

YOSEMITE

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Published for members of Yosemite Natural History Association



WIND BENDS THE GRASSES in the meadows; the water in the Merced is rushing — icy, cold and deep. Everything is greener, more alive than last year; lots of wildflowers. And this summer the high country will be, if possible, grander than usual. So much of our lives — and livelihoods — is mixed up with the weather. YNHA's as well. Our sales drop when foul weather discourages visitation. But the foul weather has a positive effect on the plant life to come. . . . Can't have it both ways.

Here come the clouds again — Are they cumulus or nimbus? Is it warm because it's "high"? Or is it "low"? Why, in the summer here, does it seem to rain only on warm afternoons? Dr. Jim Huning's seminar WEATHERWISE AND OTHERWISE answered a lot of the questions about the phenomena of Sierra Nevada weather. If Sierra weather interests you, we suggest acquiring a copy of the booklet Huning is doing for Y.N.H.A. It's described in this *Bulletin* on page 3.

A long time ago the earth was dark and cold and the people had no fire. . . . Frank La Pena, of Sacramento State University is directing a class for us, "Yosemite Indians: People of the Clouds." It will give participants an insight into the social environment of the Western Sierra Miwoks, their mythology, sources and uses of native plants as food, medicine, in cooking, and in weaponry. He has arranged for participants to meet and talk with a number of the tribal elders. The fate of the Miwok after the arrival of white settlers will be an ongoing theme. Seminar dates are July 31 - August 4.

For those interested in more specific studies of the Yosemite Indians' material culture, Bob Fry will lead ETHNOBOTANY OF THE WESTERN SIERRA INDIANS. This course will emphasize the uses of plants as practiced by the Indians of the Central California regions and particularly by those of the Sierra Nevada. INDIAN MATERIAL CULTURE with Craig Bates will cover the technology involved in the gathering, preparing, and ultimate use of native materials. Fry's class will be offered August 14-18, August 28 - September 1. Craig's classes, essentially a condensed version of Fry's class, are on July 22-23, August 19-20.

There are several other seminars this summer that will open new doors to many natural aspects of Yosemite. One can learn much about SIERRA BIRDS with David Gaines, and have a man-to-bird relationship at Bob Stewart's BIRD BANDING WORKSHOP. Speculate whether an ice age may return in Prof. Marlin Dickey's LIVING GLACIERS or join him on his FIELD STUDY OF ICE AND ROCK examining the glacial geology of the Park. Hike the ALPINE and SUBALPINE ZONES, examining the plant life of these areas; discover with Dean Taylor why there are MOUNTAIN MEADOWS. Travel to the Mariposa Grove and Kings Canyon National Park with Dr. Thomas Harvey to study the ECOLOGY OF THE GIANT SEQUOIAS. If the Sequoias overwhelm, Dana Morgenson's PHOTOGRAPHY FOR

THE BOTANIST will bring you nose-to-nose with many of the wonderful members of Yosemite's plant life. After you've taken your flower pictures, learn about the relationship between flowering plants and the pollinating animal, in THE POLLINATORS with Charles Turner. At 3,500' above Yosemite Valley, be dazzled by stellar studies at Glacier Point in Ron Oriti's STARS OVER YOSEMITE. Learn the facts and fiction of those objects in the sky.



ARE YOU OUT THERE? Moving to a new home or a new town is a very unsettling experience. But, when we lose track of you we get unsettled, too. Since YNHA is a non-profit organization, most of our member mailings are sent at the "bulk" rate. The postal people don't forward this kind of mail. So, if you move and change your address or if you change your name — please send us a postcard with the updated information. We're happy if you're moving on to new and better things. But — when we read on your renewal form "please note new address" we don't know if you have been receiving all your member news or if it had been left behind in some post office. We appreciate the time you take to let us know.

THE AGREEMENT: Those members who attended the annual meeting last fall learned of the "proposed agreement" between cooperating associations (YNHA) and the National Park Service. It's a lengthy and complicated document, written by the N.P.S. In effect, it solidifies and clarifies the relationship between us and the Service. It is a contract, call it what you will, that binds YNHA to certain standards, regulations, limits, and rules. And, it is now in effect - - signed by our Board Chairman, Dana Morgenson and N.P.S. Western Regional Director, Howard Chapman.

