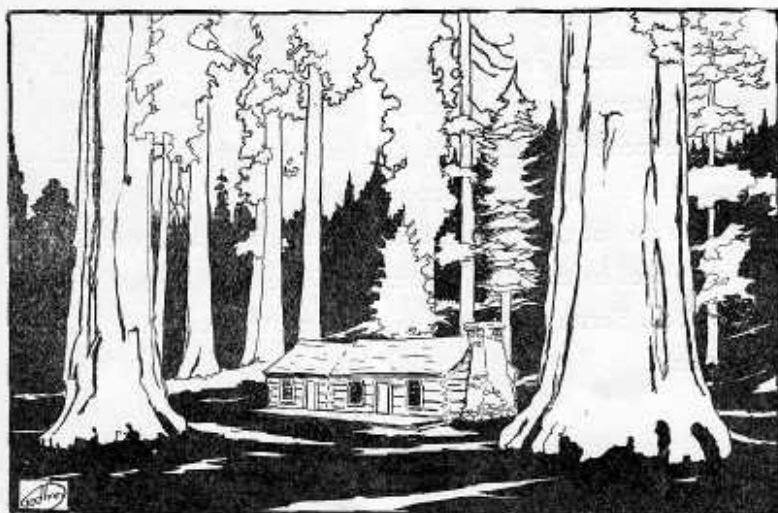


YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



A TRAILSIDE MUSEUM HAS BEEN INSTALLED HERE.

Funds are needed with which to reconstruct this picturesque land mark. When the cabin has been made safe it will house a permanent museum exhibit.

Volume VIII
JUNE, 1929
Number 6

Department of the Interior
Ray Lyman Wilbur, Secretary
National Park Service
Horace M. Albright, Director

This is the official publication of the Educational Department of Yosemite National Park. It is published each month by the National Park Service with the co operation of the Yosemite Natural History Association, and its purpose is to supply authoritative information on the natural history and scientific features of Yosemite National Park. The articles published herein are not copyrighted as it is intended that they shall be freely used by the press. Correspondence should be addressed to C. A. Harwell, Park Naturalist, Yosemite National Park, California.

C. G. THOMSON

Superintendent

YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

THE PUBLICATION OF
THE YOSEMITE EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT
AND THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Published monthly

Volume VIII

June 1929

Number 6

A "GOOD-BYE" AND A "HELLO"

By C. P. Russell

In 1924 the American Association of Museums lent a supporting hand to a faltering offspring of the U. S. National Park Service. The infant was the Yosemite educational project. The helping hand came in the form of recognition of promising work done and financial support for continued development. The Yosemite museum was given adequate quarters and worthy exhibits were prepared. The steady growth of the educational service which grew up about this new center has developed a certain public conscience of the good that results from such activities in National parks. Educators have taken note of the results obtained and great national institutions have expressed their approval of the projected plans for future service. The general public has registered interest in no uncertain terms, and the National Park Service seeks, and obtains government appropriations for the maintenance of the Yosemite educational program, which is now officially regarded as a major function.

The American Association of Museums has maintained its whole-hearted interest and has embraced the entire National Park System in its motherly arms. A trailside museum has been constructed on the rim of the Grand Canyon. An important branch museum has just been built at Old Faithful geyser in the Yellowstone and preparation is under way for a splendid central institution at Mammoth Hot Springs in the same park.

This enlarged scope of the National Park Museum work has called for a National parks official who can concern himself with the preparation and installation of exhibits which will tell the significant story in each of the new institutions. The writer is happy to announce that he has been designated to serve in this capacity.

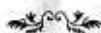
For six years he has enjoyed the loyal co-operation of a staff of naturalists who have "put over" the Yosemite program of lectures, trips afield, and museum service. To these coworkers he acknowledges deep appreciation of their constant support in bringing success to the

department. To that large number of individuals and organizations who have contributed so generously to the details of exhibits and collections housed in the Yosemite museum he wishes to express renewed thanks and the assurance that their gifts are left in the hands of a most worthy Yosemite staff.

