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BIRD RECORDS OF THE 1943 SEASON

By Assistant Park Naturalist R. K. Grater

Throughout the year bird records of more than passing interest and importance are constantly being accumulated. The following observations, obtained during the summer of 1943, throw new light upon the status of some of our bird species.

On April 25, a WESTERN MARSH WREN (*Telmatoodytes palustris pleisius*) was observed in a swampy area near El Capitan. This bird has normally been considered an uncommon post-nesting migrant through Yosemite Valley with records from August to October. Its presence in the Valley during the late spring, plus the fact that an immature was collected in the Valley during October, 1914, suggests the possibility that this species may be nesting in favorable localities in the lower reaches of the park.

On May 16, a Cassin's Vireo nest was found in the Museum Wildflower Garden. In the nest was an egg of the DWARF COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater obscurus*). In 1934 the cowbird made its first recorded appearance in Yosemite, and in May of that year one of its eggs was discovered in a Cassin's Vireo nest. Again in June,

1940, a Cassin's Vireo was observed feeding a young cowbird at Mirror Lake. No other records have been obtained from this region showing any other bird species other than the Vireo acting as a foster-parent to the cowbird, although others undoubtedly occur.

On June 5, a DUCK HAWK (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) was observed below Yosemite Point. This is such an unusually rare hawk in the park that its presence is worthy of note. The record is also of importance in that this species was known to nest near Yosemite Point in 1939, and this may indicate that the same area is being used as a nesting site again this year.

On June 16, a TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura septentrionalis*) was seen near the South Entrance Ranger Station. Since 1919 there has been only eight recorded instances of this bird occurring within the park, and these observations range from May to October. However, in July, 1933, two were observed at the Mariposa Grove and on May 6, 1942, eleven were seen at the South Entrance. With summer records from

this one sector ranging from May to July, it is highly possible that these birds nest somewhere in that part of the park or in the immediate region.



Turkey Vulture

The year 1941 saw the first record of the WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) nesting in Yosemite. Again this year the Wood Duck visited Yosemite Valley and is known to have hatched five young in the Leidig Meadow region. When observed on June 30 the young ducks were strong, sturdy and extremely capable in the art of disappearing into the safety of the marshes.

For several years the BLACK SWIFT (*Nephoecetes niger borealis*) has been the object of much study in the park. Some seasons it occurs in sufficient numbers to be noted with more or less regularity; other seasons it is almost entirely lacking. The nesting sites of these birds in

the region are still not well known. This summer these birds have appeared over the Yosemite Valley region in large numbers. Nor was this abundance transitory, but was maintained all through May, June and July. On July 15, they were observed in abundance around the Nevada Falls area and several were seen to disappear in the crevices in the rock on the cliffs of Liberty Cap. This suggests that probably both areas were being used as nesting sites, and that young were likely being fed.

On July 22, a large hawk was observed to drop the remains of a partially eaten bird near Rocky Point in Yosemite Valley. An examination of the dead bird showed it to be a second year CALIFORNIA GULL (*Larus californicus*), making it the seventh record of this gull from Yosemite Valley and the first since 1940. The hawk, insofar as could be determined, was a WESTERN GOSHAWK (*Astur atricapillus striatulus*).

NEW BIRD RECORD FOR YOSEMITE

In going over the bird study skin collection in the Yosemite Museum, it was discovered that a Hutchin's Goose (*Branta canadensis hutchinsii*) collected in Yosemite Valley by Lowell Adams on February 27, 1939, has not previously been reported in *Nature Notes*. This record constitutes the first of its kind for this species in the park.—R. K. Grater.

CHIEF RANGER TOWNSLEY DIES**By Frank A. Kittredge, Superintendent**

It is with regret that we inform our readers of the sudden death of Chief Ranger Forest Sanford Townsley, popular old-timer and head of the Yosemite ranger force for the past 27 years. Death resulted from a heart attack on August 11, while on a pack trip with friends at the lake locally named in his honor near Vogelsang Pass.



Chief Townsley was born at Greeley Center, Nebraska, on August 24, 1882. He moved to Oklahoma with his pioneer parents at the age of six, and rode a horse in the great land rush at the opening of the Cherokee Strip, where his father served as Deputy U. S. Marshal.

Townsley started his national park career in June, 1904, in what was later known as Platt National Park, serving first as patrolman and later as park ranger. He came to Yosemite as park ranger in 1913 and was promoted to Chief Ranger of Yosemite National Park in 1916 following establishment of the National Park Service. His skill as a taxidermist brought special recognition from Stephen T. Mather, first Director of the National Parks, and his bird and mammal specimens were the nucleus of an exhibit which was the beginning of the first National Park Museum. These were originally prepared and displayed by Mr. Townsley in the old ranger office in the Old Village in 1915. Later, in 1920, they were moved to the old Jorgenson Studio, which served as the park museum until the opening of the present modern museum in Government Center in 1926. A number of these study skins are still in splendid condition and are preserved in the scientific study collections of the Yosemite Museum.

