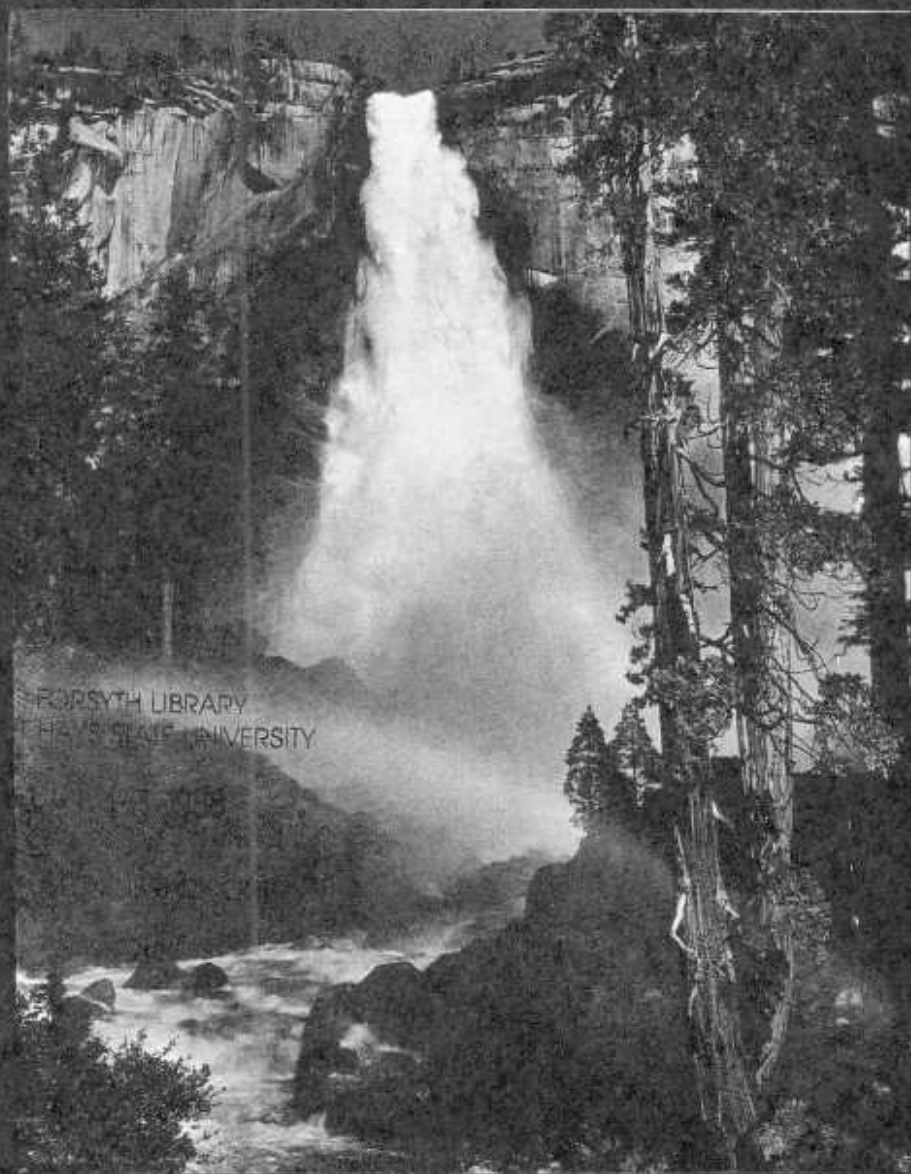


F
868.Y6
.Y52

NO. 1
April
1950

osemite Nature Notes



FORSYTH LIBRARY
THE STATE UNIVERSITY



Hungry Little Bear

Photo. by Anderson.

Cover Photo: Nevada Fall, rainbow, Yosemite Valley. By Ansel Adams from "Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada," text by John Muir, 64 photographs by Ansel Adams. Reproduction by kind permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

Yosemite Nature Notes

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DIVISION AND
THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION, INC.