Our Board discussed the proposal at great length at several meetings, and at the January meeting, by a vote of six to one, agreed to accept it with certain reservations. From a practical standpoint, we feel that its presence will make little difference in the association's operation, the day-to-day routines won't change materially. All in all, we feel that the contents of the agreement are reasonable. But it evokes a feeling of awe to be the other member of a contract with the U.S. Government.

During the time the agreement was being drawn, (but not because of it), Sterling Cramer, of the YNHA Board, put together the framework of a 'conference of cooperating associations'; he was aided in the preparation by Board Member and attorney, Tom Shephard. All the cooperating associations were invited to join and at the present there are 13 members (out of 57). The conference provides the machinery for member associations to speak more forcefully to the Park Service about common causes. We are pleased that Messrs. Cramer and Shephard are taking this sort of interest in association affairs.



THE TRANS-SIERRA TRIP. Bob Roney, aided by Rich Lee, led our first ski trip over the Sierra Crest - - Lee Vining to the Valley, March 19-25. He made detailed notes, some we think are of general interest:

DAY 1. (By plane from Mariposa to Mammoth, thence to Tioga Pass) "We were behind schedule from the outset and didn't start for Tioga Pass (from Lee Vining) until 1 p.m. Got a late start from airport and the equipment weight necessitated three air shuttles. The last five miles became a mad dash because of increasing darkness. Encountered an avalanche path, strewn with large blocks of ice. Stopped to assess the situation. Due to high angle of slope, the unstable conditions of ice block, removed skis before crossing path. No problems. Quarters a little cramped but

we got along famously.

DAY 2. (Tioga Pass to Tuolumne Meadows)

An inch of snow fell last night. Excellent skiing conditions. Discussions of plant and animal life and the geology of the crest area. Skiing good, mostly downhill; five hours to Parsons (Lodge). Some bothered a little by altitude. Parsons cold 'til we built fire. Ample room to spread out. A good day and good evening.

DAY 3. Two new inches of snow last night. Clear day, perfect skiing. Climbed Ragged Peak. Interpretive sessions great.

DAY 4. (Tuolumne to Snow Flat.)

Strong winds, snow flurries, patchy sky. Weather dampened spirits somewhat but we carried on - - some interpretation. Watched an avalanche on Polly Domes.

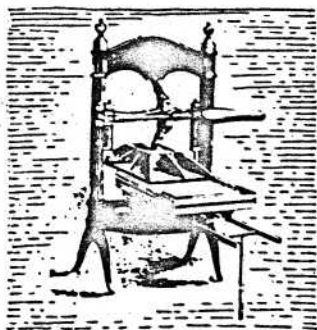
DAY 5. (Snow Flat to Snow Creek.)

Fine, sunny day. Easy stroll! Excellent ski conditions. Practiced telemarks. Botanized. Studied animal tracks; bird-watched.

DAY 6. (Snow Creek to the Valley.)

Bright, warm day. Snow icy. Delayed departure 'til thaw. Lunched at Snow Creek Bridge; down switchbacks on foot. Arrived Mirror Lake 5 p.m.

All has gone well. A few blunders - - nothing critical. Trip far surpassed my expectations."



BOOKS, GUIDES, CHECKLISTS: In our experience with YNHA, publications activities have never been livelier. We try to get out a publication each year and have a schedule that takes us through 1980. This year, it seems that some which have been delayed are coming into shape, plus others more recently commenced.

The third in the "discovery" series, *Discovering Sierra Mammals*, is nearly complete. It was written by Russell Grater, illustrations by Tom Blaue. Containing 180 pages, 45 excellent black and white illustrations, it retails for \$4.50; \$4.10 to members, including tax and mailing. We are co-publishers with the Sequoia Natural History

Association.

We've been in the midst of a new and expanded "bird check list." The information has been gathered from several sources - - David Gaines, Ted Beedy, Steve Medley, and Len McKenzie, birders all. It should be ready by mid-June.