For four years the printed series of Yosemite Nature Notes has made friends for the Yosemite Educational department. As the organ of the Yosemite Natural History Association and the Yosemite museum it has made many contracts of importance to the cause, and the support given to it has made possible a large number of museum enterprises which were unsupported by

government funds. The Yosemite museum library has been especially benefitted by this co-operation and that library has been most valuable to the park naturalist. To all readers of Yosemite Nature Notes and especially to the editors of that journal, the "Stockton Record," the writer wishes to express thanks for the interest shown.

This is the last number of the Yosemite publication which the present park naturalist will be privileged to produce. Through it he makes his bow of exit and introduces his capable successor, Mr. C. A. Harwell. Of this friend, not entirely new to Yosemite enthusiasts, more will be told in the next number of Yosemite Nature Notes.



MUSEUM ACCESSIONS FOR MAY

Chris Jorgensen, former Yosemite valley artist, has added thirty-one valuable Indian baskets to his earlier gifts to the Yosemite Museum. One hundred and eighty-one ethnological items have been accessioned from Mr. Jorgensen, and his collection constitutes a valuable part of the Yosemite Museum Indian collection.

The Yosemite National History Association has purchased and presented the following:

"Useful Birds and Their Protection," Forbush, 1913.

"The Fur Animals of Louisiana," Arthur, 1928.

The Library of Congress presented four volumes:

"Yellowstone National Park," Haupt, 1883.

"Souvenir of California," Dennison News Co., N. D.

"Semitropical California," Truman, 1874

"History of San Francisco Committee of Vigilance of 1851," Williams, 1921.

Eleven pamphlets of historical interest were also obtained from the Library of Congress.

"California Fish and Game," Vols. 12, 13 and 14, and the "1926-28 Report of the Division of Fish and Game" were obtained from the California Fish and Game Commission.

C. E. and C. H. Mayo presented a flint lock musket and bayonet which has been in the Mayo family for 100 years.

A geological map of California was obtained from the California Division of Mines and Mining.

Sectional book cases (eight sections) were made available to the Park Naturalist's office as a loan from George M. Wright.

Twenty-one lantern slides were prepared at government expense.

THE YOSEMITE MUSEUM AND THE CONSERVATION OF WILD LIFE

By C. P. Russell

Several millions of American citizens just now are invading our national parks. These annual pilgrimages to Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Mount Rainier, Rocky Mountain, and others of our system of great natural preserves steadily become larger. National parks are overwhelmed by tides of eager sightseers, and facilities for accommodating the crowds are taxed to the utmost. A point has been reached where some parks enthusiasts throw up their hands in terror at the threatened inundation of nature's sanctuaries, and one is led to ask what the outcome may be.

To counteract and subdue anything of the "jazz element" that may enter with the multitude, the National Park Service has instituted an educational service whereby the crowds may be brought to a realization of the true significance of national parks. By the same token that makes this service a restraint upon mummery within the parks, it also becomes a significant factor in the national campaign for the conservation of all natural assets of America.

Primary Park Purpose

It is generally conceded that the primary purpose of conducting National Park Service work is to preserve for all time the areas set aside as national parks, and to facilitate the study and recreational enjoyment of those areas. In advance of recreation must come a place in which to recreate—conservation of recreational areas, and before we can hope for conservation public opinion must be shaped. In other words a program of education must be launched.

Endeavors for, and by, the parks, then, may be concisely listed in the following order:

1. Education
2. Conservation
3. Recreation

If we analyze ideals and desires regarding a National program of general conservation outside of National Parks, we arrive at the same sequence of endeavors. Accepting conservation as meaning the greatest permanent use of any area or resource, we find that a program of preservation must necessarily carry a campaign of education at its head; education, first of all, to the end that proper legislation may be effected, and then having obtained the desired laws, it is necessary to educate the people to an appreciation of why the laws should be observed.