As Chief Ranger of Yosemite National Park, Mr. Townsley has welcomed visitors from all parts of the world and from all stations in life. The crowned heads of Europe as well as the most humble have responded to his ingratiating smile, and shared with him his love of the wilderness.



DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO YOSEMITE

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

Part II — The Era of Wheels

(Continued from last month's issue.)

Completion of the All-Year Highway

The fast growing popularity of the automobile as a means of transportation was paralleled by a considerable amount of road improvement in the park, resulting first in the re-vamping of the early stage roads so that they could be utilized by automobiles. Many visitors of the present day will recall the system of highway controls by which automobile travel was regulated for several years on the narrow, torturous sections between the rim and the valley floor. Increase in automobile travel also revived interest in a road up the Merced Canyon. As early as 1913 such a highway was advocated and a survey completed which indicated its practicability. By 1921 the initial portion of this route between Merced and Mariposa was completed, from which town it was extended to Briceburg in 1923. Means of surmounting the great difficulties and terrific expense presented by the Merced Canyon had been under consideration for some time so by fall of that year a plan had been worked out whereby convict labor

from San Quentin and Folsom prisons could be used to complete this section of the highway. The plan was a success both from a sociological as well as engineering point of view and on July 31, 1926, amid considerable festivity the now famous "All-Year Highway" was formally opened to the public. This event will probably remain the high point in Yosemite transportation history for some time, although the opening of the Wawona Tunnel in 1933 marked the completion of the present Wawona Road, and 1941 witnessed the completion of the first section of the new Big Oak Flat highway between the Valley and Crane Flat.

The Tioga Road

Until 1883 the Tuolumne Meadows region of Yosemite National Park, today frequented by many visitors, was accessible only by trail. The present Tioga Road over the pass of the same name, which extends through the heart of Yosemite National Park to Mono Lake to the east of the crest of the Sierra is the outgrowth of the mining excitement which centered in the area along

the Sierra crest in the 70's and 80's. For a time one of the most active corporations in this section was the Great Sierra Consolidated Silver Mining Company, whose claims were located just east of the present eastern boundary of Yosemite National Park. A trail had been constructed from the west to this location in 1857 over which most of their necessary supplies and materials were transported. In the winter of 1882 over 16,000 pounds of machinery, including an engine, compressor and boiler, were laboriously "snaked" over the rugged terrain on tobssleds from the east. This laborious task together with plans for increased activity no doubt prompted the initial construction of the Tioga Road by the company mentioned. It originated at Crocker's, a point on the Big Oak Flat Road, and extended eastward for over 56 miles, passing through Carl Inn, Aspen Valley, and White Wolf; skirting Tenaya Lake and crossing Tuolumne Meadows, to Bennettville or Tioga just east of the pass of the same name. Construction across the area, then public domain, was undertaken in 1882 and completed on December 27, 1883, at a cost of \$64,000.00. Although constructed primarily to transport ma-

terials and supplies, it soon came into use by the general public and the corporation applied for a franchise permitting the collection of tolls, a privilege that was granted by the commissioners of both Mariposa and Tuolumne Counties through which the road passed. The high hopes for this mining development, however, were short lived as work ceased in 1885. Collection of tolls was discontinued and the road fell into dis-repair. It remained in that state, owned by private individuals but lying within a national park (*) until 1915 when it was purchased by Stephen T. Mather (**) and a group of associates who, in turn, presented it to the Federal Government. The road was immediately reopened and made passable and, since the State had previously constructed a road up Leevining Canyon from Mono Lake, passage was thus provided across the Sierra through Yosemite National Park.

The road was hardly suited to modern motor travel, however, and in 1931 the National Park Service undertook its re-location and re-construction. The section from Tioga Pass westward through Tuolumne Meadows to Cathedral Creek was completed in 1937 while that portion

(*) Yosemite National Park, embodying an area of "reserved forest lands" surrounding Yosemite Valley was established by Congress on October 1, 1890. The Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, originally entrusted to the State by the Federal Government in 1864, was incorporated into the area in 1906.

(**) Then Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior. In 1917 he was appointed Director of the National Park Service, established in the previous year.

from Crane Flat to McSwain Meadows (near White Wolf) was completed in 1941. Thus visitors traveling this highway must still traverse about 20 miles of the old Tioga Road which, although modernized, still retains a semblance of its former rugged character.

First Airplane to Land in Yosemite Valley

In variance with present-day modes of travel is the pioneer trip by air to this region. On the morning of

May 27, 1919, Lieut. Krull of the U. S. Army, after a previous inspection of the Valley in which he passed upon the practicability of the flight, dove into sight over Sentinel Rock at an elevation of 7000 feet. Following a series of descending turns to 500 feet he swept down the valley from the vicinity of Washington Column to land in Leidig Meadow. Within a few years one or two planes repeated this performance but this mode of transportation is not approved by the National Park Service.

