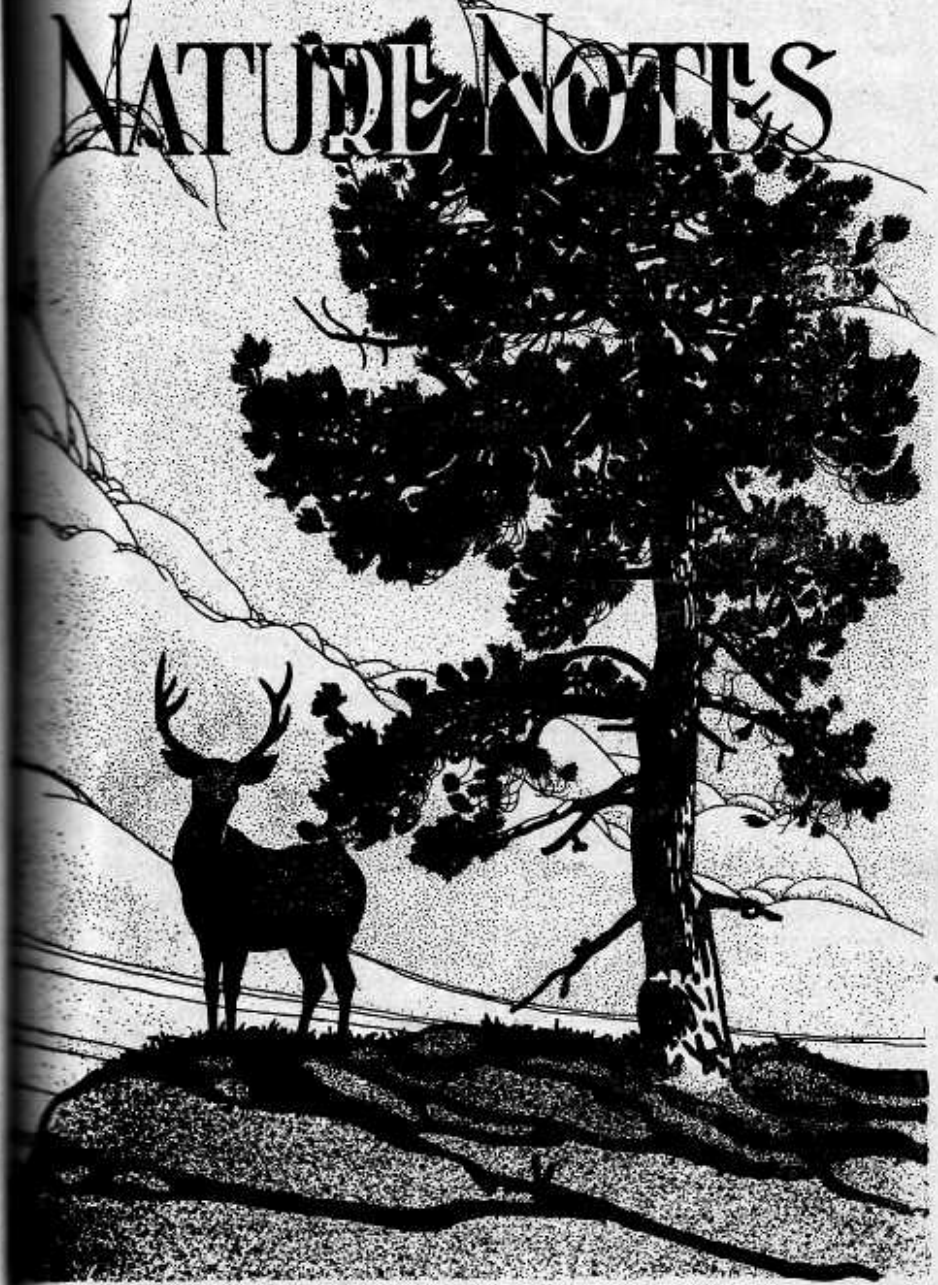


# YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



Volume IV

July 21, 1925

Number 9

## 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 co-operation 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 co-operation 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.



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## NESTS

By L. K. Wilson

It is easy to find the nests of the Yosemite bird population during the nesting season. But when the first frosts of winter strip the black oaks of their leaves it is with difficulty that even close observers are able to find even traces of the old nests.

