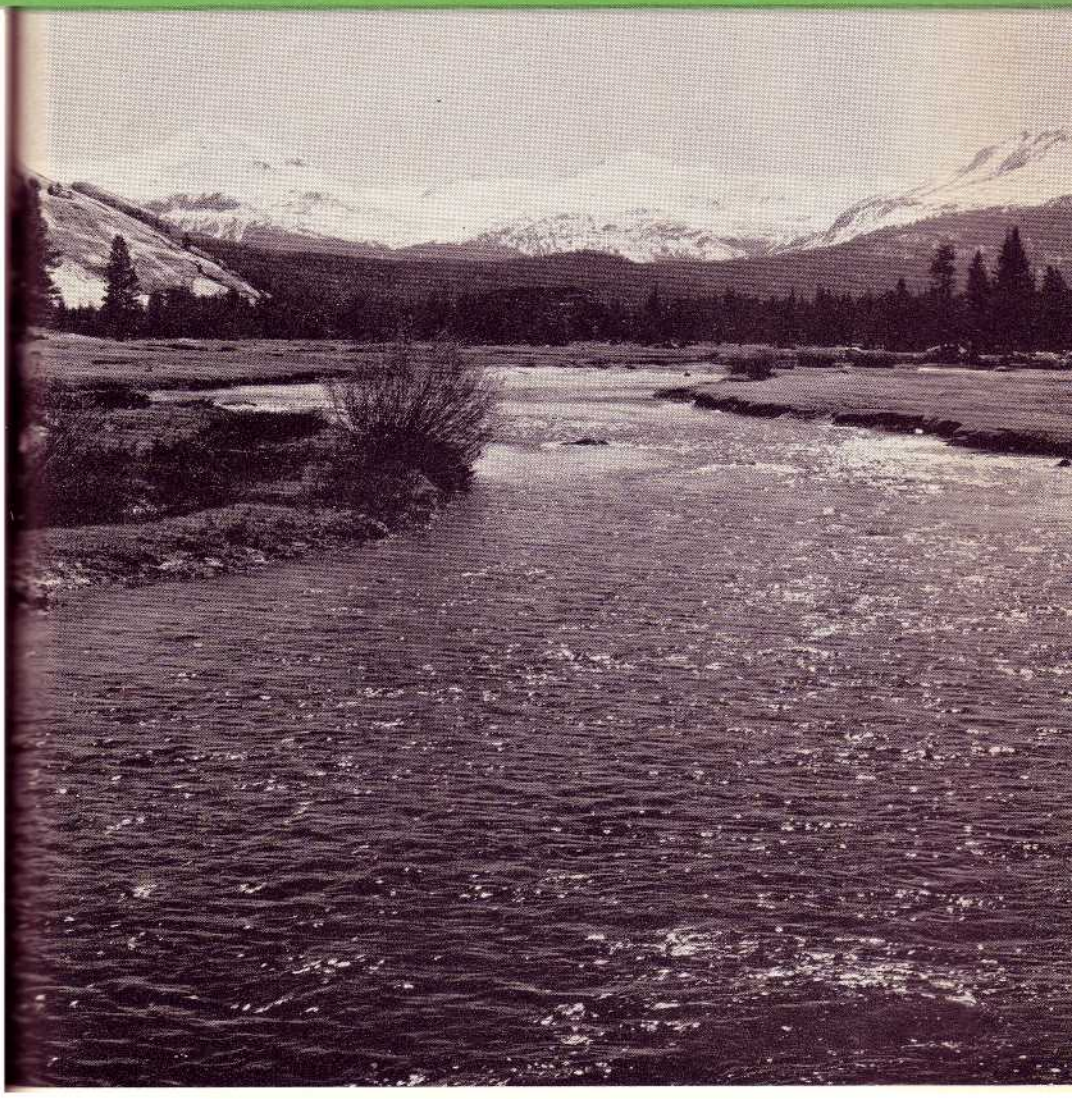
YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



TUOLUMNE MEADOWS: Lyell Fork of the Tuolumne River.