Here is the opportunity for National Parks.

Three Million Visitors

About three million people visit our national parks annually. Where, in our land, is it possible to reach great numbers of citizens with a message of conservation at a time when they are in a more receptive mood?

It is hardly necessary to go into detail as to how the educational department of a national park "puts over" its message of conservation. Summer programs of trips afield and public lectures for park visitors, as well as year-round park museum work, are well known. Perhaps it will be of interest to indicate briefly a few specific instances of introduction of pertinent conservation messages into our activities.

Yosemite Museum Features

When the Yosemite Museum was in the building, an Oakland taxidermist Gus Nordquest, volunteered to install a coyote habitat group as a part of the natural history exhibit. Needless to say, his offer was accepted, with the result that a very effective and compelling exhibit greets visitors as they enter the natural history room. In this instance, the coyote is having difficulties with a skunk, and it is seldom, indeed, that a visitor resists his impulse to read the large,

clearly lettered labels that form a part of the case front. In addition to giving interesting and amusing information on the unsavory skunk we have taken occasion to put in a good word for the coyote.

Need for Study

There is a growing feeling that the scientific, education, and economic value of predators is not properly represented by the existing policy of extermination. Viewed from the broadest standpoint of the public, it is our duty to conserve predatory animals in national parks, and, where possible, to point out to visitors the need for studies upon which acceptable predatory animal policies may be formulated for the country as a whole.

The Yosemite Museum coyote exhibit is a step in this direction, and I venture to guess that thousands of citizens have caught their first word of the predatory animal problem from it.

Many Museum Visitors

No less than 300,000 people entered the Yosemite Museum during 1928. Only the smaller part of these visitors made an attempt to study carefully labels and displays, but practically every one of them seized upon certain outstanding features that have dramatic appeal. We have centered upon these popular exhibits in spreading our message of the need for conservation.

Through the co-operation of the Forestry School of the University of California, we have come into possession of a most remarkable elk skull that had been overgrown by the trunk of a Madrone tree. The growth of the tree had taken place in such a way as to cause the huge antlers to protrude evenly from either side of the trunk. The skull itself is deeply imbedded within the heart wood, and only where the tree has been sectioned can it be seen. We have exhibited the specimen conspicuously and needless to say, so spectacular a freak arrests the attention of every visitor. We have felt that to exhibit freaks is, ordinarily, bad policy, but certainly here is an exception.

Exhibits Attract Attention

Having aroused the visitor's curiosity, we are assured of our label

being read. In this case we have put in a plea for the preservation of the disappearing race of California Valley Elk. This notable mammal is limited to California, and its disappearance would be a loss which future generations would regret, if we do not. Now the last remnant of the once enormous elk herds of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys is threatened with extermination.

On lands in Kern county belonging to Miller and Lux a few hundreds of the beasts still run at large under conditions very near those that existed before California valleys were densely populated by white men. The Miller and Lux lands are to be broken up into ranches and sold, which will mean the elimination of the elk range.

The California Academy of Sciences has been active in attempting to guarantee the future existence of the elk herd, but no relief from the threatened danger has been found. The Yosemite Museum label that accompanies the imbedded elk skull explains the present circumstances and makes a plea for the preservation of the interesting animals. It is possible that some one of the thousands who read the story may take it upon himself to lend aid.

Bear Season Opened

To the great grief of nature lovers, California has recently removed all protection from black bears. California the Bear State! The famous California Grizzly, for which the state was named, has been killed, to the last animal, and now official sanction has been given to the destruction of the one remaining representative of the genus for which the state was named. Those of us who are familiar with bears know, of course, that no charge warranting such destruction can justly be placed against them.

