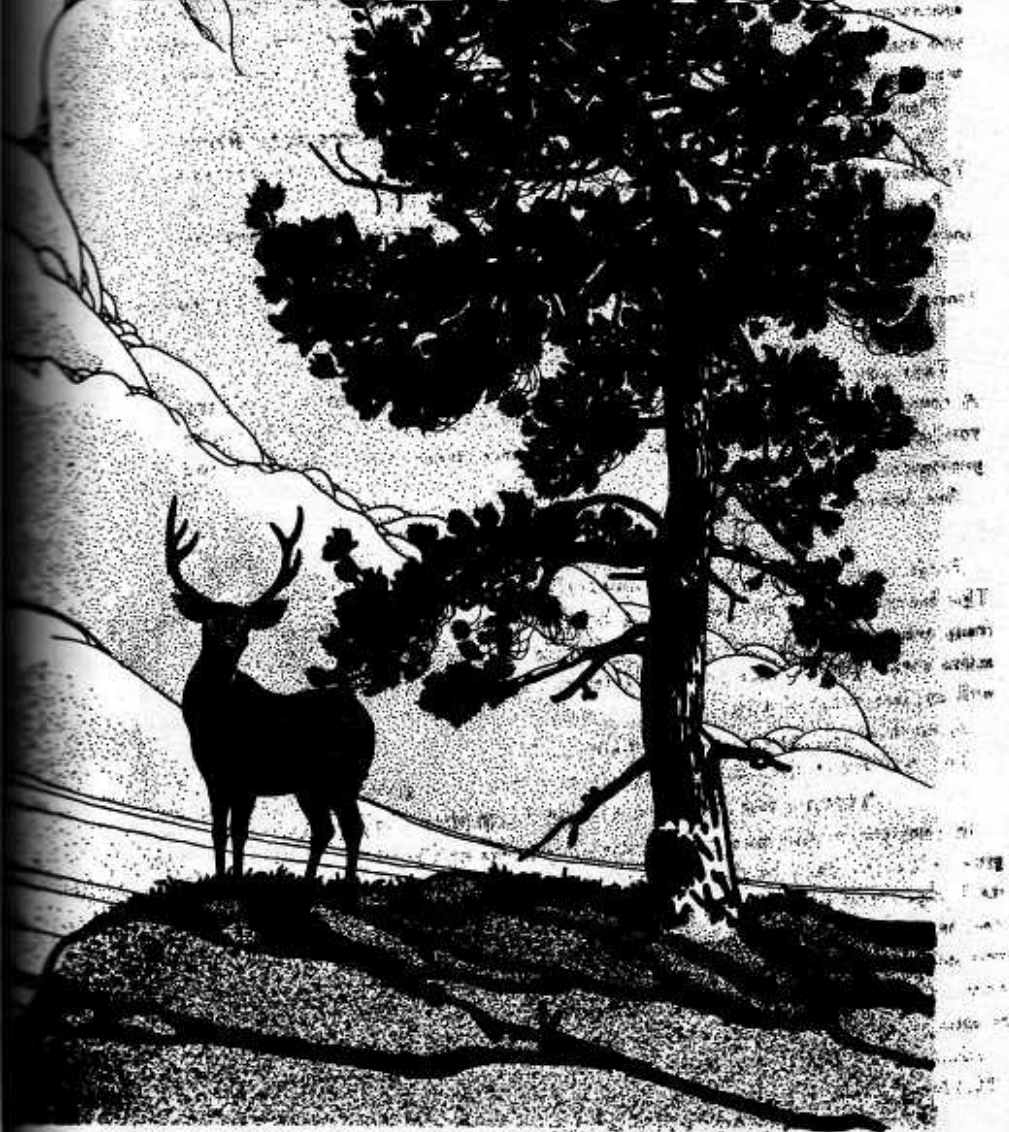


# YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



Volume IV

August 4, 1925

Number 11

## A PERSONAL INVITATION.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK IS YOURS! WE OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WANT TO HELP YOU TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR PARK AND TO UNDERSTAND IT IN ITS EVERY MOOD. ALL OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICE IS OFFERED TO YOU *free* BY YOUR GOVERNMENT:

### Visit the Yosemite Museum!

Here you will learn the full story of the Park — what tools were used by the great Sculptor in carving this mighty granite-walled gorge; who lived here before the white man came; how the Days of Gold led to Yosemite's discovery; how the pioneers prepared the way for you; and how the birds and mammals and trees and flowers live together in congenial communities waiting to make your acquaintance.