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Yosemite Nature Notes

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BEAUTY IS NOT A STATIC THING

By Sam Houston, Field School, 1948

Beauty is not a static thing . . .
It moves alike in the slow inexorable strides of glaciers
And in the jubilant flash of waterfalls.
We find it where red firs, tall patriarchs,
March calmly down their quiet mountain aisles.
Its tender searching fingers clutch the heart
As grapevines grip spilled boulders on the talus slopes.
We see it where El Capitan sleeps hugely in the sun,
And where the breeze stirs shadowed banks of fern:
When sculptured crags strain skyward . . .
Where blue-eyed lakes gaze openeyed, or doze
With tree-fringed eyelids, dark with sleep.
Beauty lives on soaring heights where pines, wind-whipped,
Turn bold resistant shoulders to the storm,
Leaps in the flex and flow of running deer,
Glides in the flowing sinuousity of snakes,
Twists in angular and stubborn manzanita shrub,
Survives through centuries of fire and ice
In great Sequoias — lightning-scarred;
It whirls in dancing planets in the sky.
It challenges the minds of men
To search, to find, to know.

Cover Photo: by Ansel Adams.

EXOTIC PLANTS IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Richard G. Lillard, Field School, 1948

By intention or accident Americans have introduced many plants to the floor of Yosemite Valley. These plants are useful or ornamental, or they are weeds. Some are far from their Old World points of origin. In general these exotics grow in or near areas of settlement and development since 1859. Exclusive of vegetables inside the several Victory Gardens west and east of Government Center, and plants in the wildflower garden, the list includes several dozen species of herbs, vines, shrubs, and trees. Either these belong in any new Yosemite flora to be published or else they should be eradicated.

White clover **(Trifolium repens)** and oxeye daisy **(Chrysanthemum leucanthemum)**, both of European origin, grow in low meadows. Common mullein **(Verbascum thapsus)** is in higher, drier areas. Spearmint **(Mentha spicata)** runs alongside the highway west of Old Village, and a large circle of cat tails **(Typha** sp.) thrives in a pond north of the Camp Curry dining room. Near the official Victory Garden are prickly lettuce **(Lactuca scariola)**—a common American weed brought from Europe, pigweed **(Chenopodium album),** and anise **(Pimpinella anisum)**—the Egyptian plant that the Spanish brought to California. In 1912 the Halls said in "A Yosemite Flora" that pineapple weed **(Matricaria suaveolens)** "may be expected as an introduced weed." It grows along the shoulder of the road between Sentinel Bridge and Government Center.

The hop of commerce **(Humulus lupulus)** clambers around and over bracken fern **(Pteris aquelina),** giving it vigorous competition, in an area of several hundred square feet north of the Victory Garden. There is a hop at the southeast corner of Yosemite Lodge, and several other hops grow on the houses of Park Service employees. This Eurasian plant is known for its habit of escaping cultivation. The foxglove **(Digitalis purpurea)**, the most common cultivated flower around Yosemite Valley homes in July, has naturalized along the east side of Yosemite Creek from the site of the Hutchings sawmill almost down to the road between Government Center and Yosemite Lodge. The perennial bull thistle **(Cirsium lanceolatum)** is scattered over the Valley floor and up the sides, as on Sunnyside Bench and the trail between Wawona Tunnel and the last Old Inspiration Point.

There is a plant of English holly **(Ilex aquifolium)** behind one of the homes between Government Center and the hospital. In the same area are plantings of Virginia creeper **(Parthenocissus quinquefolia),** a hybrid two-colored ivy **(Hedera** sp.), and lilac **(Syringa vulgaris).** Two old clumps of lilac, remainders of early settlement, grow west of the church in Old Village. A Virginia creeper, a wistaria **(W. chinensis?),** and an American slipskin grape **(Vitis labrusca?)** clamber over the front of Lost Arrow Fountain.

