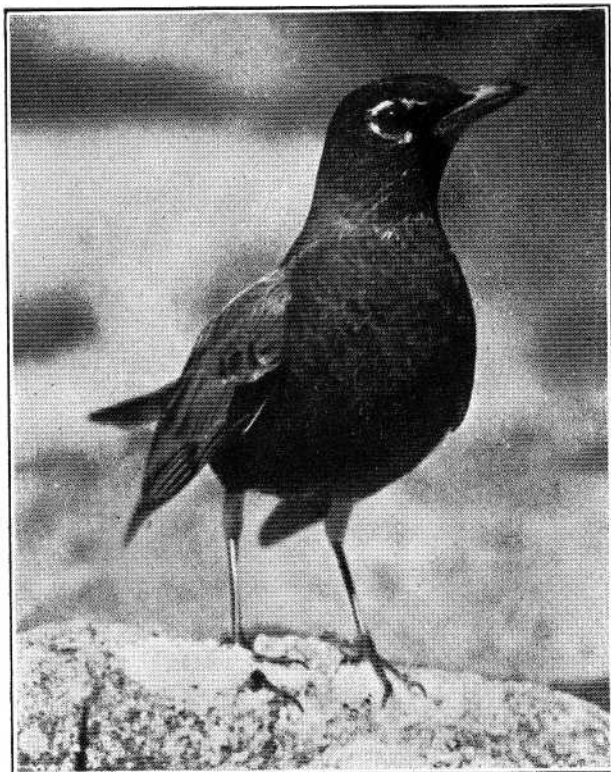


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THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DEPARTMENT
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THE FIRST POSTMASTER

By Emil Ernst, Park Forester

According to his own words in his book, "In the Heart of the Sierras," James M. Hutchings was the first postmaster in Yosemite. In those days the post office was called "Yosemite" and the postmaster received the enormous salary of \$12.00 per annum plus the uncalled-for old papers and quack advertisements. In those days there was no winter service and he often paid his Indian mail carrier as much as \$10.00 for a single round trip plus board and any old clothes available. This Indian made the trip out in the middle of winter without snowshoes.

Previous to his appointment as the first postmaster of Yosemite all correspondence was carried privately by travelers. Unfortunately Hutchings does not state when he was appointed postmaster, the date of the first dispatch of mail from the

newly created post office, length of the season for regular service nor the route or routes over which the mails were carried.

From C. F. Gordon-Cumming's book, "Granite Crags," mail service in all its important aspects was an established feature of the Valley in 1878. As the stages had been operating into Yosemite Valley as early as 1874 it can be assumed that regular mail service became a feature of modern development with the completion of the stage roads. That the service was reasonably fast is indicated in Gordon-Cumming's letter of July 1, 1878, to correspondents in England in the statement, "Today's post brought me the first letter I have received from you. It did seem strangely delightful to receive one ONLY a month old." Service from England today is not much faster unless air mail postage rates are paid.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM**By Victor H. Cahalane, Biologist**

Editor's Note: This paper presented at the meeting of Chief Park Rangers held in the Director's Office, National Park Service, March 19, 1947.

Biologists may investigate, diagnose, and write memoranda on wildlife management in the national parks. But the park rangers are the ones who come in daily contact with wildlife. They are the ones who are charged with its constant protection. Almost without exception, park rangers are intensely interested in this phase of their multi-sided job.

There are many interpretations of wildlife management. We could spend the remainder of the week discussing the details of the Park Service concept. As we are allowed only an hour, we must confine our discussion to basic principles and fundamentals. Undoubtedly each of you have your individual philosophy within the framework of Park Service policies. Before asking you to express your thoughts, I would like to highlight briefly a few subjects which I feel are outstanding.

We may at times lose sight of the vast importance of national parks in perpetuating whole species, — not just a number of individual animals. For better or for worse, this country is undergoing rapid changes. Our population is expanding and spreading into hitherto little used territory. The automobile is responsible for multiplication of highways. The airplane is bringing numbers of biolog-

ically ignorant people into the very heart of wilderness areas. The program for development of river basins is disquieting. These and many other factors will alter not only the aspect of the land but the distribution and living habits of the human population.

