

YOSEMITE

JANUARY, 1976 VOLUME FORTY-FIVE, NUMBER 1



HARRIET MEYER'S TRIPS TO YOSEMITE. When I was four years old, I was taken to Yosemite with an entourage that consisted of my parents, my thirteen-year old sister and her Shetland pony, a surrey-with-the-fringe on top pulled by two horses and a buckboard for the servants and tents and supplies. Ours may have been the first family to enter Yosemite in this fashion.

My father generally went there four times a year for rough-camping in the high country, but my mother loathed it. Father, that year, knew he was dying of cancer and possibly mother did also as she consented to go on this last trip if he would travel in the style to which she was accustomed.

Our horses and buggies went by train to El Portal. There, all disembarked, and, like a wagon train, made our way up to the Valley; the Valley seemed to bore my father; he passed through it only to see that we got to Mirror Lake, before starting up the steep trails to Tuolumne Meadows.

I remember best, Mirror Lake, where we camped the first night. When father announced to mother that he was going to awaken us early enough to see the sun rise on Mirror Lake, she replied that she was going to sleep. This meant that father had to dress me. Father had a law firm in San Francisco and commuted by ferry from Mill Valley every day so had little time to help domestically with his daughters. I was closer to him at that moment than any-time before or since because I was much more pleased at his love and awkwardness than I was upon seeing the sun come over the trees, and of course he made a production of it, telling us how beautiful it was going to be. The older sister had often gone camping and fishing with him so wasn't as impressed as I.

As soon as we could get our band into action we started the trek that caused the rangers to ask father if he had lost his mind. He knew all of them and just replied that he had sawed down a few saplings to make the trail wide enough for the buggy and wagon. I remember a bear's crossing in front of Chipmunk, the Shetland pony; Chipmunk reared on his hind feet but sister was very calm and not afraid. Mother and father and the servants walked most of the narrow trails, but I rode like a queen.

We finally reached Tuolumne Meadows where we were challenged again by astounded rangers and I remember being pleased that they knew my father's name, but he had often sat around their campfires with John Muir. As they were both of Scottish extraction, father states in his diaries that their philosophical outlook on life seemed compatible, and they both belonged to the Sierra Club.

Two other memories of the Yosemite High Country stick in my mind: I ate every trout I was offered, and one night my sister and I, in a tent next to our parents, heard our father whispering to us to keep very quiet as a bear was trying to climb the tree where our bacon hung.

Next year father passed away and I know him best through his diaries which I read every few years. From his diary, these few quotations remain the most outstanding:

July 1, 1901 - "First annual outing of the Sierra Club at Tuolumne Meadows. Camp Curry - 100 people. In evening a special meeting of Sierra Club to protest artificial illumination of the falls and natural objects in the valley and a committee was appointed to draft resolutions condemning the project." (Father was on the committee.)

July 8, 1901 - "Hiked to Porcupine Flats - most of club also. Two Chinese cooks got supper for over 70 by the campfire. Half Dome, Lake Tenaya, Mt. Dana."

July 19, 1901 - "Professor Dudley lectured on trees. John Muir and party arrived. He presided at the campfire. Next day to Dog Lake and Glacial Meadow, described by John Muir, in "Mountains of California". Had long talk with Mr. Muir after dinner about the Tuolumne Canyon trip and his experiences in general. Found him delightful."

I recently moved to an adult community at the foot of Mt. Hamilton. It has everything one could want including a parade of every variety of birds and several duck ponds. A few weeks ago I joined a group for a trip to Yosemite. Our visit was planned to be there when the dogwood was in bloom, but it was not. We learned that it was among the latest springs in some years. An Indian woman who weaves baskets at the Visitor center said even the bears are not out of hibernation, and very few flowers were out.