Plan your trail trips on the large scale models in the Geography Room.

The Yosemite Library in the museum provides references on all phases of Yosemite history and natural history.

Popular lectures on Yosemite geology and other branches of natural history are given by nature guides at scheduled times each day.

The nature guide on duty will be more than willing to answer your questions on any subject.

### Go Afield with a Nature Guide!

Take advantage of this free service that will help you to know your Park. A competent scientist will conduct you over Yosemite trails and from him you may learn first hand of the native flowers, trees, birds, mammals, and geological features.

See Schedule of Nature Guide Field Trips.

### Visit Glacier Point Lookout!

From there you will obtain an unexcelled view of Yosemite's High Sierra. The binocular telescope will bring Mt. Lyell to within one third of a mile from where you stand; you can recognize friends climbing trails several miles away. The Nature Guide in attendance will help you to operate it and will explain what you see.

A small library is at your command.

You will enjoy the informal nightly campfire talks given here.

### Attend the Nature Guide Campfire Talks!

In addition to the museum lectures, members of the educational staff give talks as a part of the evening program at Camp Curry and Yosemite Lodge. Non-technical explanations of how Yosemite came to be; what you may expect of Yosemite bears; how the local Indians lived; what birds you see about your camp; what trout you will catch in Yosemite waters; how you may best visit the wonderland of the summit region; and scores of similar subjects are given by the National Park Service Nature Guides.

**ALL OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE BY YOUR GOVERNMENT.**

**—TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM—**



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## FLOWERS ON THE EAGLE PEAK TRAIL

By Enid Michael

For those who go with a nature guide to Eagle Peak there are flowers all along the way. These flowers smile up into the faces of all who go that trail, but the hikers, warm and breathless, bent on a goal for up the steep cliffs, are apt to be blind to the winsome loveliness of the trailside unless someone with them draws attention to the flowers.

Among the first flowering plants of this trailside is one with soft gray leaves. It flowers in clusters of upturned lavender bells. A modest but thrifty home-maker among the gray rocks is this *Draparia*. The plant that lays a rosette of leaves on the warm sand bank and lifts its fluffy clusters of pink flowers on long stems, is Pussy Faws (*Spraguea umbellata*). On the sand bank, too, grows red-flowered milkweed (*Asclepias confertifolia*) and flaming Indian paint brush (*Castilleja breweri*). Miners lettuce (*Montia perfoliata*), a succulent plant with round leaves from which rises a cluster of small white flowers, grows all along the way. Another tall plant with roundish leaves, through which the stem seems to pass and a three-sided lavender-green flower, is shield-leaf (*Streptanthus tortuosus*), a member of the mustard family.

Where the trail turns in toward the Yosemite Fall mist keeps the banks damp. Here the airy balls of white bloom, raising on tall stems from branching, thread-like leaves, are Queen Ann's lace (*Eulophus bolanderi*). The shrubs that are all abloom with soft, fluffy sprays of white flowers are wild lilac or Deer bush (*Ceanothus interrimus*). Where the trail zig-zags up the chaparral covered slope Red Pentstemon (*Pentstemon bridgestii*) reaches clusters of bright flowers into the trail.

After the trail reaches the rim and turns into the great forest of red and white fir, sugar, jeffrey, tamarac and mountain pine, with occasional aspen and oak, only the first spring flowers are in bloom. Sierra forget-me-nots (*Lappula nervosa*), as delightful as any florist's

creation, stand gracefully along the trail. There are fields of Blue larkspur (*Delphinium decorum*) and Golden stars (*Bodlaea ixioidea*). *Polemonium plucherrimum*, called Jacob's ladder because of its ladder-like leaves, gleefully holds up plump clusters of blue flowers. Tall mountain bluebells (*Mertensia sibirica*) flower luxuriantly in the damp places. There, too, is the common Monkeyflower (*Mimulus luteus*) with enormous golden heads. Over the dry sand flats *Mimulus mephiticus* creates a golden mantle with a million saucy monkey faces.