C. P. Russell, Superintendent
H. C. Parker, Assoc. Park Naturalist

D. E. McHenry, Park Naturalist
R. N. McIntyre, Asst. Park Naturalist

VOL. XXIX

APRIL, 1950

NO. 4

BORN AT THE WRONG TIME OF YEAR?

By Robert N. McIntyre, Assistant Park Naturalist

Why do bears leave their warm dens in the middle of a cold winter, resist the natural urge for hibernation, and wander about in the deep snow and cold winds during the month of January? Why does a mother bear give birth to cubs at the wrong time of year and why would one of them appear in January trying to wrest a living from the cool countryside of Yosemite Valley covered with three feet of snow?

These facts and others are being pondered by the staff at the Yosemite Museum. On January 26, Mr. Clifford L. Murphy noticed the sign of a small bear cub searching for food between the Lewis Memorial Hospital and the New Tecoya residences in Yosemite Valley. On January 28 District Ranger Gustave Eastman led the naturalists to the little fellow behind Best's Studio. For three days he was observed by the naturalists and others trying to shelter himself in the limbs of an incense cedar tree against the winter cold which dropped to ten degrees above zero each night. When it became apparent that he could not survive under natural conditions, he was captured and taken to the Yosemite Museum for food and shelter.

During the first 48 hours of his captivity the survival of the bear

cub looked hopeless. He was about 17 inches in length and 11 inches high at the shoulder, weighing between 8 and 10 pounds. A child's formula through a bottle and nipple supplied him with needed liquids during the first 24 hours. The second day he was subjected to the "calf treatment", that is, immersion of the head in a pan of milk until a desire to drink became apparent. After the third day a ration of molasses, canned milk and "minute oats" twice per day gave the cub a new lease on life. By the 18th of February when we allowed him to go free on a warm hillside surrounded by bushes loaded with dry manzanita berries, the bear had devoured at least one-half bushel of apples and a number of choice bones all of which nearly doubled his original weight.

During his 18 days of "hospitalization" in the Yosemite Museum, some 470 people, including the school children of the Valley, were allowed to see him during feeding time. These interested individuals donated the food needed for his transformation from a sack of skin and bones to a cute and lively cub bear.

Careful observation of the bear cub has caused the Assistant Park Naturalist to discount the theory that

our cub was a "runt" born in January or February 1949 to a mother bear then in hibernation under some snow covered rock. On two occasions the teeth of the small animal were closely examined and found to be small and sharp, the "milk teeth" of a young animal less than a year old. Although no written records have been uncovered by the writer to support such a case, it is believed that our cub is a part of a litter born not earlier than August 1949. The mother going into hibernation in the Valley during December was probably still nursing the little fellow. During hibernation it is quite conceivable that her milk supply was cut off and the cub without an adequate supply of reserve fat woke up and through a natural urge for food started to prowls the Valley. The mother is probably yet in hibernation unaware that her offspring has caused so much attention.

During the period of "hospitalization" several pertinent observations of a small bear's intelligence were recorded. Twice when the cub was taken from his box for sanitary reasons, he refused to return when the enclosure was ready. Not having time or patience to follow the animal up the walls and along the overhead beams, he was left to his own whims in the basement of the museum. Both times within two hours the cub, after tiring of his explorations, had returned voluntarily to his box and pulled the door shut after himself. Once he looked out as if to say, "See, I'm a good little bear."



Photo by Anderson.

Cub Bear 10 Days Later

The lock on the door to his box seemed to intrigue him. This was the thing that the man used to lock him in, or used to open the door when hot food was available. Several times he was observed reaching through the bars with one paw tampering with the lock even though it was difficult to reach. After a time he gnawed a large hole in one wooden bar to give him more freedom of movement for playing with the lock. This he did many times and when caught in the act and scolded, he would sit with his head down as if to say, "Give me time and I'll be able to come up and get my own food."

A REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION BOARD — MARCH 1950

By Donald Edward McHenry, Director

Although there was a downward trend in the sales of publications offered by the Yosemite Natural History Association during 1949, the

Association has continued to successfully add to the strength and effectiveness of the interpretive work of the Yosemite Naturalist Division. Among the more significant accomplishments were: the publication of the enthusiastically received special issue of Yosemite Nature Notes, **A Guide to the Yosemite Sequoias** appearing in June; the newly revised special number on **The Fishes of Yosemite** which recorded for the first time three new indigenous species; the purchase of such major items as a Recordak microfilm reader; a film editing table; a supply of mimeograph paper for naturalist program announcements to tide over the period when the government supply was exhausted; about 50 records of symphonic and similar music for use at the campfire programs, made possible through a generous gift of Dr. and Mrs. H. C. Bradley; and two copies of the new Ted Phillips—Atwater Kent "Yosemite" film. One copy of this film has been in constant circulation throughout the Pacific Coast region and should do much to increase a better understanding of the nature and purpose of the park. During 1949, 62 books and 18 bound volumes of periodicals were accessioned to the Yosemite Museum reference library through Yosemite Natural History Association funds.

A "Film Classics" series using old historic silent films from the Museum of Modern Art was presented to 166 local subscribers once a month from October 1949 to April 1950. This program has enjoyed considerable success.

The Association shared with the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. in the expense of bringing Miss Julia C. Watkins, daughter of the pioneer Yosemite photographer, C. E. Watkins, to Yosemite on October 25-27 for her first visit to the park which

her father helped to make famous through his pictures. A recording was made of an interview concerning her father and his work.

The Board approved necessary funds to finance the new special issue of Yosemite Nature Notes on **Mammals of Yosemite** now being prepared by Associate Park Naturalist Harry C. Parker, which will probably appear in June 1950. The gift of a plate for a proposed new format for Yosemite Nature Notes offered by Ansel Adams was accepted by the Board and this new format should make its appearance soon. The investigation with the thought of possible purchase of an automatic sound moving picture for use in the Yosemite Museum geology room was also authorized. If obtained, the geological section of the Ted Phillips "Yosemite" film will be placed on exhibit to supplement or in some cases replace the personal lecture of a naturalist, thus releasing him for other urgent interpretive duties and making the Yosemite story available to visitors whenever desired.

It is noteworthy that in spite of the generally downward trend of publication sales, paid subscriptions to Yosemite Nature Notes has more than doubled during the past year and stood at 1056 at the close of the year. Some concern is expressed, however, over the failure of such a large percentage of subscribers to renew. Thought is being given to changing our expiration notices to a remittance envelope type now so generally used by publishers. There are plans also to send a questionnaire to those who have lapsed to try to determine the reason and to solicit helpful suggestions. All present subscribers are urged to solicit subscriptions from their friends in order to extend the effectiveness of this part of the naturalist program.

A brief of the financial statement of the Association shows a net receipt of \$4,835.85 for 1949 as against \$5,402.66 for 1948. In spite of the fact that 65,298 pieces of sales literature were handled during 1949, only 37,351 were sold as compared to 64,694 in 1948.

During the year the insurance carried by the Association was increased to cover the additional photographic, projection, and sound equipment recently acquired. The total insured value is now \$3,218.00.

So great have been the demands of the business of the Association on members of the naturalist staff that it has become a matter of in-

creasing concern to all involved. To attempt to gain partial relief the Board engaged a part time auditor to draw up the monthly and annual financial statements.

It was with regret that the Board accepted the resignation of Mrs. Ruth Knowles because of moving from Yosemite. She has been very active on the Board since January 7, 1937. Mr. W. J. Fitzpatrick, a long-time enthusiastic supporter of the local natural history program was elected to fill this vacancy. The members of the Board are Chairman Sterling Cramer, Trustees Mrs. Virginia Adams, Ralph Anderson, Walter Fitzpatrick, and Dana Morgenson.