Dr. Thomas Harvey has written a fine manuscript for us on Yosemite's Sequoia Groves. It is all-color, 40 pages. It should be out by early June. Retail \$2.75; to members, \$2.40.

Dr. Jim Huning, meteorologist and teacher at U.C. Riverside, has done a primer on Sierra weather. It won't tell you how to forecast Sierra weather (only a fool or newcomer would be so bold) but it does describe and discuss the phenomena of the various weather types and their effects on the land and the foliage. This, too, is jointly published with Sequoia N.H.A. Huning's wife, Beth, is preparing the charts and graphs.

Finally, the second issue of *Nature Notes* is well-along. It will have 21 articles written by naturalists on last summer's staff. We find them all excellent, several containing natural history revelations. Martha Lee has done a remarkable set of illustrations.

WE HAVE RECEIVED word from the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) that it is feeling the effects of inflation and related fiscal crunches. The PRBO is among the premier facilities of its kind in the United States with programs in research and education. Supported primarily by membership contributions, the PRBO is seeking new members in an attempt to improve its financial condition. Regular membership is \$10 per year, while larger

contributions would be warmly received. We encourage your support of this fine institution and wish the Point Reyes Bird Observatory a long and healthy life. Write: PRBO, Box 321, Bolinas, CA 94924.

CARL STEPHENS is a neighbor of ours in Midpines. Midpines (pop. 380) is on Highway 140, about an hour's drive from the Park; we commute to work, though separately. If one must spend two hours a day on the road, this twice daily trip must be one of the west's better commutes, particularly during the past three months, watching spring develop day by day. We relished the greening of the hills and the appearance of new blooms each day. But wouldn't attempt to identify them, so we have asked Stephens, a first-rate botanist, to put down for the record his notes on the flowering of the Merced River Canyon following a marvelously wet winter, which itself was an experience to be remembered.

"March. Rain, most every day. In my ten years on the Midpines-Yosemite run, I can recall neither more rain, nor a grander lot of blooms. From the first turning of the chapparal-covered canyon to the blooming of the first dogwood, each day was a delight.



"Mid-March. The first masses of popcorn flowers appeared. What a silvery-white blanket they cast on the steep hillside! Shortly after, came the baby blue eyes, light blue patches in a quilt of white.

"All spring, the draws and gullies that flow into Bear Creek ran wild and red with Mariposa clay. At Briceburg, Bear Creek joins the Merced, now running full but fairly clear. At the meeting of the two streams, the water swirled in spirals of red and green. Several times I crossed to the north bank to watch; a mesmerizing sight.

"On the wetter slopes — all were wet — but on those south-facing and in full sun, the pink-white flowers of a small wild onion were the first bulbs to appear. (When bruised, there's no doubt that they're onions.)

"The first bloom on the manzanitas today, along the top slopes of Briceburg — pendant, bellshaped, purple blossoms adorn this common, silvery-leaved shrub. Saw beekeepers hauling their hives to sunny places where the industrious inhabitants manufacture wild bush honey. Am told there's much bee-rustling, so hives are hidden in obscure locations. Along with the manzanita came the bladdernut — olive, with white drooping blooms; this shrub is found in the canyon, as far up as Arch Rock.

"Late March. The early bloomers have become more joyous, and are joined gradually by western red-bud. Its buds swelled each day, then, appropriately, at about Easter, they seemed to burst at once into clouds of magenta.

"Regardless of the wetness of spring, there are always stands of California poppies. But spring, 1978! Even older-timers than I can't recall more areas of yellow-orange, first on the south slopes, then on the north. They appeared in areas where I'd never before seen them. There are two species in the Canyon; the first to bloom (*E. lobii*) is small and more yellow than orange, the next, much larger and true orange, (*E. californica*.) Also appearing now were the fiddleneck, colorful, but overwhelmed by their showy neighbors.

"Two stonecrops today — April 15 — *dudleya cymosa* and *sedum obtusatum* — the former, with large green rosettes, appear occasionally on rocky walls while the smaller — *obtusatum* — with bright yellow flowers, is more profuse, emerging from improbable rocky footholds. These will go dormant with dry weather.