The great floral display is in Eagle Peak meadow. This large meadow, set like an eye in the great forest, is flushed with the first bloom of spring. The White-headed knotweed (*Polygonum bistortoides*) and piquant Shooting star (*Dodecatheon jeffreyi*), that bloomed a month ago in the Yosemite meadows, are here in fresh array. But the glory of this meadow today is the Blue camas (*Camassia quamash*). These lilies, each a large, dark blue star set in clusters on a tall bare stem, open in the afternoon to close the following day. The vast expanse of freshly opened lilies, when viewed in the afternoon, seems to float above the green meadow as a cloud endowed with the bright splendor of the Sierra sky.

On the slopes of Eagle Peak grow the low mats of Douglas phlox, now brightly mantled with pink and lavender flowers. And on the very summit, like tongues of fire thrusting out from the cracks between the rocks, is the Pride of the Mountains (*Pentstemon mentzelii*).

These flowers and others you may see today, if you climb to Eagle Peak. In two weeks, however, most of these flowers will be gone, and thousands of other flowers will be perfuming the soft mountain air. The mountain wild flowers bloom from June to October; each week some flowers fade and other species bloom, and so from week to week and month to month a brilliant floral pageant passes over the mountains.



# MUSEUM NOTES

## YOSEMITE FIELD SCHOOL. OF NATURAL HISTORY

Opening exercises of the Yosemite Field School of Natural History were held on the afternoon of June 29, with Chief Park Naturalist Hall, Park Naturalist Russell and Dr. H. C. Bryant as the speakers. An earnest group of nineteen students are now busy studying living things in the field. The work emphasizes knowledge of the living thing itself as against laboratory study or book study. Background for each study will be gained by emphasis on setting and interrelations. Both students and instructors appear to be thrilled with the plan of work and the spirit shown. Hours are too short for this group of students, and already the week to be spent in the high country studying conditions at timber line is but a short distance away. Each will go home with a more intimate knowledge of the fauna and flora of Yosemite and will be better fitted to teach biology or natural history or to fit into the nature guide programs in national parks or in summer camps.—H. C. Bryant.

\* \* \*

## Y MUSEUM CAMPFIRE

Hoping to gather those interested in natural history for a weekly program, a fireplace and benches have been arranged in back of the new museum. Here on Tuesday, July 7, was held the first museum campfire. Sixty-five gathered to sing, contribute to the entertainment and listen. Several poems by Badger Clark were read and quotations from John Muir given. An experience meeting which dealt with interesting birds and animals found brought out talent and worth-while information. Judging by the interest shown in this first campfire, this innovation is likely to grow into a permanent institution. All nature lovers who visit Yosemite in the future should plan to attend the museum campfire on Tuesday evenings. They are assured congenial company and a worth-while program.—H. C. Bryant.

\* \* \*

## NATURE MAGAZINE

Published monthly in Washington, D. C., by the American Nature Association. Usual price of membership is \$3.00 annually.

With "YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES" --- \$4.00 annually.



## YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

Published weekly in summer, monthly in winter by the Yosemite Natural History Association in Yosemite Valley. Membership is \$2.00 annually.

With "NATURE MAGAZINE" \$4.00 annually.

# AFIELD WITH THE NATURE GUIDES

## CASSIN VIREO REFUSES TO VACATE

It was a rainy day. Twenty people had risked a wetting to follow a nature guide. They stood beneath a black oak for shelter while watching a female Cassin vireo on her nest in a coffee berry bush but six feet above the ground. Neither dripping umbrellas nor talk startled the bird from the nest. The male bird appeared, took a sheltered nook under a limb and gave a concert. Then dropping to the bush he quickly covered the eggs as the female slipped off the nest, stretched herself and flew to another tree to feed. The nature guide, wishing to show the eggs, moved his hand to the edge of the nest, but the incubating bird failed to move. Instead he used his bill in defense. When gently stroked he settled low in the nest as if he enjoyed it. Not even a tug at his wing and at his tail dislodged him. He stood his ground and refused to be budged from the nest. This vireo often builds fairly close to the ground and is readily approached, but less often may a bird be stroked on the nest.—H. C. Bryant.

## YOSEMITE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS

Red-winged blackbirds are found in Yosemite valley at a few scattered points, as in the meadow north of Sentinel bridge and also in the silk paddock. Four pairs are also at home in the meadow west of Kenneyville, and two in the meadow east of the same place. One pair is located at the Leidig meadow also. It appears that these few pairs are the nesting Redwing population of Yosemite this year.