It is questionable whether we are wise enough to protect and insure the continuance of many vital resources during the process of this development. We need not worry now about the cottontail rabbit, the field sparrow, and the channel catfish. Those animals are much more durable than man himself. We must, however, be concerned about the Sierra bighorn, the grizzly bear, the bufflehead, the salmon, and many other species. To some of them, national parks can give little or no help. The existence of others, however, is directly dependent on the protection afforded by national parks. Some of the most valuable of these threatened species are not adaptable to civilization. They must be assured of large areas of wilderness, which only national parks can provide by law in perpetuity.

In this age of science, can the tragedies of the passenger pigeon, the Carolina parakeet and the great auk be allowed to repeat them-

selves? Are the professional alarmists too much alarmed about wild-life's future? Seven or eight races of grizzlies have been exterminated in the past 50 years. The Merriam elk was exterminated by 1900, the Audubon bighorn in 1914, the Lava Beds bighorn about 1920. Simple mathematics show that the rate of extinction of wildlife species is accelerating—not slowing down. During the past 2,000 years, about 106 species and subspecies of mammals have become extinct in the world. Only 35 of these were lost in the first 1850 years. Thirty-one died between 1851 and 1900. From 1901 to 1945, **forty** were wiped out.

In almost every instance, civilized man has been at fault. Through centuries of competition, animals have adapted themselves to meet the adversities of existence. Against the natural world, they are highly successful. That is why most species in natural areas need no assistance from man. They ask only that we refrain from meddling in their ways, for we lack both knowledge and means to "improve" their specialized ways of life. Sometimes, however, natural conditions and relationships of species in the parks are disturbed and some less adaptable animal must be helped if it is to survive.

Once a species has been extirpated, special measures may be necessary to enable a small stock of reintroduced animals to persist and increase to a safe level. Thorough

studies should always precede reintroducing a species which has failed to maintain itself in a park area, for often the causes of failure are still present. For example, extensive and severe forest fires probably caused the extirpation of woodland caribou from Isle Royale. The lichens which form the principal winter food of this animal were destroyed. Their recovery will require a very long period of time. Because of the lichen-factor alone, reintroduction of caribou cannot be considered within our life-time.

While some species have dwindled and disappeared from our parks, others have embarrassed us by increasing to several times the normal population. The causes of these irruptions are usually complex and sometimes obscure. They cannot be discussed satisfactorily in the short time available today. Instead I shall summarize as briefly as possible the policy of the Service toward excess populations.

Unlike animal populations under other concepts of land use, national park fauna are emphatically not managed to provide maximum numbers or to provide stable exhibits for the public. Instead, the objective of national park management is to maintain the natural ebb and flow of animal life. Except in fenced areas such as Wind Cave, there is no attempt to stabilize the population of any animal species. If the parks are to function as natural reservations,

their animal life must be subject to the least possible regulation by man. Normally, each and every species is fluctuating numerically with respect to every other species. The "balance of Nature" is never still, but is always see-sawing on its hair-fine pivot.

Park management policy permits interference only to prevent extermination of a species threatened either directly by falling below a safe minimum, or indirectly by rising to such heights as to menace its food supply. Our function is to prevent "Nature's balance" from slipping off its fulcrum.

In the case of excess populations, the National Park Service prefers that the problem be solved, if possible, by natural controls, or by action outside of park boundaries. Predators, if present in normal numbers, tend to stabilize prey species by removing those individuals that cannot find adequate food and cover. Legal hunting, if properly regulated and adequately manned, can prevent migratory game animals from becoming too numerous. But there are times when predation does not avert irruptions of game. We should not be trapped into sweeping assertions to the contrary. At other times, the state game authorities are unable or unwilling to act. Under still other conditions, the mushrooming species may be sedentary and does not move beyond the park boundaries where legal hunting pressure

can be exerted. Under such conditions, it becomes necessary to take action inside the park.