One reason for this is the fact that the birds themselves pull the first nests of the season apart in order to obtain material with which to construct a home for the second brood.

A Chipping Sparrow had started to construct a nest in an apple tree in the Clark orchard. Being disturbed in the work by overzealous observers, the site was abandoned. After two or three days the birds had carried the nesting material from the original site to a new one in another apple tree some sixty feet away.

A Western robin reared a brood of four youngsters in back of Camp 19. As soon as they were able to shift for themselves the parent birds started to construct another nest for the second brood, using the material from the old nest in building the new one.

Another robin, nesting near the transportation office at Camp Curry, utilized a piece of ribbon from a candy box in the construction of the nest, and after the brood had been raised, the ribbon was taken to a new nest site and worked

into a second home.

A wood Pewee nest near Clark's bridge met with a disaster before it had been completed. Within one week of the time when the nest had been blown loose from its moorings by the wind the parents had removed every trace of it to a new location.

A Cassin Vireo nest in the Lamon Meadow was wrecked by a strong gale which blew the eggs out upon the ground. Within a week from the time that this calamity occurred, all the spider cocoons which had been used to decorate the nest had been removed, either by these same parents or another nesting pair.

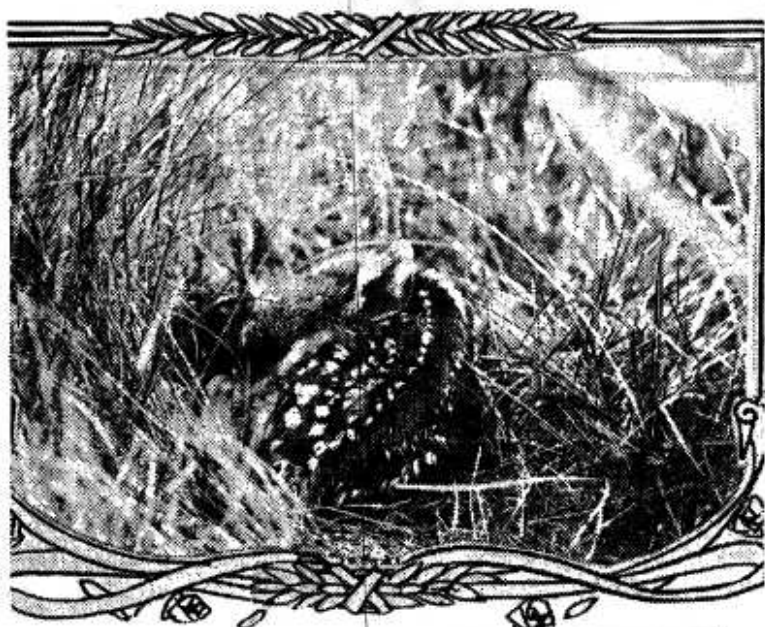
This same result was reached in the case of a Warbling Vireo which raised a brood in the Clark orchard. A few days after the birds had left the nest the exterior decorations had been all torn away.

The conclusions to be drawn from these facts are that many nests are torn down by the birds themselves after the first brood has hatched, and therefore few old nests are found during the winter, though a large population may have flourished in the region during the nesting season. Also this may be limited to a few species, for blue jays and humming bird nests are frequently found after the leaves have left the trees.

# THE ARRIVAL OF BABY MULE DEER

By C. P. RUSSELL

Park Naturalist, Yosemite National Park



Some weeks ago "Yosemite Nature Notes" reported the birth of elk calves. Now come the many tiny fawns that each year add to the great number of Mule deer that inhabit the park. The first one to come to the attention of the park naturalist was born May 25. That it had a twin brother or sister is altogether likely, for such is the Mule deer nature, but the rest of the family could not be located if it did exist.

The infant that I came upon was curled up in a tiny ball, its nose inserted beneath its breast, and only its ears, of huge proportions, betrayed its identity. The wise mother had cached it beneath the overhanging limbs of a yellow pine and had it not been for the single twitch of one of the long ears, I must needs have passed it by without guessing its presence.

The many white spots in the brown coat of the youngster, strangely enough, do not make it conspicuous. On the contrary, they cause the motionless form to blend into the grassy surroundings—splendid camouflage. There is but very little body odor to new-born fawns and the doe may safely leave them to the natural protection of their natal surroundings. Coyotes and other predators can not easily search them out even though their canine noses be keen.