THE "PANDA BEAR" OF THE SQUIRREL WORLD

By Robert N. McIntyre, Assistant Park Naturalist

My first experience in observing one of "Nature's gliders" came to me while working as a logger in the Cascade Mountains of Washington years ago. A turn of logs struck the upright bole of a dead western red cedar snag and caused bark to be cast in all directions. One piece of bark did not fall near the base of the dead tree but seemed to propel itself off into space at an unbelievable angle, landing in a patch of deep mud with quite a thump. From my vantage point on a large stump I saw that piece of "bark" move and resolve itself into a small animal struggling to gain solid ground. I ran to the spot and picked up a wet bit of fur from the mire. Fortunately I was wearing a pair of heavy leather gloves for as the angry bit of big-eyed fur gained its breath, powerful little jaws started to bite on my fingers. Temporarily I placed the flying

squirrel in my metal lunch pail for security and later took it home where it lived a pampered life of luxury until it was released to the wild a month later. During this time it had not become noticeably tame or friendly.

In 1942 while improving the El Capital trail in Yosemite I camped in the meadow by Ribbon Creek, and there our camp was visited by a pair of flying squirrels which were observed in the beam of a flashlight. They seemed to have little fear of man while crossing and recrossing my bed which was situated under a large red fir tree.

During the summer of 1948 while camping in the Ten Lakes Basin of Yosemite, I was entertained by a mother flying squirrel and her young.¹

Flying squirrels (*Glaucomys sabrinus luscivus*) are probably quite common

1. Yosemite Nature Notes, Vol. XXVII, No. 9, page 113, September 1948.

in Yosemite Valley, but due to their nocturnal habits very few have been seen. For many years during the summer months campers in the Valley have reported small squirrels stealing bacon and sampling butter during the hours of darkness. Some people complained that they were being kept awake by the squirrels sliding down from the tops of their tents only to return and try the process over again. One man remarked that they were too fat for pine squirrels and that their eyes glowed in the dark. One lady who heard the plop, plop, plop of the squirrel on her camp table, just knew that it must be a bear robbing the groceries, and was very pleased the next morning to find that the invader had eaten only a few carrots.

During the summer months of last year my son traced a family to a nest in the attic of our front porch. On Christmas night I observed one watching me through the window of our home by Sentinel Bridge. In December of 1949 one was observed eating an acorn by the local cemetery in broad daylight. This was unusual behavior for such a nocturnal animal. Reports from the cabin area around Yosemite Lodge indicates that it is quite possible that flying squirrels are as numerous in the Valley as their larger cousins, the Sierra chickeree (*Sciurus douglasii albolimbatus*).

Few people have had a flying squirrel for a pet, but those who have had that experience believe that these big-eyed, slack-skinned animals, are perhaps the cutest and smartest of the local wildlife. Since the McIntyre family has had the honor of sharing their home with one of "nature's gliders", it is only fair to other wildlife lovers that our observations be passed on for them to enjoy. Our squirrel was not tame

and it is doubtful whether an adult male such as he would become tame or accept handling by children. His attitude was that of gentlemanly tolerance toward us, our raids, our bright lights, the kitchen noises, the violent activity of the children, the popping fireplace, the smooth surface of the walls which often baffled him, the insecurity of my ranger hat and the strange smell of visitors who often fired flash globes without warning.

"Quirry", as our daughter called him, lived with us for about five and one-half months. On January 8, 1949, he was found by District Rangers Eastman and Clark in a trap set for a troublesome skunk that had made his home under the Lewis Memorial Hospital building. Two days after the rangers placed him in the photographic cage in the museum, I brought him home to show the family and to study. At first he was housed and fed in a small wire cage, being released each evening for an hour or so of exercise. As a rule he was not difficult to find and his capture was made easy by using my fish net.

One evening after company had left the house, we couldn't find the squirrel. It was my belief that he had taken advantage of the open door and had left his temporary bed in my ranger hat to seek freedom in the wintry night. The next day as my wife started to prepare the evening meal, to her surprise she saw the squirrel emerge from the cupboard space near the kitchen sink. Upon my return home I searched for his hiding place and found it to be a string and rag nest in a drawer full of odds and ends. He entered and left this drawer from the rear without it ever having to be opened for him.

Upon the discovery of his snug

retreat, I proposed to give the squirrel the run of the house at least on a trial basis. My wife was apprehensive but consented provided that I collect him if and when he got into trouble in any way. From that time on the squirrel was allowed to come and go, search the house, sleep, eat or play whenever it desired. The doors to the wintry world were often open and free of access many times but the squirrel stayed with us.