"Early April. The rains seem to be less frequent, and, as the sun moves higher, the rush of color begins. The four lupines seem to be competing — harlequin, bush, ground, and white are everywhere. Rampant among them are great masses of owls clover, ranging in color from white to pink to deep magenta.

"The Merced is indeed wild today — higher than any day before. In the narrow places, it is rather more white than green; in the wide places it flows swiftly but its surface unbroken, to reflect the deep purple collinsia in the shady areas. White fairy lanterns nod their heads here and there. Some of the bulb-plants now showing up. Four brodiaeas — blue dicks, Ithuriel spear, golden and the twining (*B. volubilis*.) This last intrudes its way through tall grass to get its pink flowers into the spring sun.

"Late April. The hillsides are mad with color — every day's a new treat. Now on the scene, western wallflowers — both the orange and the yellow — now in abundance. Purple collinsia side by side with a pink alum root — a color mix unmatched outside nature.

"May. Several white-blossomed shrubs now on the hillsides — mountain lilac, with its musky, sweet scent, buckeye and chamise, its masses of white flowers covering the entire bush, hiding the rather nondescript shrub underneath. Saw the largish colony of Lewisia (*L. congdonii*) in the canyon today — has fine stems topped with rose colored blooms (on California's rare and endangered list.) All sorts of clovers blooming along the Merced — some native — some planted for cattle forage.

"Near Arch Rock noted a few Hartwig Iris. Colors vary from purple and pale blue to yellow and light brown.

"Mid-May. Have a feeling the peak's been reached in the Canyon. But some of the late bloomers are coming along — orange paint brush, yellow yarrow, tarweed, white larkspur. Also, the three colonies of Matilija poppies, papery white blossoms on tall stems, have appeared. These are native to Southern California but have been introduced here. These fellows indicate the coming of summer to the foothills — just as the dogwood suggests the arrival of spring in the Valley. And predictably that fine tree that grows steadfastly by the dam put out its greeny-white bracts — almost as if it were playing a role — 'I am here — spring has come'."

Carl Stephens has directed Yosemite Park & Curry Company's landscaping for 15 years, keeping all their hotels' grounds in just the right degree of order, native and natural. From his home in Midpines, he operates the Shop in The Sierra, a native plant nursery from which he sells by mail and in person, to the puritans among western Sierra gardeners.

For the convenience of those who may have forgotten the botanical names for the plants named, the following will serve as a refresher —

Dogwood	(<i>Cornus nuttallii</i>)	Blue dick	(<i>Brodiaea capitata</i>)
Popcorn flower	(<i>Plagiobothrys nothofulvus</i>)	Ithuriel spear	(<i>Brodiaea laxa</i>)
Baby blue-eyes	(<i>Nemophila menziesii</i>)	Golden brodiaea	(<i>Brodiaea ixioides</i>)
Wild Onion	(<i>Allium hyalinum</i>)	Twining brodiaea	(<i>Brodiaea volubilis</i>)
Manzanita	(<i>Arcostaphylos sp.</i>)	Wallflower	(<i>Erysimum asperum</i>)
Bladdernut	(<i>Staphylea bolanderi</i>)	Collinsia purple	(<i>Collinsia bicolor</i>)
Redbud	(<i>Cercis occidentalis</i>)	Alum root	(<i>Heuchera micrantha</i>)
Poppy (yellow-orange)	(<i>E. lobbii</i>)	Mountain lilac	(<i>Ceanothus interrigimus</i>)
Poppy (orange)	(<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>)	Chamise	(<i>Adenostoma fasciculatum</i>)
Fiddleneck	(<i>Amsinckia sp.</i>)	Lewisia	(<i>Lewisia congdonii</i>)
Stonecrop (orange)	(<i>Dudleya cymosa</i>)	Buckeye	(<i>Aesculus californica</i>)
Stonecrop (yellow)	(<i>Sedum obtusatum</i>)	Iris	(<i>Iris hartwegii</i>)
Lupine, harlequin	(<i>Lupinus stiversii</i>)	Paintbrush	(<i>Castilleja sp.</i>)
Lupine, bush	(<i>Lupinus albifrons</i>)	Yellow yarrow	(<i>Eriophyllum confertiflorum</i>)
Lupine, ground	(<i>Lupinus bicolor</i>)	Tarweed	(<i>Madia sp.</i>)
Lupine, white	(<i>Lupinus densiflorus</i>)	Larkspur	(<i>Delphinium hansenii</i>)
Owl's Clover	(<i>Orthocarpus purpurascens</i>)	Matilija poppy	(<i>Romneya coulteri</i>)
Fairy Lantern	(<i>Calochortus albus</i>)	Clover	(<i>Trifolium sp.</i>)