A half million people now enter Yosemite each year, and a great preponderance of them are Californians. The Yosemite Educational Department during the past summer made every effort to acquaint these visitors with the facts regarding this slaughter of California's most interesting animal. Our work of 1929 will be dedicated to bringing about the elimination of

this unfortunate law from the California statutes.

Means of attack are several. A transparent, colored picture, depicting the shooting of a female bear and her two cubs, is exhibited in the museum. It attracts considerable attention and arouses comment. The label accompanying it explains the threatened extermination of bears in California and makes a plea for public action in changing the bear laws.

Large Lecture Audiences

Evening lectures given by members of our educational staff at Yosemite resorts reach as many as 3000 citizens in one gathering. Frequently these lectures pertain to the life history of bears. Probably nothing in the experience of Yosemite visitors leaves a more lasting impression than does the thrill of encountering bears along the trails and roads. It is, then, an easy undertaking to arouse the sympathy of an audience when a bear talk is given.

Comments made by listeners during the talk and afterward are invariably heartening to the lecturer and are good evidence that an enlightened public will not tolerate the slaughter of bears by a few selfish, would-be sportsmen and stock-growers.

Our most fertile field for the dissemination of information on the California bear legislation is the popular bear-feeding platform. Every night in the week throughout the busy travel months hundreds journey to a point on the Merced River where bears are fed under the glare of powerful lights.

Parking space has been provided, and visitors arrive in their own cars or ride in one of the fleet of big stages operated by a transportation company. These stages assemble visitors from the several resorts and are accompanied by a lecturing guide.

When the crowd has gathered along one bank of the river a signal is given and a flood of light reveals a natural amphitheatre in the forest of the opposite shore. An attendant steps from the gloom about the lighted area and dumps buckets of choice kitchen scraps onto a platform of planks. Even

before he can withdraw a dozen bears, great and small, lumber into the light and produce a most interesting spectacle of antics, brawls and drollery.

During this performance a lecturer tells of bear habits, not failing to mention the danger that attends feeding the beasts from the hand. Here is a most excellent opportunity to spread the word of the unwise bear law and to develop the public support necessary to reinstate this animal among the protected mammals of California.

Bird Banding Stories

The story of bird-banding finds a place in our evening lectures and on field trips. By informing park visitors of the organized attempts to trace bird migration, we hope to assist in preparing individuals to co-operate when a banded bird comes into their hands or when other opportunities arise.

Stream pollution and its deadly effects are explained to thousands who would not, elsewhere, even hear of it. The importance of game refuges is stressed constantly. Forest fire prevention can, of course, fit into our program very naturally, and no opportunity is lost in presenting it. Information on insect depredations in forests and how they are controlled is emphasized in museum exhibits and in illustrated lectures.

Reforestation and the relation of wild life to forests is not neglected. The presence of great numbers of mule deer in Yosemite makes it possible to interest many visitors in the present status of the animal and offers a means of approach in advocating wild life sanctuaries. Park visitors come in contact with more than a few fur-bearing animals, or the tracks they leave, and our ranger-naturalists thus find opportunity to drive home the plea for proper conservation of furbearers. In that connection, we never fail to dwell upon the necessity for complete protection of fisher, marten, and wolverine in California, and the great loss constituted by the removal of protection on California beaver.

One of the most noted of our museum exhibits is a fifteen-pound European trout taken from the Merced River. It happens that this

preserved specimen is not exhibited conspicuously, and this fact has brought to our attention the interest manifested in it. Hundreds of people who have heard of the existence of the fish from other visitors approach museum attendants to ask where it may be seen.

In connection with the unusual fish we explain the undesirability of introducing non-native species of fish and other life to national parks. While visitors are marveling at the great size of the trout, we also take opportunity to tell of our fishing regulations and the necessity of observing fishing laws in general.

In the field-trip work we occasionally come upon trees which visitors have mutilated with carving. These instances are rare, for regulations pertaining to defacement of natural objects are strictly enforced. I have in mind one instance of an Oakland man leaving his name and address in ten-inch black letters on a boulder the size of a cabin. He was traced and finally located, not in Oakland, but in a remote city, and forced to return to eradicate his smirch.