BRIEFED TRAVEL STATISTICS — YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

(Based on travel year period, October 1 to September 30)

Year	Visitors	Year	Visitors
1855-1864	653	1880	1,397
1864	147	1881	2,373
1865	369	1882	2,525
1866	438	1883	2,831
1867	502	1884	2,413
1868	623	1885	2,590
1869 (1).....	1,122	1886-1901 (no records available)	
1870	1,735	1902	8,023
1871	2,137	1903	8,376
1872	2,354	1904	9,500
1873	2,530	1905	10,103
1874	2,711	1906 (2).....	5,414
1875	2,423	1907 (3).....	7,102
1876	1,917	1908	8,850
1877	1,392	1909	13,182
1878	1,183	1910	13,619
1879	1,385	1911	12,539

(1) Overland Railroad completed.

(2) San Francisco earthquake and fire; Yosemite Valley receded to Federal Government and incorporated into Yosemite National Park.

(3) Yosemite Valley Railroad opened to travel.

1912	10,884	1928	460,619
1913 (4)	12,255	1929	461,257
1914 (5)	15,154	1930	458,566
1915	31,546	1931	461,855
1916	33,396	1932	498,289
1917	34,510	1933 (7)	296,088
1918	33,527	1934	309,431
1919	58,362	1935	372,317
1920	68,906	1936	431,192
1921	91,513	1937	481,492
1922	100,506	1938	443,325
1923	130,046	1939	466,552
1924	146,070	1940	506,781
1925	209,166	1941	594,062
1926	274,209	1942 (8)	332,550
1927 (6)	490,430		

- (4) Automobiles first permitted to enter the park (over Coulterville Road—August 23, 1913); administration of park by U. S. Army ends.
- (5) Wawona and Big Oak Flat roads first opened to automobiles.
- (6) Increase due to availability of All-Year Highway, opened in 1926.
- (7) Wawona area added to park; decrease in travel due to elimination from travel records of all intrapark travel and travel to Mariposa Grove, formerly included in totals.
- (8) World War II emergency.

AMERICAN EGRET—A NEW BIRD RECORD FOR YOSEMITE VALLEY

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

Although the summer season of 1943 was characterized by several new bird records, among the most interesting was the first report of the American Egret (*Casmerodius albus egretta*) for Yosemite Valley.

During early August several park visitors reported the presence of "a large white bird" along the Merced River. However, descriptions by the several people who made these observations did not tally in several important respects and we were un-

able to include it in our records, since its true identity could not be definitely established. Whenever opportunity offered we watched the shores of the Merced River but it was not until the morning of August 16th that our efforts were rewarded. At that time Park Ranger Buck Evans, driving along the road which parallels the stream between the Sentinel Bridge and Camp 16, noted the bird along the river bank and immediately called the museum,

Park Photographer Ralph Anderson and the writer hurried to the area as directed and within a few minutes not only established the identity of the bird but also secured some kodachrome slides and motion pictures as well.



The Great Blue Heron

A resident bird closely related to the American Egret.

The egret proved to be an apt subject for our cameras. Its pure snowy white raiment contrasted sharply with the dark water of the river and the deep green foliage along the bank of the stream. Engrossed in its own activities of food gathering, the bird paid us little heed and we were able to make a close approach. It stood almost motionless for long periods in the shallow pools along the river's edge, as it scanned the waters for some unsuspecting frog; occasionally stepping cautiously about upon its stilt-like legs. Now and then its long neck would dart out suddenly and an unwary amphibian held fast in the long yellow beak would be lifted struggling from its hiding place.

The beauty of the bird, together

with its highly interesting food gathering activities, quickly attracted the attention of many park visitors who lined the edge of the road overlooking the river. The interest was so great that there was little disturbance of the bird's activities so all had ample opportunity to enjoy the unusual spectacle. Finally the object of our attention decided to transfer its attention elsewhere. It rose suddenly from river's edge and flew with long flapping strokes of its great white wings out of sight about the bend of the river.

American Egrets are often seen in the swamps and marshes along the San Joaquin but this is the first authenticated record of its presence in Yosemite Valley.

PACIFIC FISHER

By Georgie Ware

Near mid-day of June 23, 1943, while standing near the creek in the Bridalveil Creek Campground along the Glacier Point Road, my attention was attracted to the opposite bank where an animal, new to my experience, had paused in the open forest near the unoccupied ranger cabin. After briefly surveying its surroundings, the animal continued leisurely on its way up the creek. Later, consulting Grinnell and Storer's "Animal Life in the Yosemite," I found that my observations of the animal tallied with their description of the Pacific Fisher (*Martes pennanti pacifica*).



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Dan Anderson