Not infrequently Yosemite visitors come upon helpless infants just as I did. The first impulse is to pick up the mite of an animal and carefully cuddle and feed it. Many times Yosemite fawns are carried to camps, swathed in superfluous clothing and fed from a bottle of

cow's milk. Usually these unfortunates resist such unnatural conditions about one week and then die. We urge that all baby deer be left where found. The seeming desertion on the part of the mother is but her natural way of awaiting the time when the fawns have gained sufficient strength to follow her about. She returns to them often during the first several days, feeds them generously, and soon they are capering about, depending upon their strength of limb for protection rather than the initial protective coloration. Tonight, after dark, I went to a spot where I knew a fawn had been cached. As I approached the thicket in which it rested, my feet caused a tearing sound as I kicked through the long grass. The youngster apparently hoped that the approaching thing was its mother for it set up a crying that sounded not unlike the mewling of a kitten. As I drew closer to it, it became undecieved and ceased its high pitched crying suddenly. I had learned what I desired to know and withdrew without attempting to locate the hungry little thing. No doubt the doe also calls to her offspring when feeding time brings her to look for it.

# The Woodpecker's Possessions

Roland Case Ross

Yosemite Nature Guide Service

A BIRD seems the most lightsome and carefree of creatures; four-footed beasts can escape their troubles and their foes only upon the surface of the earth. A favored few are learned in miners' skills and enter the solid earth—but birds have the heavens open before them, the whole earth is theirs, and to us it seems they must be the most unattached of living things. "Oh, for the wings of a dove" sighed the psalmist, who thought to flee persecution. But if he had been a dove persecution would not of a certainty have driven him to the wilderness, for birds do have attachments. Even after the home life is over, and the birdlings grown and flown, the bird finds situations and haunts that are dear to him.

Following the general break-up after nesting time, many kinds of birds establish in their winter homes more or less definite territory over which they repeatedly roam, becoming overseers of their district; landholders as it were. However, there is considerable latitude to a bird's territory, especially in winter, and changes may frequently occur, but in every new situation routine, habits and favorite locations are again established that after all such birds are bound to whatever region they are by force of a habit nature. There are many other birds that wander free-lances over both land and sea, yet even such return with the season along habitual highways and seek each spring the chosen nest-ground.

There are some birds more given to attachments for localities than others. Some must abide in definite areas because there alone is the chosen food to be found. Others have no such unalterable limitations but feed comfortably in many parts of country. The woodpeckers of this latter group and find their particular foods in ranges that extend from valley bottoms far up the mountain sides. In spite of this the woodpeckers of certain species seem to be very limited in their range, many of them being definitely localized. Part of this is due to food supply, as is especially conspicuous in the California woodpecker which confines its territory to oak-timbered regions. But it is general must have territories of a somewhat permanent nature, for winter and summer they are thought to dwell in houses of their own construction. The woodpecker hole

in the heart of a tree is a home usually occupied at night and sometimes resorted to in daylight.

Such birds are artisans of a high order, excavating entrances of remarkably uniform size—for each species—each leading to a gourd-shaped cavity of a considerable depth. It is hard work as well as skillful, and is accomplished entirely by the bird's bill. Woodpecker bills are of heavy construction and long enough to strike into deep holes with accuracy. The working edge is not chisel-shaped but rather like a crow-bar or pick. It is beveled at either side, presenting a narrowed but not keen-edged end. Then by vigorous blows struck by the head but aided by a spring of the whole body the point of the bill is driven so as to pry or pound off chips and chunks of wood. Diligence accomplishes the rest, for the task is long and many small bits and slivers have to be flicked aside or out of the deepening hole before excavation continues.

This bill is the bird's limitation as it is his special gift. Because it is so good a tool it must be used and the bird is often at his special trade, though one hole at a time is all he can occupy. He is an incurable hole-digger. These frequent cavities, constructed in leisure time, bind the feathered workman to the region; for surely sleeping quarters must be slept in; a home is to live within, and the bird abides close to home. These special provisions—the cavity dwelling and the bill that must be used—are comforts and assets in the woodpecker's life, yet they limit the free-wandering tendencies that affect unattached creatures, whether feathered or otherwise.

