DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Yosemite Nature Guide Service C. P. Russell, Park Naturalist

This is one of a series of bulletins issued from time to time for the information of those interested in the natural history and scientific features of the park and the educational opportunities the park affords for the study of these subjects.

Utilization of these bulletins by those receiving them to the end that the information contained therein might be as extensively distributed as possible will be appreciated.

W. B. Lewis, Superintendent.

KNOW YOUR PARK

With the arrival of Dr. H. C. Bryant of the California Fish and Game Commission, the fifth season of Yosemite Nature Guide Service opened May 27. As usual, large parties respond to the invitation to go afield and learn first hand of the natural wonders preserved for them. On Saturday, May 31, thirty-five Yosemite visitors climbed the Ledge Trail with Dr. Bryant and observed the interesting changes in flora and fauna between the valley floor, Glacier Point, and Sentinel Dome.

On Saturday, June 7, a full day trip will be made to the top of Yosemite Falls and Yosemite Point. Each Saturday through the summer Nature Guides will make full day trips to the "rim".

Every Monday and Thursday a Government Nature Guide will leave Camp Curry at 8:00 a.m. and at 4:00 p.m. with parties for two hour walks. Similar short trips will be made from Yosemite Lodge every Tuesday and Friday, from the Sentinel Hotel every Wednesday at 8:00 a.m., and from Housekeeping Camp Headquarters every Wednesday at 4:00 p.m. With the opening of high country camps

nature study trips of several days duration will be made.

Evening lectures and camp fire talks are given four times a week at Camp Curry and Yosemite Lodge. Twice each day geology talks are given at the Yosemite Museum. "Nature Notes", which has been published monthly during the winter, will now appear each week. The articles contained in the little publication are written by the members of the Nature Guide staff.

A display of living wild flowers at the Yosemite Museum provides a means of identifying the flowers of the park. The picking of flowers within the park is prohibited. If all were free to help themselves, 100,000 people or more in one year would leave the valley barren. Leave them that others may enjoy them.

"Learn to read the trailside."

THE WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER NESTING

As a rule, one must climb to the rim of the valley to find the Northern White-headed Woodpecker nesting, but this past week a nest was located in a dead black oak limb near Yosemite Lodge. The usual mannerism of staying away from the nest but keeping within sight of the nest tree was noticeable. The white head, surmounted by a red cap, and the coal black body with white patches on the wings make this bird conspicuous. In structure this woodpecker is of interest, for its fourth toe is much reduced in size and therefore it appears to be intermediate in this character between common woodpecker and the Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker. The white-head, which forages chiefly on living trees, subsists largely on ants.

A habitat group showing the nesting habit of the White-headed Woodpecker may be seen in the Natural History Room of the Yosemite Museum.

FLOWER WALKS

A short walk in almost any direction in the Valley will enable one at this time of year to see and enjoy many species of the Yosemite flora. Many plants are in full bloom. The deer-brush (Ceanothus integerrimus), though beyond its best, is still very attractive, and its white plume-like flower clusters attract much attention. The creek dogwood (Cornus publescence), another shrub with its clusters of white flowers, adds to the interest of the trailside, and the Manzanitas give contrast with the clusters of little apple-like fruits.

A stroll across the meadows at this time will give us a thrill as we see the attractive shooting stars (Dodecatheon jeffreyi) "standing straight like pink soldiers" in the grass, and near by possibly the Sisyrinchium, like grass but topped by a delicate blue flower. By the path in the woods we see several species of the Brodiaeas, blue, violet, pink, and golden. Gilias and Collinsias and Pentstemons and Potentillas give us a variety of form and color. On the banks of the little streams we see water cress and the brooklime in full bloom. Of special interest is the Wild Ginger, a peculiar plant, with large heart-shaped leaves concealing almost entirely a hairy brownish flower.

Its name is not well chosen for it is not used as a substitute for ginger, tho its root is highly aromatic.

DO NOT PICK THE WILD FLOWERS!