We at once boarded a large bus and were taken for two hours to view the more important sights. The first thing we saw was a stalker; then a spoiled coyote which was such a ham that he posed for pictures. There was snow on the sides of the road but the weather was very warm. We saw several buses of Japanese who got out, took each other's pictures and bowed from the waist. The next two days we saw lots of students and their leaders who apparently were working for nature credits for school.

For me, the whole trip was a nostalgic memory of Mirror Lake - and my father — so that when the bus reached there I felt as if I were in church. Father's pictures showed no trees in the background, as there are now. The rangers said that the little lake will fill in someday and will become a meadow.

The first night at Yosemite Lodge we saw an interesting picture with a ranger narrating. My room was directly below Yosemite Falls and I had to expose a semi-deaf ear as the falls sounded as if a tidal wave were approaching.

At breakfast next morning, I met one of the men on our tour. His wife was a hiker, and she had gone off with our group on the little mini-bus to get as close to Glacier Point as possible, because it was snowed in. (I had been disappointed by the fact that we couldn't be driven to Glacier Point as I have a picture of father taken there.) My friend and I decided to walk to the Center and Ansel Adam's Gallery (whose home I once visited when living in Carmel-by-the-Sea). The Yosemite Falls are above the Center so we had it in view all morning, and as I have good binoculars, it was especially enjoyable.

The walk was farther than we realized and we both agreed to take the shuttle bus back. To our surprise it went in the opposite direction and we soon heard that we could transfer to another shuttle to Mirror Lake. I was in ecstasies again, so off we went. On this trip, more time was allotted so we could walk around this beautiful lake and I could try to remember a father I had known for such a short time.

Next morning we were in the cafeteria early and had time to go to the Center again. In order to leave by the Merced road we had to start at noon when the road construction was halted. There were two lines of cars and while we waited we had a fifteen minute break. Everyone had their binoculars out watching a mountain climbing class. A ranger told us that this was where Clint Eastwood got his instructions for "The Eiger Sanction," which he made in Switzerland.

We continued on our way and to our amusement the last car we observed was a United Parcel Service bus making a delivery.

During these sixty years I had never wanted to go back to Yosemite, visualizing it through father's eyes and thinking the commercialization would have destroyed it.

But I was glad that I did, Yosemite is large enough for everyone and if Man will try to emulate nature and animals, the conservationists and the Sierra Club won't have to worry.

COOKING WITH SNOW — One of the local (lady) naturalists gave us the following recipe. It's application may not be general - but who knows? Snow cornbread: Gather four cups of clean, dry, freshly-fallen snow (fresh snow contains ammonia, which acts the same as baking powder.) Mix with two cups of yellow corn meal, ½ teaspoon of salt, a pinch of pepper. Blend ingredients quickly with a wooden spoon. Pour into a buttered and lightly-floured shallow baking tin or dish. Bake in a 400 degree oven 'til top is crisp and golden

brown. If you don't have snow in *your* back yard, come up and bake it sometime.

LIFE IN A SNAG — The life of an individual is finite, even the life of the Giant Sequoia or a Bristle-cone pine. Something always happens to cause a recycling of the elements which, from time to time, become a part of a living being, plant or animal — a necessary process, maintaining the health and fertility of the living, and assuring the success of future generations.

Thus, there can be no dead tree, really. Indeed, the tree no longer grows when it is "dead," but it still teems with life. And, the longer the tree is dead, the more life it contains. The hundreds of species which get nourishment and shelter from a standing, non-living tree range from millipedes to mammals. Some of the species can live nowhere else.

Life in a dead tree is varied, and the interrelationships complex. A complete food chain exists in and on the snag, but other relationships are broader, tying the snag into the rest of the forest community. It is food and shelter for plants and animals until it crumbles and falls, to play its final role in enriching the soil and building a new generation of living things.



WHAT'S YNHA DOING? As you know, the membership recently was asked to vote on the re-election of Dr. Harvey Rhodes and Attny. Thomas Shephard to the Board of Trustees. We have received about a 60% response to date confirming their re-election. To the question "Would you be interested in attending an annual membership meeting if one were planned?" The replies were about 80% affirmative. So, look for an announcement of a meeting next year.