In "Broadleaved Trees of Yosemite National Park" **(Yosemite Nature Notes,** January, 1947) Frank Brockman deals sufficiently with the early plantings of elms and black locusts and mentions the pioneer fruit orchards planted by James Hutchings and James Lamon.

Nothing remains of the nectarines, almonds, plums, and peaches that Lamon planted in the early 1860's, but there are scores of tall, vigorous, and productive apple trees **(Malus**

sylvestris) in the orchard east of the concessionary stables and in the Camp Curry parking lot, as also in the Hutchings orchard at the concessionary utility area. There are large solitary apple trees such as the one in the rubbish center behind the Camp Curry public garage and the one in the meadow just east of the Tecoya residential area. There are four old pears **(Pyrus communis)** in the Hutchings orchard, two in the Lamon orchard east of the stables, and one by the church in Old Village.

Old cherry trees **(Prunus cerasus?)** reach surprising girths and heights in several places. The two in the Hutchings orchard are about forty feet high. Several grow suppressed by shade in front of the Pavillion.

Despite scale and fungoid attacks these three species of fruit trees have lived the better part of a century, grown to large individual shapes, and competed—to date—with encroaching forest. They have even naturalized to a limited extent—as the elms **(Ulmus americana)** have east of Degnan's. West of the Hutchings orchard and near the bank of Yosemite Creek stands a cherry that is both post-pioneer and outside the original orchard layout. It has four trunks, each about five inches in diameter. Five tall cherries, several of them post-pioneer, grow in a wild-looking clump west of the church. The group includes lilacs, an apple, and many elms ranging from three inches in diameter down to tiny saplings.

There are three small seedling pears at the edge of yellow pine forest **(Pinus ponderosa)** east of Camp Curry parking lot, and one grows along the river north of Old Village Store.

Apples are the most aggressive of the domestic trees where soil is deep and moist. Three random trees grow east of the Camp Curry parking area. Lone seedlings, ten to twenty feet high, grow north of the road between the parking area and Camp 14, north of the river near the Superintendent's home, between Camp 19 and the road, at the entrance to Camp 6, and elsewhere. The best exhibit is in the area least disturbed by man, around the old Lamon homestead orchard, where the kenneled dogs howl. There are eight volunteer apples in the forest edge on the north side and over sixteen along the south edge. None of these is dying. They are competing as successfully as native broad-leaves with the shade and root systems of yellow pine, and black oak **(Quercus Kelloggii).** One volunteer has sent up a slim crown to compete successfully—so far—with three trees of about the same age—a black oak, a white fir **(Abies concolor),** and an incense cedar **(Libocedrus decurrens).** Such an aggressive exotic deserves careful ecological study.

The only dying apple tree I have seen in the Valley is a volunteer about fifteen feet high in dense yellow pine shade and right next to the eastern corral fence at the stables—where hoof tramping and concentrations of urea are also slowly killing pines and incense cedars.

Exotic to the Valley but not the Park are the juniper **(J. occidentalis)** —one slim, tall specimen at Galen Clark's grave—and the giant sequoia **(Sequoia gigantea)**—one north of the Superintendent's home, one in front of the Government Museum, five at Clark's grave, two in the Park Service residential area, one north of Sentinel Bridge, and four in Old Village east of Degnan's. Common upstream imports from the Merced Canyon are the sweet-scented shrub **(Calycanthus occidentalis)** and the western red-bud **(Cercis occidentalis).**

THE YOSEMITE SCHOOL OF FIELD NATURAL HISTORY

By Bettie Willard, Field School, 1948

June 28, 1948, was a memorable day for the naturalist staff of Yosemite National Park and seventeen eager students. It marked the reopening of the Yosemite School of Field Natural History, which had been closed for seven years during the war period.