Certain trees, our huge Western Yellow Pine of eight feet diameter in particular, have been subjected to the mania of individuals to carve initials. When a nature guide brings a party of visitors to such evidence of human thoughtlessness, the time is ripe for a lecture on "Outdoor Good Manners."

And, finally, these multifarious lessons in conservation that are given in scattering doses to hundreds of thousands are all gathered in organized form and energetically presented to members of the Yosemite School of Field Natural History. The National Park Service is conducting a well-organized course of instruction for college people, and for seven weeks each summer twenty men and women receive intensive training in field nature study and conservation. These twenty individuals are, for the most part, teachers of biological subjects, and they go back to their twenty communities prepared to carry our message to citizens who may never participate in the educational activities offered to the general public within Yosemite.

Through the Yosemite Natural History Association, which is so closely affiliated with the Yosemite Educational Department as to be a part of it, we are co-operating with the American Forestry Association, the American Nature Association, and the National Parks Association. We lend our aid in securing members for two of these organizations and dispense literature on conservation which they provide.

"Yosemite Nature Notes," published with the aid of the local association, carries on when our summer work terminates.

Through it our message reaches some 400 readers, and contact is made with other organizations. The accomplishments of so small an organization as the Yosemite Natural History Association may appear unimportant, but its existence has added to the permanency and breadth of our work, to say nothing of the considerable financial aid lent to all of our projects.

It seems opportune to introduce here a subject which has not yet their congressmen. Nature guide activities but, nevertheless, is essential to substantial success of educational work in the national parks. In those parks in which popular educational programs are now maintained, sufficient study of the local natural history has been made to form a basis upon which to build. In the majority of parks, however, studies of the native plant and animal forms have not been made. Scientific problems of wild life maintenance and administration continually arise, and well-defined policies regarding these matters are essential to successful procedure.

Nothing short of thorough ecological study will develop such policies, and it is apparent that technical research workers must be added to the present staff of naturalists who disseminate information in the national parks. The first step in this direction will be made in 1929 when, through the co-operation of a philanthropic naturalist, a comprehensive survey of pressing needs will be launched.

In summarizing this account of opportunities for the conservationist within national parks, the following points embody the issue:

1. The ultimate success of a national conservation program depends upon aroused public interest in the necessity for conservation. The educational departments of national parks are in a position to make an important contribution toward arousing such public interest.

2. National parks, themselves, are not yet free from attacks from various selfish interests. The issues involved must be made clear to citi-

zens who, in turn, may influence their Congressmen. Nature guide work in national parks affords opportunity to educate great numbers of citizens in these matters.

3. To prepare a thorough foundation for popular educational work and for wise administration of wild life in national parks, it is desirable that full-time research workers be included in National Park Service personnel.



WHAT INFLUENCES MAKE FOR LATE SEASONS?

The weather is always a legitimate topic with which to open a conversation. This being this Nature Guide's first note for the present season, perhaps he will be safe in making a beginning by talking about the weather. The Nature Guide writing this has been in Yosemite this season only a few days, but he has been impressed with the notion that the season was later this year than in former years, when he has reached Yosemite about the same time. The irises in Bridal Veil and El Capitan meadows have usually been through blooming, while this year they are in their prime. On the ledge of the north wall of the valley, just back of Yosemite museum, this morning (June 12) the writer found coiled fern fronds where last year they were entirely unfolded, and the buds of stream orchis were just an inch or two above the ground, where last year they were much more developed.