The folder describing our summer field seminars is being printed now; members will receive copies when they are complete. Meanwhile, here's a schedule of courses to be offered:

Course title	Instructor	Dates
Bird Populations of Yosemite	Gaines	6/19-21 : 6/25-27
Bird Migration in Yosemite	Gaines	8/21-23 : 8/28-30
Interpretive Techniques	Taylor	7/12-16
Alpine Botany	Sharsmith	7/19-23 : 7/26-30
Stars Over Yosemite	Oriti	7/26-30
Natural History for Backpackers	Davilla	7/26-30 : 8/9-13
Treeline Botany	Davilla/Palmer	8/2-6
Yosemite Indians, Their Displacement and Destruction	Shields	8/9-13
Ethnobotany of Western Sierra Indians	Fry	8/16-20
Ecology of Giant Sequoias	Harvey	8/16-20
Geology of Rock and Ice	Dickey	8/16-20
Living Glaciers of Yosemite	Dickey	8/23-27
Symbiosis of Man & Environment	Lemons	8/23-27
Photography for the Botanist	Morgenson	7/24-25 : 8/14-15



THE BIRDS AND THE BEASTS WERE THERE - L. Nahm, who reported the first four of these recent natural history field sightings, seems to float between somewhere and the Yosemite High Sierra. He appears to be an alert observer and to be in the nicest places most of the time. We appreciate his recordings of the presence of park wildlife - and envy his apparently unstructured summers.

Longtail weasel (*Mustela frenata*). Darted into a hole under the exposed roots of a lodgepole 50 yards north of Lembert Dome parking lot. Observer has sighted Longtail weasels in the Tuolumne Meadows and White Wolf areas this summer.

Pine marten (*Martes americana*). Just before sunset, it rounded a corner and stopped short when it became aware of me. We were eyeball to eyeball for an instant, then it dashed off, passing 5-6 feet from my sleeping bag. The remarkable beauty

of the fur and the black tip of the tail, along with marmot-like coloring around the neck and breast were especially noticed. 250 vertical feet above the N.W. end of Vogelsang Lake.

Coyote (*Canis latrans*). Very large coyote, fine coat. Trotted away from me as I approached. ½ mile west of point just south of Mono Pass.

Black bear (*Ursus americanus*). Bear was aware of me first and ran rapidly up a steep, broad sandy chute to the ridge separating the north and south forks of Buckeye Creek. ¼ mile WSW of summit of Grouse Mountain (alt. 10,400').

River otter (*Lutra canadensis*). Two adults swam from a small cove near the outlet. They exhibited curiosity, raising out of the water to look at us. 100 yards from the outlet to Falls Creek on the southern shore of Big Otter Lake: J. Richards.

Western Blue Racer (*Coluber constrictor*). 18 inches in length. Sought protection under parked car. Coiled and defensive when reached for. Lost Arrow Residence: J. Krisko.

River otter (*Lutra canadensis*). Small water animal perhaps 30 inches long with light tan underside and face, and dark reddish-brown fur on the back and head. The animal swam about for some time making loud snorting noises in our direction. He also dove under the water numerous times, landed once or twice and hopped about with worm-like movements.

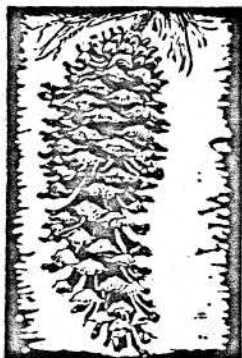
Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*). A large dog-like animal about 80 pounds with yellowish fur around the neck and a greyish tinge across the back. Later that night we heard a deep throaty howl - unlike a coyote. Small lake above Evelyn Lake.