The Yosemite Field School is sponsored by the naturalist staff of Yosemite National Park to give specific training to people wishing employment in the interpretive work of the National Park Service and similar agencies. A broad approach is given to each field in order to take into consideration an over-all program of interpretation and research of the entire Park Service. Particular emphasis is placed on the techniques of popular interpretation of the natural and human history of Yosemite National Park. In 1948 the course was conducted entirely by members of the Yosemite Park naturalist staff and visiting members of the Park Service.

The various facts of the National Park policy of conservation and interpretation were thoroughly discussed and the techniques of conducting nature walks, campfires, Junior Nature Schools and overnight hiking trips were presented. As a climax to the seven weeks, two weeks were spent in the High Country.

The Yosemite School of Field Natural History was begun in 1925 by Dr. Harold C. Bryant in answer to a need for adequate personnel to handle the interpretive naturalist work in Yosemite. Field training was lacking in all applicants for positions on the newly formed naturalist staff. With this in mind, the Yosemite staff formulated a course of study which stressed the popular interpretation of science in the field.

Twenty students are selected from the applicants for each class. A minimum of two years of college work was required of the first few groups. Soon after the school was begun, it became very popular because it was the only course of its kind in the country. It still remains unique in the realm of field schools because of its broad scope and interpretive work in contrast to the academic field schools. Recognition of the Field School as an official training program came in 1935 when the requirements were raised to the graduate level. Soon after the school was started several professors from the University of California became interested in the field activity and the type of instruction given.

The students have always camped as a group. First they were given a designated area of one of the public camps and later, the use of a portion of Camp 19. This practice of camping develops self-reliance and the ability to learn from one another.

College credit has never been given, but a certificate of graduation is issued to each member on satisfactory completion of the school.

Dr. Bryant published a summary of the occupations of the graduates of the Field School in the **Park Service Bulletin** of March-April, 1940. At that time, twenty field schoolers were employed on a permanent basis by the National Park Service; fifty were temporary employees of the National Park Service the remainder were employed in diverse occupations in and out of naturalist work. Although the National Park Service cannot hire all

the students who complete the Yosemite Field School it has made a great contribution in helping these people become nature minded and nature wise. They can lead others to a similar profit and enjoyment of nature and contribute to conservation education.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. GERTRUDE HUTCHINGS MILLS

By Andrew Bennett, Field School, 1948

Mrs. Mills, the daughter of J. M. Hutchings of early Yosemite Valley fame, now spends many of her summers in the Tuolumne Meadows, where she has a tent on the Sierra Club property near the Soda Springs.

It was about noon of Sunday, June 11, 1948, that we came to Mrs. Mills' tent and interrupted her while she was feeding a white crowned sparrow. In spite of the fact that it seemed somewhat formal as an approach in a spot such as this, we knocked on the trunk of the tree which formed the doorway of Mrs. Mills' tent and heard her remark, "Someone is knocking." The sparrow fled and Mrs. Mills came to her dorway.

After apologizing for interrupting the visit of her feathered guest, we introduced ourselves and told Mrs. Mills that we were interested in talking with one of the earliest residents of the Yosemite Valley and especially with one who had been so intimately acquainted with John Muir.

After having confirmed the fact that she had had intimate acquaintance with John Muir, Mrs. Mills went on to state: "We children and John didn't waste much love on each other. When Florence, Willie, and I used to come to the sawmill to play, he would send us up to the loft in the gable end and we were instructed to sit there on his bunk boards and watch for anyone who might be coming in the direction of the mill. We had an idea that he didn't want anyone watching him. Could have been that he didn't want us in his way."

Mrs. Mills was then asked about her early life in the Yosemite Valley. "We didn't spend our winters in the valley. We children were packed off to San Francisco to spend the winter with Grandmother. She had a house on Pine Street where she ran a lodging house for the sea captains who were in the China trade. When we lived on Pine Street in San Francisco we would attend the Clement Grammar School. In the Spring, we would come back to the valley and live at the Cedar Cottage. One thing I remember about the earlier days was our play around the corral and the horse barns. Our father had some hired hands who were brothers. Their family name was Screech, and we thought that was most peculiar. Florence and I often went over to the corral to watch the men and the horses and it was a treat when one of them would dare Florence to ride one of the horses that was a bit friskier than the others. She would accept the dare and she could stick on the best of them. She really was the one to do things. It was she for whom they named Mount Florence.