Now here is where the weather comes in. The Nature Guide won-

dered if the weather had anything to do with his observations, so he obtained the weather reports from the chief ranger's office, and this is what he found. The mean temperature for April, 1929, was 46.58 degrees, while for the same month in 1928 it was 51.88 degrees. In May, 1928, it was 61.58 degrees, while for May, 1929, it was 59.49 degrees. That is, the average temperature for April this year was 5.30 degrees lower than during April, 1928, and for May, 1929, 2.10 degrees lower than for May, 1928. He also found that in April, 1928, the precipitation was 3.07 inches and in May, 1.18, while for the same months of 1929 it was 4.44 inches and .57 inches, respectively. Part of this precipitation in April, 1929, was snow. Twenty inches fell. For these two months then, 5.01 inches of precipitation fell in 1929 as against 4.25 inches in 1928. Perhaps then, the cooler, wetter season of 1929 may account for the nature guide's observation.

M. B. NICHOLS

INCENSE CEDAR TENACIOUS OF LIFE

At the lower end of Yosemite Valley stands a tall Incense Cedar, now dead. About ten years ago some vandal stripped all the bark from its base for a distance of four feet above the ground, entirely girdling the living tree. Instead of giving up as a result of the treatment, usually fatal, this Incense Cedar continued to live.

The cambium continued to grow beneath the bark above the injured trunk so that now the wood of the tree is larger in girth by more than

a half inch above the girdle than at the area stripped of bark. Examination showed six annuals indicating that the tree remained alive and grew for at least six years succeeding the girdling.

The tree slowly died over this period of years maintaining foliage longest at the growing top. Though impaired, this Incense Cedar succeeded in carrying on life functions for a long period after maltreatment which normally kills a tree.—H. C. BRYANT.

PREDACIOUS PINE SQUIRRELS

On the morning of May 28, the distracted crying of a female black-headed grosbeak attracted me to her nest site in a clump of western choke-cherry. Upon arriving under the nest, which was about seven feet from the ground, I found it occupied by a Sierra chickaree or red squirrel.

He was perched on the edge of the loosely constructed nest and in his fore-paws he held an egg from which one end was eaten. A well developed embryo grosbeak projected from this broken end and the squirrel was devouring it with avidity. The tortured mother fluttered about in branches, but a few inches above the robber's head.

Bold Marauder

He held his position unaffected by her frantic rushes and my presence, but a few feet from him, disturbed him not at all. It was not until I threatened him with my hat that he leaped from the nest. In doing so he unseated the frail structure and from it dropped two eggs which had not yet been broken by the rodent's teeth.

Occurrences of such depredations by chickarees are not uncommon and the increased numbers of the little squirrels in Yosemite valley leads one to wonder how serious a menace they may become to the nesting birds of the valley.

C. P. RUSSELL.



BRAVE MOTHERS

Early this spring a pair of western robins built their nest in a small choke-cherry bush in the open. Shortly thereafter it was decided to build a garage in the place where that bush stood. Some consultations were held as to the advisability of moving the bush and the nest and the probability of the robin following.

It was recommended that the nest be undisturbed until after the eggs had hatched, but it was soon seen that the garage could be built all about the bush in which the nest stood without disturbance. Day after day the robin sat patiently on her eggs in spite of the constant moving of lumber and the hammering and the sawing on all sides and above her.

A few days ago the eggs hatched and the young began to be fed. No abnormality in feeding habits nor any particular fright has been no-

ticed, but the robin seems to prefer to stay near the nest while the carpenters are at work and only when they are quieter or away from work does she feed her young.

Jay Is Unafraid

At Camp Curry a blue-fronted jay built its nest in a small fir within 10 feet of the new dining room. During the time she has been incubating her eggs a pergola has been built just at the side of the tree, but she has steadfastly stayed on her eggs. Even the large number of visitors who pass daily and who stop to watch her as she sits, many of them even stroking her back, has not sufficed to induce her to leave.

Another robin has taken her nesting site just against the dining room wall and receives her large quota of visitors daily, but remains patiently on the eggs until they hatch.

RALPH TEALL.



Digitized by
Yosemite Online Library

<http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/>

Dan Anderson