YNHA TRUSTEES MEET: Two actions taken by the YNHA Board of Trustees we feel will interest the membership. At the October 29 meeting, the Board approved a total of \$23,800 in fund requests by the National Park Service for 1978. This is in addition to \$5,900 carried forward from 1977 for projects not completed. Among the major 1978 fundings are \$1,500 for a 12½" reflector telescope, \$1,800 for a Polaroid copy camera for use in inventorying the museum artifacts, \$1,700 to transcribe and duplicate old and historically important taped material, so that the originals can be stored safely in Berkeley's Bancroft Library and that the contents will be available to Park researchers.

The Board considered several locations for the 1978 annual members meeting. It was decided that it would be held at the Pioneer Yosemite History Center at Wawona. The dates selected are September 30, October 1. Meeting at the History Center will provide an opportunity for members to participate in the living history programs which have been so well received by Park visitors and to get a personal feeling for the activities of the Interpretive Division. In addition to the meeting, dinner, and living history demonstrations at the History Center, there will be walks in the Wawona area and in the Mariposa Grove. Complete details of the meeting, hotel accommodations, etc. will be mailed in a member's letter before the end of March.

SIGHTINGS: The Park's Interpretive Division maintains records of natural history field sightings. Members, when visiting the Park, are encouraged to report their observations to the Visitor Center. The records are kept in the Research Library for public use. Below are listed some of the species recorded recently.

BOBCAT (*Lynx rufus*). Seen on Yosemite Falls Trail ¼ mile from Sunnyside Campground; had just captured a gray squirrel. 1/24/78: A. Baggett.

LONGTAIL WEASEL (*Mustela frenata*). Ran across road near Fern Spring. In winter coat (white phase). 1/26/78: C. Bates.

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*). On Merced River, two miles below El Portal. 1/1/78: F. Toldi.

MOUNTAIN LION (*Felis concolor*). Numerous tracks of an individual cat seen at Crane Flat Meadows, although the animal itself was not seen. The following day a leg of a mule deer was found nearby, stripped to the bone. 12/1/77: S. Murray/T. Thomas.

GRAY FOX (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*). Seen crossing the road near Church Bowl. 11/30/77: B. McKeeman.

RED FOX (*Vulpes fulva*). 1½ miles south of Wawona Tunnel on Highway 41. 10/31/77: C. Andress.

RING-TAIL (*Bassariscus astutus*). On "dinner ledge" of Washington Column. 10/10/77: R. Bloom.

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*). In Spiller Creek Canyon. 9/26/77: J. Benedict.

NEW MEMBERS. We welcome to membership in Y.N.H.A. the following good people.

Mrs. Lyle Smith	Beryl Hagens	Craig Gambee Family	Linda Perrucca
Jeanmarie Kane	Barbara Gegan	Roberta Hogan	Tom Preston
Lewis Eaton	Michael Scharfenstein	Craig Inouye	The Lyman Ritter Family
Mr. & Mrs. John Werminski	Gary Dillon	Mr. & Mrs. T. Inouye	Jeff Samco
Clifford Vincett	Dr. James Kenney	Ruth Jennings	Brenda Senturia
Virginia Lyon	Dr. & Mrs. Robert Myles	John Lewis	Henry Spurrier
Theo Glenn	Gregory Edmondson	Piper Lindsay	Heidi Welch
Phillip Smith	JoAnn Ordano	Miriam McNitt	Mrs. Herbert Wildenradt
Barbara Steinberg	David Schleidt	William Matteson	Sheila Wineman
Eric Dillingham	John Dolan	David Moor	Al Vogel
Barbara Lachelt	James Forward	Charles Nestle	



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Dan Anderson