YOSEMITE BIRDS IN MAY

The month of May in Yosemite Valley was a delightful spring-like month. To the bird student the main interest of the month was the nesting activities of the birds.

To the nesting birds the weather was exceptionally kind; there were no extremely warm days during the month. Great, puffy summer clouds often drifted across the sky, but on only three days did rain actually fall. On the afternoon of May 12 there was considerable rain, and on May 22 and 23 there were afternoon showers - heavy but of short duration.

Owing to the light snowfall of the past winter the spring floods were lacking this year, and by the middle of the month the river was already on the wane. There was no menace of flood to the ground nesting birds.

This month of wonderfully fair weather apparently affected the activities of the birds but little. In general, the summer birds did not arrive earlier, nor did they nest earlier. Many nests were discovered, but a brood of robins and a brood of juncos that left the nest on the last day of the month were the only cases of young birds leaving the nest that came to our attention.

Now that the nesting season is on in earnest, some of the birds have almost ceased to sing. However, the Black-headed grosbeaks, the two vireos, and the Yellow warblers more than make up for the silent birds. The Russet-backed thrush, another fine singer, was also in full voice the last week of the month.

ANGLING EXCELLENT

With the Merced River already low as compared with normal years, angling is better than in former seasons. A large trout within a half-pound of the record was secured near Sentinel Bridge recently, and the more skillful anglers are taking two and three pounders.

TAME ANIMALS

With continued protection large game mammals are becoming very tame in Yosemite. Although a few years ago near approach was all that could be expected, this summer many are having thrilling experiences having bears and mule-deer eat from their hands in their own camp. A bear followed by a bevy of amateur photographers is a common sight.

WILD STRAWBERRIES ARE RIPE

Women and children, busily engaged in hunting something in the meadows, is a common sight in Yosemite these days, for wild strawberries are ripe, and everyone knows they have a flavor superior to the domestic varieties. Strawberries and cream, and strawberry shortcake often make up part of the menu of Yosemite campers.

GRAY SQUIRRELS STILL ABSENT

Three years ago a severe epidemic among gray squirrels dissipated their numbers. Last year not a tree squirrel was seen on the floor of the valley; as yet there seems to have been no arrivals to fill the place of those taken by disease. Undoubtedly, time will allow the species to re-establish itself in the Yosemite region, but to one who remembers their former abundance the lack of these gray beauties is most noticeable.

TELLING YOSEMITE'S STORY

2. The Uplift of the Sierra Block.

In the last number of Nature Notes, the first of a series of notes on the origin of Yosemite appeared. In succeeding numbers the entire story, as interpreted by Mr. F. E. Matthes of the U. S. Geological Survey, will be given.

The story goes back to a period of fifty million years ago. At that time the Sierra region was a comparatively flat ocean floor. While thus submerged, great quantities of sand, silt, and other sediment settled out of the water and covered the ocean floor to a depth of several thousand feet. Then came a recession of the waters, and the former ocean floor became dry land. This change was followed by an upheaval. A block of the earth's crust, four hundred miles long and eighty miles wide, was elevated; not lifted in its entirety above the surrounding country, but rotated on its long axis, rotated in such a way as to elevate the long eastern edge and depress the western edge. Thus a steep scarp was presented on the east, and a gentle slope on the west. This tilted block is the Sierra Nevada. It should not be supposed that one gigantic uplift produced the range. A series of tiltings distributed over a long period of time resulted in successive breaks or faults, and the eastern edge of the block has risen thousands of feet. There is also reason to believe that the lands east of the range have subsided so that the prominence of the Sierra is due to its own rising and to the sinking of adjacent regions. In the region of Owens Lake one may stand upon the crest at an altitude of 11,000 feet and cling to the brink of a 7500 foot descent. The eastern edge of the great block ranges from 10,000 to 14,000 feet. As will be explained in the next "Note", the present crest once had a great sedimentary cover, which has now disappeared.