Reductions of park wildlife populations have been authorized in only three areas (exclusive of the fenced Wind Cave Park). Two of these, Zion Canyon and the Estes Park section of Rocky Mountain National Park, involved highly scenic areas of heavy visitor use. Vegetation was considered to be all-important. Topographic conditions and human developments resulting in "piling up" excessively large numbers of hoofed mammals. Resulting heavy damage to the range was inevitable. In the third instance, the small fraction of original winter range within Yellowstone Park had been very severely damaged by decades of over-use. The problem here was complicated by poorly-drawn boundaries, by lack of effective predators, by a multiplicity of ungulate species, and by dispersed control of the elk herd in its year-round migration cycle. A few other problems of this nature are under observation, to determine if it will be necessary to take actions. In numerous instances, the Service has decided that the problem was either too local or incapable of satisfactory solution to justify resort to destruction of the animals.

In deciding on artificial control programs, the Service must consider the very strict protection which Congress has thrown around park wildlife. It also must give careful thought

to the effect of official slaughters on the movement to open all national parks to public hunting.

Any fair-minded person must admit that legalization of hunting would change the fundamental conception of park wildlife management. Eventually, management practices would be forced to favor game species with the objective of satisfying one class of visitor—the hunters. The attempt to foist hunting on the parks is only one aspect of the continuing drive to make park resources available for consumption by the few rather than for the enjoyment by the entire public.

It is only natural that fishing should be a controversial subject in the administration and management of natural parks. The acts establishing most of the parks imply that fishing shall be permitted "by hook and line only, at such seasons and in such times and manner as may be directed by the Secretary of the Interior." No other class of park wildlife may be captured or killed by park visitors. No other park resources may be consumed by those who come to these areas. Thus the fishes are in a special category.

On the other hand, these pieces of legislation, and the Act of 1916, provide that the parks must be preserved and maintained as nearly as possible in their original condition, with only such development as is necessary for the accommodation of visitors. The waters are not excepted

from this prescription. They must be protected like the land and its plant and animal life.

We have been slow in recognizing our obligations toward the aquatic environment in natural parks, just as most people have failed to perceive its biological importance in the country at large. This is not intended as criticism of past administrators. They merely shared an almost universal lack of understanding of the biological processes of lakes and streams. Fishery research and practices have lagged far behind game studies and technique. Accordingly, the fish populations of practically all park waters have been modified by long-time angling, by artificial stocking, or by migration of imported species to new waters. In some instances, native races of fish have been exterminated. In others, haphazard fish cultural practices of earlier times have resulted in unfortunate biological legacies. Stocking of alien races or closely related species produced numerous hybrids. In a few areas, streams were modified by removal of the forest cover prior to park establishment. In so far as possible, aquatic life should be brought back to an approximation of its original composition. This will require many years.

It seems unnecessary to point out that good administration and management of all wildlife resources must be based on accurate, thorough information. The park ranger staffs,

with the naturalists, are in the best position to gather it. Park Service biologists are too few; Fish and Wildlife Service employees have too many other responsibilities, to make the many investigations that are crying for solution. Wildlife work requires certain basic training and capabilities. The facts must be interpreted in the light of scientific knowl-

edge. Otherwise, the result is merely "barber-shop biology."

From time to time, park rangers have made important contributions to wildlife management in the National Park System. Others undoubtedly can do likewise, if you Chief Rangers can seek out the capable men and afford them the opportunity to pursue investigations.

* * *

M. V. WALKER TRANSFERS TO ZION NATIONAL PARK, UTAH

By Frank A. Kittredge, Superintendent

Associate Park Naturalist M. V. Walker, who has served in Yosemite National Park since June, 1944, is being transferred to Zion National Park as Park Naturalist of the Zion-Bryce Canyon National Parks.

Mr. Walker's first work in the National Park Service was as a ranger naturalist at Petrified Forest National Monument from May, 1933, to April, 1934, when he was promoted to Junior Park Naturalist. He served in that area until he was advanced to Assistant Park Naturalist of Zion National Park in April, 1938.