Mountain lion (*Felis concolor*). An unidentified hunter described the cat as having a body about 5 feet long with a long tail and other typical mountain lion characteristics. It was seen at dusk at about 10,000 feet altitude on a line extending from the south end of Tioga Lake to the top of Mount Dana.

Comments on Sightings, provided by the Resources Management People

We asked the National Park Service Resources management people to comment on some of these sightings. They very helpfully supplied the following.

The river otter is termed a "rare" inhabitant, occurring in very small numbers and seldom observed. It is felt that the otter may have migrated into the Sierra in years past from the San Joaquin Valley, and that park fish planting program, starting in 1877 in the Kibbie Creek Drainage basin, may have caused the animal to extend its range and to have increased in population. About the reported grey wolf: When Joseph Walker crossed the Sierra in the 1840's, the presence of the grey wolf was recorded by a member of his party. The records show 1922 to be the date the last grey wolf was taken; this occurred in the Providence Mountains near the eastern end of the Mojave Desert. Black bear, indeed, are seen frequently. However, they seldom are sighted at this elevation (10,400') more usually being found between 4 and 8,000'. The mountain lion is classed as rare, with a total park population, thought to be static, estimated at five. Mountain lion sightings are "cautiously appraised."



THE SUGAR PINE — John Muir called the sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*) the "King of Pine Trees." The noble tree was so named because its sap is very sweet, though, if ingested by humans, has a disastrous cathartic effect. Bears, who have notorious appetites for sweet things, shun the sap. The sugar pine reaches heights of from 160 to 200 feet and, in the Yosemite region, grows at elevations ranging from about 4,500 to 9,000 feet. It is an easily identifiable conifer, because of its unusually long cones - some 13 to 18 inches long and 4 to 6 inches in diameter. The cones mature in two years - from flower until the seeds fall from the cones, although the cones may remain on the trees for several years. The needles are about three inches long and occur in bundles of five. Muir described the wood as "deliciously fragrant, fine in grain and texture, and creamy yellow, as if formed of condensed sunbeams."

There are few virgin sugar pine stands left in the world and the Tuolumne Grove area has one of the finest remaining. There was considerable sugar pine logging in the Yosemite area; this reached a peak during the 1920's. The stand in the Tuolumne Grove area was saved by a group of private citizens who were enraged at the thought of this unique stand's being destroyed, particularly since it was on the boundary of the Park. Through private donations, a large grant from John D. Rockefeller, and a Congressional appropriation, the tract was purchased and made a part of the park in 1937.

So, in addition to the other special things in Yosemite, there is one of the world's finest virgin stands of sugar pine.



WHERE HAVE ALL THE CREATURES GONE? Most of the animals one might see on a summer visit to Yosemite no longer are in evidence. Many of the birds have migrated south to warmer lands and food sources; the coldblooded animals - frogs, snakes and lizards are dormant beneath the icy ground-surface. Chipmunks, ground squirrels and marmots are hibernating now and not visible. Hibernation is a condition that only a few mammals attain. When an animal hibernates, its body temperature drops nearly to freezing, its breathing rate slows and its heart beats only a few times a minute. With such reduced metabolism, the animal can survive the longest winter without starving.

Bears sleep, though they do not truly hibernate. Cubs, born hairless and weighing less than a pound, arrive during the winter while the mother sleeps; if the mother were truly hibernating, the new-born cubs would freeze. It is not uncommon to see prowling bears in Yosemite during the winter as they rouse themselves occasionally to hunt for food.

A number of animals still pursue their usual routines during the winter and in the Valley one may find deer, coyotes, tree squirrels, woodpeckers, water ouzels and raccoons.

Come spring, Yosemite's wildlife as its waterfalls and plant life, emerges from winter respite.