## AFIELD WITH THE NATURE GUIDES

### SPOTTED SANDPIPER BABES

If one is fortunate enough to find a family of young Spotted Sandpipers running about under the direction of the parent he should spend a few minutes observing the birds' behavior. The agitated calls of the mother are sufficient to cause the young birds to "freeze" in their tracks. A brood of young observed on the island next to camp 6 disappeared practically under the observer's gaze. The mother bird was very excited, while her young ones were crouched low among the pebbles in the open and would run about, pretending to be feeding, but frequently climbing a little plateau about a foot and a half high, from whence the young could be watched. As no danger approached, one of the young birds dashed for the bank, and upon my approach huddled close to the bank, as though trying to protect itself from being stepped upon. The minute I looked in another direction they were off for the tall grass, where the mother felt reassured and became quiet. The protective coloration of the young birds when "freezing" in a group of stones makes it very hard to detect and it will not under any fright run again until the coast is clear.—David D. Keck.

### A REMARKABLE FLOWERING

A charming flower is the Mariposa lily, *Calochortus leichtlinii*. Slender stems reach these lilies well above the grasses. The three "petals" that turn softly backward, are snowy within with a dark "eye" and a hairy yellow base. The backs of the "petals" are daintily penciled with green. The three "sepals," too, are lined with green and bordered with white. Delicate and chaste. Butterfly lilies turn their pure faces to the sunshine. This *calochortus* blooms early in June. Usually a hundred flowers appear in the Sentinel Meadow, and to the sandy flats near Clark's bridge and to a few other warm flats a scattering of lilies come. So few of these lilies bloomed last year that the writer feared that in the valley these flowers had almost passed. Then the June of 1925 brought a glorious resurrection! Along the sandy roadsides on the south of the valley appeared thousands of these lilies. They formed a continuous flower garden down as far as the Bridal Veil Falls; four miles of flowers! In the meadows, on the sandy flats, right in the public camps, where thousands tread, bloomed the lilies. For two weeks they made the valley glorious, then vanished as quickly and as mysteriously as they had come. Up the slopes now they gleefully climb after the spring, and to the trampler along the trails they now turn their sweet, white faces.

Had these thousands of lilies that bloomed this year, where a few hundred bloomed each year during the five years previous, lain asleep in the sandy earth awaiting for a season of rain, such as this, to bring out their flowers? We guess that this may be the explanation of the extraordinary flowering.

Now a second Mariposa is to bloom *Calochortus venustus*, and we wonder if it, too, is to take possession of the valley.—Ezra Michael.



### DUCK HAWK IN YOSEMITE DURING JUNE

On June 26th, while standing on the back porch of the Rangers' Club with Nature Guide David Keck, we saw circling between us and the Royal Arches a hawk, which I at first took to be a Prairie Falcon. However, the bird suddenly plunged down and passed directly in front of us over the road only a few feet from the ground, disclosing an adult Duck Hawk. The slatey blue back and the dark head were unmistakable. It continued down the valley toward the lodge, finally disappearing from our view.

Could it be possible that this Falcon is nesting somewhere in the walls of Yosemite, or was it just a wanderer from some other locality in search of better hunting grounds?—D. D. McLean.



### PERPLEXED ANGLERS PLEASE NOTE!

Yosemite has been termed the region of "educated" trout, because of the faculty which the trout of the region possess of ignoring the lure of all but the craftiest of anglers.

But the educated trout partake of queer foods as is shown by the stomach contents of a fine Eastern brook trout taken on fly, June 7, in Tamarack creek. This fish, which was about a foot in length, was noticed to have a particularly distended stomach. Upon examination it was found to contain the recently swallowed body of an adult Navigator Shrew.

This animal, which is considerably larger than an ordinary house mouse, lives in and near the swift flowing mountain streams, spending much of its time in the icy water. Because of the particular character of their ur, it holds a great quantity of air, so that when the animal goes beneath the surface it gives a very glistening effect. Apparently this shrew was too much for the brook trout, and the shrew taken from his stomach had dived into their ushing waters of Tamarack creek once too often.—L. K. Wilson.

## 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 camps; 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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Dan Anderson