living Lodgepole Pine at 7000 feet altitude on the Big Oak Flat Road. The tree stood twenty feet back from the shore of a small lake and about half this distance away from the paved highway. There were many dead and dying Lodgepole Pines in the near neighborhood of the nest-tree, and it was on these trees that the female woodpecker did her foraging. Because of the fact that there was no male bird attached to this nest during the time of our observation, the female had to do all the foraging, and she was a very busy bird. On the morning of June 17, between 9:22 and 12:21 she brought food to the nest fourteen times. In all these three hours

the young were never silent; a constant clatter of metallic notes came from the nest-hole. The notes were very much like the clicking of a telegraph instrument. The mother bird's call-note was a single "click," which she uttered as she approached the nest. This note was uttered several times as she hitched down the tree trunk to the nest-hole. And incidently the first "click" as the female came in from the forage field caused the youngsters in the nest to become wildly excited; the volume of voice increased and also the tempo. And it was noted that the young could keep up squalling even when being stuffed with grubs. The parent bird did most of her foraging on the trunks of the dead Lodgepole Pines, and the food she brought in appeared to be termites.

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Dan Anderson