The birds about the Sentinel bridge and Kenneyville all seem to be of the new subspecies (*Aciculaus*) or the Kern Redwing which, up until a few years ago, 1918, approximately, was known only to occur in breeding season in the Kern valley east of Bakersfield. It is distinguished from the Bl-colored Redwing in having a very long, slender bill and a buffy yellow edging to the red on the shoulder.

The birds at Leidig meadow seem to be Bl-colored Redwings, as the male was observed at very close range and had a short heavy bill and practically no buff whatsoever bordering the red of the shoulder patch.

Polygamy is practiced to some extent by all the Redwings, so one will often see more females than males around the nesting locality.

At my home, thirty miles west of Yosemite, one Bl-colored Redwing was known to have three wives and three nests under his surveillance and he made an able guardian for all three.—D. D. McLean.

## WHAT IS THE LEDGE TRAIL?

Many visitors to the park are misinformed as to the exact nature of the Ledge Trail from the floor of the valley to Glacier Point and several have missed this wonderful trip on that account. Soon after leaving Camp Curry the climb starts in earnest, but the shade afforded by the friendly oaks and conifers cheers the traveler on for the first half of the distance. Soon the trail finds the dashing stream that makes Staircase Falls and follows it to the top. To be sure, there are plenty of tall steps to climb, but the benefits of a shady trail with wonderful views all along make the trip a memorable one. The naturalist finds much of interest on the way. The joy of finding a new fauna and a new flora at the end of the trail adds to the anticipation. Where the trail follows the stream up its narrow fissure the traveler passes the most refreshing rock gardens countless annuals are bowing to the passerby smiling in the sunlight, and seeming to revel in their solitude. Another point about the Ledge Trail—it does not follow a dizzy precipice as many suppose, but is a safe means of ascent for anyone.—David D. Keck.



## STONE FLY TRANSFORMATION

Spring marks a change in the life of many an insect, but there is no greater change in habits than that taking place in the stone fly. For a year or two these insects have been spending their naïad existence underneath the rocks in swift-flowing streams. At the urge of spring, when internal conditions are favorable, these naïads crawl out of the water and onto trees or rocks. Then the skin cracks along the back and out crawls the gauzy-winged adult, at first hesitantly and then more positively as the warm air dries and hardens the body. Soon the glorified stone fly tries his wings and away he goes to spend the few remaining days of his existence in glad revelry and without food while a very material ghost of his former self is left clinging to the tree or rock.

These ghosts or exuviae are very common along the streams at this time of the year. Below El Capitan bridge they were found on nearly every tree or stone by the water's edge. On a single large alder seventy-five skins were counted, some being at a height of twenty-five feet above the water. To see a developed naïad change to the adult is a sight worth many hours of search.—R. D. Harwood.

#### Nest of Northern Pileated Woodpecker Discovered by Nature Guide Party

The nature guide party which went to Glacier Point on Friday, June 26, and along the Pohono trail the following day had a most unusual experience, for not only was a northern pileated woodpecker seen but his nest was discovered. The kuk, kuk, kuk of the bird was heard and an investigation off to one side of the trail soon disclosed the presence of this, our largest woodpecker, and about twenty-five or thirty feet from the ground in a dead fir tree, its nest. The female bird was sitting on the nest. An excellent view of the male was had when he alighted on the side of the trunk containing the nest. He stayed but a moment, however, and did not come back a second time, but carefully concealed himself on the opposite side of a big fir at some distance. The great size of this bird, its long neck and bill, and its bright red crest make it easy to identify and one never to be forgotten. No wonder it has been nicknamed the cock-of-the-woods.—M. B. NICHOLS.

\* \* \*

#### A Nest of the Mountain Bluebird

The Mountain Bluebird is a bird of the high mountain meadows. Not only is it conspicuous because of its color, but its habit of hovering attracts the eye. A Mountain Bluebird hovering in the air and pouncing on an unsuspecting grasshopper completes the mental picture of many a mountain meadow to the one familiar with its beauties. For a safe place to rear its young this bluebird selects a hollow in a tree or an old woodpecker's nest. The lining is usually of grass. Both parents help in feeding the young. On the trail to Merced lake is to be found a splendid grove of aspens beside a small road. About eighty feet up in one of these aspens is an old sapsucker's nest and this is now (July 4) occupied by a pair of Mountain Bluebirds engaged in feeding the young. Exceedingly graceful on the wing, these birds were worth watching. Arriving at the entrance to the nesting cavity each parent in turn disappeared into the cavity, remained for half a minute and then launched into flight directly from the opening. Although we hear of the song of the Eastern Bluebird, no one appears to enthrall over a song of the Western or of the Mountain Bluebird. The chord-like note of rich quality is often heard, but even at nesting time the bluebird of our mountain meadows is noticeably quiet and practically songless.—H. C. BRYANT.