Mentioned in the last Bulletin were the Association's winter ecology seminars and the environmental ski-tours. As is customary, Dr. Sharsmith's winter-programs are about half-filled now. Likewise, Warren White's cross-country ski tours to the Ostrander Lake Ski Hut are approaching the half-capacity mark. Those members wishing to participate in either are encouraged to advise us as soon as possible.

Richard Ewart, a graduate in biology and philosophy from the University of New Hampshire, has been working for the Association since September. He performs a number of tasks for us and is very much in demand. Because of Richard's college studies and his interest in the park's natural history, we have 'loaned' him to the Park Environmental Education Specialist, John Krisko, two days per week. Under Krisko, Richard is learning interpretive skills and techniques. In addition, he has helped Krisko with the design and construction of nature trails. Thus far, he has led two nature walks for Park visitors. We take some pride in helping a young man get a toe-hold on a career — in a fine park with fine people.

Some time ago, we asked the membership if anyone would volunteer to help us with projects. Member Patricia Enright of Canyon Country, California responded, and subsequently sent us some excellent sketches, proposed for the cover of our forthcoming seminar folder. We were very pleased with her spirit of cooperation and admire her abilities. Ms. Enright, we thank you.

We've nearly completed arrangements for an environmental education course for elementary school teachers to be offered next summer. It is our feeling that the environment may be in for tough times, what with resources depletion, energy shortages and something less than cheerful economic forecasts. The more immediate and pressing national needs may cause the brakes to be put on environmental control and preservation

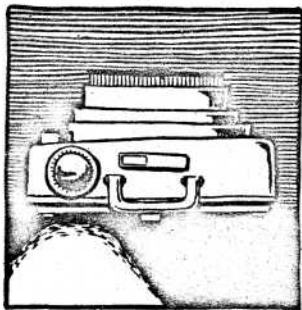
programs. So, with a good deal of counsel, we are preparing a 40-hour course in environmental education, designed for teachers of grades 4 - 6. It will be directed by Margaret Tierney, who has had 5 years of UCB training in the subject, plus field work with the N.P.S., teacher and student organizations. The course approach will be novel, practical and stimulating. We plan to present it here twice next summer.

We are underwriting the costs of instruction staff, references, materials, etc. because we feel even as small an effort as this will be, it will be effective in furthering environmental awareness and a sound way to spend association funds. We hope you agree.

Incidental to the mention of money, we have a feeling that many people, members and otherwise, believe we get financial aid from the National Park Service. Not so; we're self-supporting, non-profit and try to stay solvent through membership revenue and book sales so that we can fund such programs as the above.

Dana Morgenson's fine new book, *Yosemite Wildflower Trails*, which we are proud to be publishing, is now in the hands of the Phelps/Schaefer Printing Company in San Francisco. We expect copies by late January. Those who have been on one of Dana's "camera walks" know of his rare ability to point out things of beauty - and how to photograph them; Dana's photos have been published in major national magazines. The book will contain 125 color photos of Yosemite's flowers, accompanied by delightful descriptive text. YNHA members will receive an announcement about ordering procedures.

Incidentally, Dana will be giving his "Photography for the Botanist" seminar again next summer; dates are shown in seminar schedule above. The two days with Dana in the Tuolumne area finding, examining and photographing the scores of high-elevation flowers is a wonderful experience.



NEW PARK ORIENTATION PROGRAM — The Eastman Kodak Co. has produced for the National Park Service a new ten-minute sound/slide show designed to give Park visitors an orientation to Yosemite's scenic spectaculars, recreation possibilities and available activities. The Kodak people have provided this at no charge to N.P.S.; they have done a similar program for Great Smokies National Park.

Six slide projectors are used to throw on a 3-panel screen an image 3 times wider than high, which does dramatic justice to the grand Park vistas. The accompanying music/narration sound track is reproduced in stereo and the operation of the projectors and the sound system is totally automatic.

Eastman's George Butt produced the show, assisted by photographer Paul Yarrow. Park Technician Mike Durr represented the Park in the preparation and installation.

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