"You know, we used to camp on this exact spot years ago. In those days Joe Le Conte used to camp here with us and it was always a welcome sight to see Joe coming across the meadows leading his animals. Those were the days before the meadows were so widely used. It would be a real pleasure to visit with Joe Le Conte again.

"When Whitney and Brewer were making their survey of the mountains here they stayed at father's hotel. Florence kept all of Mr. Whitney's notes for him. Many of us around the hotel thought Mr. Brewer did most of the work because Whitney seemed to be around the hotel most of the time."

For one who, in spite of her age, seemed to be in excellent spirits Mrs. Mills made an interesting statement. "I'm glad I lived when I did. My sons are all doing well and are happy, but I don't think the world is getting any better than it was."

An indication of Mrs. Mills' estimate of her own health was the plan, which she told us that Sunday, to climb Mount Conness on the following day, Monday, July 12, 1948.

LASTING FRIENDSHIP

By David L. Jennings, Field School, 1948

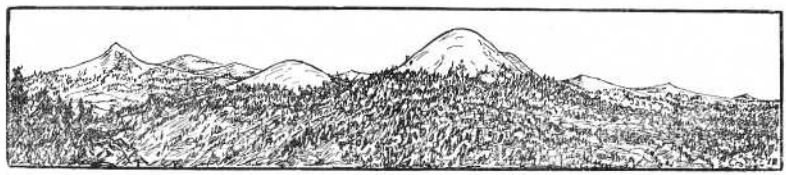
On the morning of July 10, while walking along one of the trails near the Illilouette Falls, I came upon a Sierra Grouse **(Dendragapus fuliginosus sierrae)** "drumming" or "hooting" in the sunlight in the center of the path. So absorbed had I been in unraveling the story of recent happenings that were revealed at my feet in the dust of the trail that I had paid no attention to the "boomp, boomp, boomp" that had been getting louder and louder until a movement ahead in the sunlight focused my eyes on the drumming cock.

Stopping immediately to see what would happen I waited for my host to make the next move. Raising and spreading his tail feathers like a fan he scraped the ground with his wings, distended the yellow resonators on his throat, and emitted another series of "boomps."

Desiring a Kodachrome picture of the little act, I dropped to my knees and quietly began adjusting the camera. Eyeing me carefully the grouse straightened up and slowly began to approach my position. When he had come to within twenty feet he stopped and looked at me out of one eye and then the other and then, fanning out his feathers and bobbing his head slightly, he repeated his calls a third and yet a fourth time.

Having made enough exposures, I put my camera down and got to my feet. This movement startled the bird. He flew up into a nearby Jeffrey pine, and there, appearing to forget me, continued to "drum" undisturbed until I left.

This chance encounter with the lone mountain bird was like meeting an old friend and I watched and listened with mingled feelings because as a very small boy in an Alaskan frontier town I had been given the chore of locking up "Daddy's chickens" at night to protect them from marauding hawks and owls, and one of these chickens had been a "hooter" or grouse that had attached himself to our flock for a period of time and roosted at night in the hen house.



GEOLOGIC FIND ON SUNNYSIDE BENCH

By Sam Houston and Marge Herkenham, Field School, 1948

While on a roughing hike to Sunnyside Bench on July 7, 1948, members of the Yosemite School of Field Natural History discovered an outcrop of reddish rock which presented a different appearance from that of the surrounding granitic rocks. This outcrop is located roughly a quarter of a mile below the base of the upper Yosemite Fall, near the foot of a cliff which separates the lower portion of the bench from the upper portion. Its elevation is approximately 5,000 feet.