Only once did the squirrel transgress. That day he was found sleeping under the blankets with our small daughter along with stuffing he had pulled out of her toy rabbit.

The day that he found that he had the free run of the house was a bewildering and quite eventful one to our little friend. I watched him closely as he investigated every nook and cranny of the kitchen. He ignored me completely but seemed to appreciate the opening of boxes and drawers for his investigation. At last he retired behind the electric range when suddenly I remembered that I had set a mouse trap there baited with walnut meat. I heard the snap of the trap and was almost afraid to look, but luckily he had not been caught. From the trap he made a quick retreat and dashed for the fireplace in the next room. Needless to say, we set no more traps where he might be likely to happen on them.

After investigating the whole house thoroughly, upstairs and down, he settled on the odds and ends drawer for his permanent abode and spent most of his time, day and night, curled up there a small bundle of fur.

About 11:00 p.m. each night the little fellow would come bouncing from his drawer and would leap to the fireplace mantle, his feeding station. A slice of apple, dessert first,

was his preference. The apple, held like a slice of watermelon in his paws, was moved back and forth in front of his face. The seeds and peel were not eaten and in a few minutes he would be at his water dish for his one drink of the evening. Two ounces of water in the dish would last him for five days. After his drink he would take two halves of walnut meat and attempt to hide them in an open sugar pine cone on the fireplace. Next he would shell open four or five peanuts one end at a time and eat them with relish. Salted nuts were often dropped by him in the water dish to soak awhile before eating. After this maneuver he would look to me for another slice of apple and if I refused it temporarily, he would begin a sys-



Photo by Joe Grater.
Flying Squirrel With Apple

tematic search of the room for this choicest of morsels.

Several times the squirrel attempted to eat small apples at one

sitting but usually his eyes were bigger than his tummy and he had to rest for awhile. On one occasion he grasped an apple weighing more than he did (6 ounces) in his arms and calmly pulled it back into his lap, sitting there Indian fashion with his beautiful flat tail gracefully arched behind him for support. Using my pencil I would quickly lift his tail from the fireplace ledge and a bewildered little squirrel would roll over backwards still clutching his red apple.

When he tired of his apple he would approach me as near as possible on the fireplace ledge and begin his nightly ablutions. He first washed his forepaws carefully, scrubbing every finger, then his face and whiskers in the manner of a cat. The drooping trouser-like folds of his leg membranes would be carefully smoothed and polished until a sheen began to appear. Even his tail was patiently combed, the snarls being taken out by pulling it through his teeth.

My cigarette seemed to fascinate him and once after blowing smoke at him he jumped down to my desk and came to a skidding stop as though he wanted to play. I talked to him. He approached as though he wanted to make friends, but on second thought he would whirl away and leap to a curtain. From the curtain with membranes spread he would glide to the sofa and begin to search the house room by room. Each object was in a mysterious realm compared to the snowy winter world which he had known in the wild. A bounce or two and he would be in the hall closet. Up one garment, down the next, then into sleeves and pockets. Thump! My ranger hat would fall to the floor and an angry little squirrel would crawl out of its interior and thump



N.P.S. Photo—Sequoia N. P.
Landing on Tree Trunk

across the floor almost in a gallop heading for the altitude of the fireplace where he would poise crouched to throw himself into the air if pursued.

One evening I placed a piece of fresh lichen on the fireplace. This he discovered at feeding time. His ever present slice of apple was forgotten momentarily and he advanced upon it eagerly. He clipped off one fruiting body after another and ate them as though he were starved. Later after a drink of water and a slice of apple, he came back and rolled in the bristles as though it were catnip.

