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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

## YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

Volume III

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Number 7

Yosemite Nature Guide Service

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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.

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### RECORD TROUT TAKEN

For several years past tourists and natives of Yosemite have attempted to catch the huge trout often seen in the Merced River near the mouth of Cascade Creek. At least twice the fish has taken lures and promptly broken the tackle. It remained for Mr. U. N. Gilbo of Fresno, California to hook him and land him.

On June 5th this fisherman spied the monster and in fifteen minutes from the time of sighting him he had him safely ashore. The bait used was sal-

mon eggs; the hook, a #4. The fish weighs 9 lbs., 15 oz. and is 28½ inches long. His ancestry is traceable to Scotland, as he is apparently a typical Loch Leven.

Mr. Gilbo has placed the fish in the Yosemite Museum where it will no doubt carry the label, "Yosemite's Largest Trout" for years to come. Mr. S. R. Smith of Freeport, N. Y. has generously donated the large cylindrical glass jar in which the specimen will be preserved and exhibited to the thousands who annually visit the museum.

#### IDENTIFY YOUR TROUT AT YOSEMITE MUSEUM.

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#### GOLDEN EAGLE SEEN FROM EAGLE PEAK

Nature guided hikers to Eagle Peak on June 7 were rewarded with a list of about twenty birds seen and heard. Of greatest interest was a near view of an adult Golden Eagle appropriately seen from Eagle Peak. The bird gave a wonderful exhibition of flying and passed within a hundred yards, giving a splendid head-on view as well as views of the under and upper surface. The light golden brown color indicated that it was an adult.

The Golden Eagle is "supreme in size and majesty" among Sierran birds. Formerly a pair nested near Nevada Falls but they seem to have deserted that locality. Now birds are occasionally seen on upper Illillouette Creek near Glacier Point and near Eagle Peak.

#### THE SONG OF THE WATER OUZEL

Fishermen and explorers along Yosemite streams are occasionally favored by the song of the bird made famous by John Muir - the Water Ouzel. The writer located such a singer on a boulder in the Merced River below Pohono Bridge on June 8. With feathers fluffed out he poured forth a wonderful varied song of notes and trills almost to be compared to the sounds of rushing water. To describe this varied song is hopeless.

Although a nest on Tenaya Creek has been watched year after year, no song has been noted. It seems to be common knowledge that the song is more often heard after the nesting season than during it. According to John Muir, this bird often sings persistently in the middle of winter while foraging alongside of a frozen stream. The person who has learned to use eyes and ears is rewarded with such melodies as spring from the throat of the Water Ouzel in mid-summer!

#### THE FLYCATCHER PLIES HIS TRADE

One rainy afternoon while I was sitting in the kitchen, my attention was attracted by a Western Wood Pewee (*Myiochanes richardsoni richardsoni*) that

came fluttering against the window pane. A large, heavy-bodied moth on the inside of the pane was the attraction that brought the bird. After three attempts to get the moth, the Pewee gave up the hunt and flew to a perch on a branch about forty feet away.

To learn what the result would be, the moth was captured and tossed uninjured out of the window. No sooner had the moth started to flutter away than the keen-eyed flycatcher made a dive from his perch. There was a snap of closing mandibles, and the fat moth was a captive. The Pewee flew back to his perch to enjoy the morsel at leisure. As he ate the body of the moth, its wings were severed and cast aside. The detached wings floated downward; the Pewee wiped his bill on a limb and was ready for another meal.

A second moth was tossed on the air, and again the flycatcher made a perfect kill. Once more the wings came wavering down, and once more the Pewee wiped his bill. The bird held to his perch for a few minutes but as no more moths were forthcoming he uttered his buzzing call-note and departed.

#### PRIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS

Near Yosemite's "rim" the breathless hiker views with a thrill one of the most gracious and cheerful of mountain flowers. On large, gray, lifeless blocks of granite, he will see patches of brilliant pink or scarlet, the flowers of a Penstemon, the Pride of the Mountains, as it is known. Subsisting on apparently but a speck of soil and drawing its mineral food from the huge boulder, this plant produces its masses of bright flowers under the open sky and gladdens the heart of the weary hiker. At the trailside, possibly in the shade of a pine, the brilliant snow plant greets him, and growing among the stones in the bright sun the golden pink Sedum welcomes him. One can't but wonder how these plants can possibly grow in such situations. They not only grow but they give us beauty and teach us courage. The trailside has many lessons for us if we will only take the time to look and think.

#### ROBIN KILLS A LIZARD

On June 6 a group with a nature guide witnessed a remarkable performance staged by a male robin and a five inch Western Fence Lizard. When first seen, the robin held in his beak a writhing thing whose struggles threatened to overthrow the bird. Close approach revealed the prey to be a Western Fence Lizard. Not at all perturbed by the presence of fifteen wondering humans, the robin devoted his entire attention to his catch. Frequently the little reptile would twist into a position to seize upon the bird's throat feathers, whereupon he would gain his freedom momentarily, for the robin would hop a foot into the air and release him. But the attack was well planned; the spot was sandy and open, and, before the freed lizard could race to cover, the bird would again be upon him. It was apparent that the adversary was enjoying the excitement; it really appeared that there were more escapes and captures than were actually necessary. While the lizard was held in the robin's beak, he suffered heavy thumps against the ground and at last he ceased to struggle viciously. The robin ended his existence with heavy, direct blows from his beak and when last seen was engaged in opening the abdominal cavity and pulling forth the lizard's intestines.



## TELLING YOSEMITE'S STORY

### No. 3 - What Streams Did to the Sierra Block.

As the great Sierra Nevada was lifted, the water falling as rain upon its surface formed numerous drainage systems on both the east and west slopes. A series of nearly parallel master streams flowed directly down the west slope, and into the master streams poured a network of ramifying branch streams. The present Feather, Yuba, Bear, American, Mokelumne, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced, San Joaquin, King, and Kern Rivers are the most important of the master streams, heading on the Sierra crest and flowing to the Sacramento and San Joaquin plains.

This elaborate network of streams rapidly denuded the tilted block of the heavy layer of sedimentary matter which had been deposited from the ocean that once covered the region. Again as sand and silt, it was carried by the busy streams to the great valleys of California. The western edge of the Sierra Block was buried deeply beneath thousands of feet of this rock debris. So the granite of the range which had formed under the original sedimentary cover was bared. In a few places on divides between side streams some of the original soft rock cover escaped erosion. In numerous places along the crest contacts of it may yet be found. If one climbs from Glacier Point to Sentinel Dome, some of it may be seen, and in the vicinity of El Portal are quantities of it.

When the great cap of softer rock had been removed, the streams worked upon themuch harder granite. With each successive tilt that lifted the mountain range, the slope became steeper. Fresh vigor was given the master streams flowing down the slope and with each upthrust they became more efficient as cutters of canyons. The sand, gravel, and boulders swept along by the powerful currents vigorously cut and scoured the hard granite over which they flowed, and deep V-shaped canyons were formed. Mr. Matthes found that by such water action the Merced River had intrenched itself 2000 feet in the region of Yosemite Valley.

The above paragraphs describe briefly the part that stream action played in forming the Yosemite. It is apparent that the first V-shaped gorge resembled not at all the present marvelous vertical walled canyon. The next part of the story will account for the changes that have taken place.

### A THIRD BABY ELK ARRIVES

On the morning of June 4 Mrs. Elk Number 3 appeared with a new born fawn. Two other fawns, born this year, arrived April 23 and April 29 respectively. Last year but two fawns were added to the little herd, which now numbers eleven.

These elk of the Yosemite paddock are but a remnant of the enormous herds which once roamed the Sierra foothills and the great valleys of California. They are known as TULE ELK. The Yosemite herd was captured, transported to Yosemite, and enclosed in the large corral by the California Academy of Sciences



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Dan Anderson