#### CALIFORNIA PINE GROSBREAK SEEN

A bird whose aspect impresses

one so that once seen he is remembered is the male of the California pine grosbeak (*pinicola enucleator californica*). The pine grosbeak is a comparatively rare bird and is usually found only well above 8000 feet, so it is seldom encountered by the automobile tourist. One was found July 2, at 7500 feet elevation near the head of the Pohono trail. The bird, a male, was brightly marked with red on its head, breast and rump, the rest of the body was predominantly a brownish gray. His fearlessness was remarkable and he kept up his song of two notes, wuit-leek, while all the time he was within six or eight feet of the observer, feeding among the tender shoots of the red fir.—David D. Keck.

\* \* \*

When young Elgin Lait piled eleven more years on top of his present ten, he's going to be a national park ranger.

Elgin learned about rangers the other night in Yosemite. He likes them.

Elgin came to the national park from Los Angeles with his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Durka. They arrived here at night, made camp, had their supper around the campfire and turned in. Grandma and Grandpa Durks slept inside the tent, but Elgin wanted to be a ranger and sleep under the sky, so they let him drag his cot outdoors, where he slept with his clothes on, just like rangers are supposed to do, but don't.

Elgin got to sleep, and was soon awakened by someone stumbling against his cot. It proved to be not one, but three girls. They were lost. Elgin whipped out his flashlight, and like a gallant ranger, helped the girls find their tent.

Then he set out to find his own tent again. Midnight found him still looking.

It also found him bumping into a ranger on patrol. The ranger tried for two hours to help Elgin find his tent, but the boy was so completely lost that at 2 in the morning he was taken to the rangers' clubhouse, where he slept like a log among the rangers.

At 7 next morning Elgin was awakened by a ranger who wanted to know if boys liked bacon for breakfast. Elgin did. He ate about a dozen strips of it, and then with a ranger set out to find his grandparents and their tent.

In the daylight, Elgin found them before they were out of bed. They didn't know, even, that Elgin was out of bed. Say, what that 10-year-old boy did have to tell them about rangers and how rangers treat 10-year-old boys!

Well, Elgin's going to be a ranger, when he grows up!

## THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION ITS PURPOSES

1. To gather and disseminate information on the wild-life of the Sierras.
2. To develop and enlarge the Yosemite Museum (in cooperation with the National Park Service) and to establish subsidiary units, such as the Glacier Point lookout and branches of similar nature.
3. To promote the educational work of the Yosemite Nature Guide Service.
4. To publish (in cooperation with the U. S. National Park Service) "Yosemite Nature Notes".
5. To study living conditions, past and present, of the Indians of the Yosemite region.
6. To maintain in Yosemite Valley a library of historical, scientific, and popular interest.
7. To further scientific investigation along lines of greatest popular interest and to publish, from time to time, bulletins of non-technical nature.
8. To strictly limit the activities of the association to purposes which shall be scientific and educational, in order that the organization shall not be operated for profit.

### MAY WE SEND YOU EACH ISSUE OF YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES?

Your check for \$2.00 sent to the Park Naturalist, Yosemite National Park, will help to pay the cost of its publication for one year and make you a member of the Yosemite Natural History Association for the same period.

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### FROM THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON OUT-DOOR RECREATION

Called by PRESIDENT COOLIDGE

THAT THE CONFERENCE ENDORSE NATURE STUDY IN SCHOOLS AND THE EXTENSION OF THE NATURE STUDY IDEA TO EVERY AMERICAN SCHOOL AND FAMILY; . . . . THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MUSEUMS OF NATURAL HISTORY IN NATIONAL PARKS WILL INCREASE THE EDUCATIONAL RECREATIONAL VALUE OF THE PARKS".—Resolution of the Conference.

A scenic view of a river flowing through a forested valley with mountains in the background. The river is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery and the blue sky. The foreground shows large, smooth rocks in the water. The background features steep, rocky mountains under a clear blue sky.

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Dan Anderson