At times I would rise from my chair, step towards him and talk to my "panda bear" of the squirrel world. I would rub his fur along the ridge of membrane. He would become indignant and retire a few inches with back to the stone, large eyes watching me with a belligerent

gleam. I would stroke his tail and as he pulled it away, I would rub the fur on his back the wrong way until I could feel a vibration through his body almost like a cat's purr. This he seemed to enjoy at times, but often he would nip at my fingers and would grab my pencil and bite it savagely before flipping it to the floor. Turning away from him, I would watch him search for the walnut meats that he had hidden in the scales of the sugar pine cone.

The activity of our family seemed not to disturb our little friend. Anytime during the day we could open his drawer and talk to him or even stroke his tail or white undersides. He only lifted his furry tail up from his face so we could see a big eye looking out at us, and waiting patiently for us to close the drawer again so that he could go back to sleep. If a stranger entered the kitchen at this time he would become anti-social and scurry to the back of the drawer to get out of sight.

I handled him so often with leather gloves that he became rather belligerent at the sight of them. One afternoon as I approached him he gave me his own special look of mistrust and with a quick leap was upon the offending gloves like a flash, biting them several times and trying to pull them from my hand to the floor. He retreated to his drawer after that outburst of temper, so I picked up the gloves and stuffed them into the drawer along with the string he used for his nest. After this the gloves became a part of his bed and he no longer tried to bite me.

At times he would be quite playful. Once he batted a marble about the floor, another time a short piece of string was tossed about. Only once was he observed chasing his tail around a curtain. A time or two he bounced up to me, slapped my

leg with his paws and turned to run, stopping a few feet away as if he were inviting a chase. But most of the time, unless photographers were present, he would emerge from his chosen hideaway for food and drink after the family was in bed, only to be about for a few minutes and then back to his string bed where he would rest for another 24 hours.

During the time that the squirrel was our guest many experiments were tried and many observations were made. He was measured and weighed both before and after a full meal. His capacity for water was recorded, and his great variety of diet was noted as new foods were placed before him. His largest meal was consumed after one of his 24 hour naps when he ate over 2 plus ounces of water, apple, carrot, peanuts and walnut meats. Since he was liveliest and liked to eat about midnight or later, that was when we used him as a photographic model. Both Ralph Anderson and Joseph Grater waited many weary hours for our squirrel to make up his mind as to whether he wanted his picture taken or not. High shutter speeds were necessary for he seemed to anticipate the trip of the camera and flash globes. He became a scientific specimen for study as well as a true member of our household. As an animal he was a clean little fellow, leaving his droppings only in his drawer a few inches from his nest of rags and string.

Although the squirrel would allow only me to touch him when he was feeding, he tolerated other members of our family and at times seemed eager to join in the fun and roughhouse of the children. The noise of the radio didn't frighten him but when it was playing he kept an eye on the instrument. Violent popping in the fireplace often

alarmed him, causing him to leap across the room only to look back for a nonexistent pursuer.

Of course the whole family became attached to the little bundle of fun and as spring came with warmer days and greater light intensity, I was often met at the door of an evening by my daughter who would give me a running account of "Quirly" and his ever increasing daily activity.

By early June every chance was given the squirrel to escape, but open doors and windows were not a great temptation. Finally I made

the break and carried our little friend out to the woodshed and established his bed in my fishing basket. Within a few hours he heard the call of the wild and I hope that he was able to find other members of his family in the tree tops of Yosemite Valley.

For many days I had to answer the questions of our small daughter, "Daddy, where did 'Quirly' go; will he be back to see me; can I see him when he comes to eat if I stay up tonight?" Little Laura still hopes that he will come down from the trees and play with her in the sand box.



From "Mammals of Lake Tahoe" by Robert T. Orr. Courtesy of the publisher, California Academy of Sciences.

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

The club subscription, which has made possible the purchase of combination subscriptions including Yosemite Nature Notes, American Forests and Nature Magazine, is being discontinued. This action is necessary because cooperating magazines find it impossible to continue their club agreements due to the increased cost of production. The wholehearted cooperation of these magazines over these many years is greatly appreciated.

Subscribers now participating in club combinations will not need to take any action until expiration of their current subscriptions. At that time, it will be necessary to deal directly with the publishers of the magazines concerned.



Digitized by
Yosemite Online Library

<http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library>

Dan Anderson