In August, 1940 he was promoted to the position of Park Naturalist in Crater Lake National Park where he served until May, 1941 when he was transferred to the same position in Glacier National Park, Montana. After serving in Glacier National Park for three years, he was transferred to Yosemite National Park in 1944.

Mr. Walker is a native of Kansas

and has a broad scientific background as well as a wide experience



in a number of areas in the National Park Service. He graduated from Fort Hays Kansas State College in 1927 and from the University of Kansas in 1931. He received his Master of Arts degree from the latter institution in 1931. His special field of research was in vertebrate paleontology and historical geology. For several summer seasons he was associated with the Smithsonian Institution and the George F. Sternberg paleontological field parties who were engaged in collecting fossils in the badlands of Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, and in the chalk beds of western Kansas.

After seven years as an instructor in natural science in the city schools of Kansas and the Fort Hays Kansas State College, he was well fitted to interpret the natural phenomena and natural wonders of the areas in which he has since worked.

Mr. Walker is a versatile and entertaining speaker. During the past three years he has interpreted the story of the formation of Yosemite Valley in as interesting a manner as he has told of his discoveries in paleontology—his specialized field. He has made valuable contributions to the interpretation of the park in general, and to the advancement of the affairs of the Yosemite Natural History Association in which organization he has served as Business Manager. He is the author of "Reptiles and Amphibians of Yosemite National Park," a special number of Yo-

osemite Nature Notes issued in January, 1946.

We in Yosemite National Park are going to miss not only Mr. Walker for his professional capabilities, but also Mrs. Walker and Margaret Jean whom we have enjoyed having in our school and social activities.

NEW BIRD RECORD

On the afternoon of March 14 a male blue-winged teal (**Anas discors**) was swimming with four other ducks just above the Sentinel Bridge. This species has not heretofore been included on the park list. Three of the other ducks were male cinnamon teal (**Anas cyanoptera**). The fifth was a female but since the female of these two species are indistinguishable in the field it is not known to which of the males it belonged.

We are indebted to Mr. Walter J. Fitzpatrick of the Post Office for calling our attention to the presence of these birds. (H. C. P.)

People like to throw away money. The pool outside the fish hatchery is almost paved with pennies, nickels and dimes. And the first youngsters to plunge into the Merced in the spring at Sentinel Bridge will harvest a fortune for ice cream—dozens of coins thrown in by visitors still rest on the rocks.

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ROBINSON BECOMES NEW ASSISTANT PARK NATURALIST

By Donald Edward McHenry, Park Naturalist

Harry B. Robinson, who has been in charge of the naturalist work in Lassen Volcanic National Park since 1942, with the exception of a brief intermission, joined the Yosemite National Park naturalist staff on April 3, 1947 as assistant park naturalist. Mr. Robinson will fill the vacancy which is to be created by the promotion of Assistant Park Naturalist Harry C. Parker to associate park naturalist.

Mr. Robinson entered the National Park Service as a temporary museum assistant during the summer of 1940, returning to his teaching position in the autumn. He returned to Lassen in May, 1941, this time as permanent museum assistant. On October 15, 1942, he was made junior park naturalist in charge of the naturalist program.

Before coming to the National Park Service Mr. Robinson taught geography and geology at Central College, Fayette, Missouri, and at Christian College, Stephens College, and at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri. At the latter institution he was in charge of the correspondence courses in geography for a number of years.

Mr. Robinson is a native of Princeton, Missouri. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in history in 1928, his Bachelor of Science degree with a major in education and his Master of Arts degree

with a major in geography and geology in 1933 at the University of Missouri. He was working on his Doctor of Philosophy degree when he joined the National Park Service.

Members of the Yosemite National Park staff are happy to welcome Mr. Robinson, his wife Mildred and their nine-year-old son George as new members of the local Park Service community, while members of the Yosemite Natural History Association will receive them as new friends.





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Dan Anderson