Its dimensions are approximately seven feet by two feet. Other dimensions could not be ascertained because of the position of the outcrop in the steep slope of the ledge above and because of the debris and dense manzanita below it. The surface outline of the outcrop is roughly lens shaped.

The lens trends approximately N. 65° E., a direction which is almost at right angles to the trend of the flow structures of the granite which surrounds it. About 50 yards down the slope from the lens are numerous boulders of the same reddish rock, indicating a former larger extent of the outcrop.

Because of its difference in color and texture from the surrounding granite, it was considered that this outcrop might be a segment of the ancient sedimentary roof cover of the Sierran granites, altered by contact with the granitic uplift. Red-stained quartz is the predominant mineral. Feldspar is present, and also a small number of what appear to be minute garnet crystals. Bordering the reddish rock material on the north side, and grading gradually into it, is a narrow white aplitic zone.

This report is made in the hope that it might be of assistance in future detailed geologic investigations of this area.

NATURE NOTELET

By Gary Sandy, Field School, 1948

A juvenal band-tailed pigeon **(Columba f. fasciata)** was found stranded in the road at the entrance to Camp No. 7 on the afternoon of July 15. The camper who found the bird took it to ranger Gustave M. Eastman, who brought it to the attention of the naturalist staff at the museum. This bird was in nearly complete juvenal plumage, but remnants of the natal down remained, particularly on the head and neck.

An inspection of the area where the young bird was found failed to reveal the nest or the presence of the parent birds. However, the oak trees along the road at this point provide suitable nesting sites for the species.

This is additional evidence that the band-tailed pigeon actually nests in Yosemite Valley, although positive records are limited.

APRIL SHOWERS AND NO FLOWERS

By Robert C. Zink, Field School, 1948

Early in 1948 the rain and snowfall situation became the great concern of the State of California. It necessitated water and electricity rationing. Late in February there were only a few feet of snow in the High Sierra. Then suddenly the weather changed and March rainfall was near normal. April came forth with four times the normal precipitation, bringing the total fall for the year within two tenths of an inch of the average. Yet this delay of rain and snow fall has not been without a noticeable effect, especially in the High Sierra as well as in the Yosemite Valley itself.

To the new Valley visitor the water falls were splendid, as always. To the old timer in the valley the falls were a wonder for the quantity of water still flowing in the middle of July. This was owing to the heavy snows of April. These snow banks had just recently disappeared from the lower drainages of the Yosemite and Bridal Veil Creeks. Not only these two superb falls but many other little rivulets were making themselves available to the visitor's sight.

The high country was a vast expanse of lush green grass with brooks and springs running full. The season was late and the late visitor was seeing the entire park under conditions normally seen by the early visitor.

Another aspect of this odd distribution of rain and snow could be seen on the upland trails around the valley rim. In the many small, beautiful meadows and glades the usual profuse array of wild flowers was yet to be seen as late as July 15. Here and there along the Pohono trail groups of flowers could be observed, but the mass showings were lacking. At the same time some of the grasses were already beginning to dry. The total effect of the overlapping cycle of a late spring on a normal summer had produced a retardation of their germination and flowering. Now this was being followed by a premature drying. Paradoxical mother nature had given us our water but denied us her flowers.

OBSIDIAN QUALITY

By S. M. Pattee, Field School, 1948

A resident of Camp 19 picked up a broken spearpoint above the Wawona Tunnel. The obsidian of which it was made was of an unusual transluscent quality.

Upon seeing it, Chief Lee-mee (Chris Brown) observed that his people had preferred the lighter-colored rock from the Casa Diablo locality because it broke into thinner sheets that were easily trimmed to the desired shape. The opaque obsidian of the Lake Mono region had a tendency to break into chunks or blocks that could be made thin only with great difficulty. He further indicated the desirability of using just the right kind of obsidian by saying that he could shape a good piece into an arrowhead in two minutes.

Editor's Note: This number of Yosemite Nature Notes has been prepared and edited entirely by the 1948 class of the Yosemite School of Field Natural History.