

YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



The Yosemite Museum

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YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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CONSTRUCTION OF COULTERVILLE ROAD RECALLED BY V. BRUSCHI

By Mrs. H. J. Taylor

Librarian, Yosemite National Park

Recently Virgilio Bruschi, 905 20th street, San Diego, was a visitor at the Yosemite Museum. He has lived in San Diego many years, where for 12 years he was a member of the Common Council. His devotion to the city's welfare made him a beloved and highly respected citizen. Mr Bruschi's early life was spent in Coulterville. He related some of his early experiences, especially his contact with the construction of the Coulterville road, the first to be built into the Valley.

Mr. Bruschi's father, Francis Bruschi, opened a general store in Coulterville in 1853. Coulterville was first called Bandarits (Little Flag). Here Virgilio was born in 1858, the second of a family of 12 children, all born in Coulterville. The population of Coulterville, the second biggest mining camp in Mariposa county, was about five thousand at that time. Virgilio worked as a packer with his father.

Everything used in the Valley was packed in over one of the three trails, viz.; via Crane Flat; a second by Bull Creek, Jenkins Hill and the Merced river; the third from Mariposa via the South Fork. At the junction of the South Fork and the Merced was a store and a saloon. This was known as McCann's Station.

In 1868 Virgilio Bruschi, with his uncle, Peter Castagnitto, a gardener, made his first trip into the Valley. Castagnitto supplied all the vegetables for A. G. Black's and Leidig's hotels at this time. Potatoes sold for 10 cents a pound; lettuce 15 to 20 cents a head; flour 50 pounds for six dollars. About 1868 Johnny Hennesey started a vegetable garden near El Portal, which helped greatly to supply the hotels and made prices lower.

In 1872, Dr. McClain got the concession from the Government to make a toll road from Coulterville

via Bower Cave, Hazel Green, Myers Ranch, and the Cascades into the Valley. It was completed in 1874 without any serious accident. Francis Bruschi was agent for the Giant Powder Company, and Virgilio packed in all the powder that McClain used for blasting in the construction of the Coulterville road. His train consisted of four to eight mules, each carrying four powder boxes of 50 pounds each. From Coulterville to the Valley was a trip of two days. The first night was usually spent at Crane Flat or Furgeson Mine. Crane Flat was a sheep camp where often as many as 25,000 sheep camped. They lambled either on the plains or along the coast.

The tollkeeper was stationed at the Cascades. A single mule was 25 cents. A pack mule loaded was 50 cents. In order to beat the toll, Virgilio Bruschi put all the aparejo on two mules just before reaching the toll gate. Thus only two mules paid the 50-cent toll. The single mules went in for 25 cents. Boston, the tollkeeper, was killed for plunder by two Indians named Zip and Tom, who were sent to San Quentin.

Virgilio Bruschi was accompanied by his brother Fred when they packed in the German cabinet maker, Adolph Sinning. On this trip there were nine mules in the train. When they came to Furgeson Mine, the mule loaded with Sinning's tools and goods pushed the mule behind him and both fell over the trail. It took half a day to get the two mules out of the rocks. No bones were broken but one mule was so badly injured that he was in the stable for two months. Sinning made glove and jewel boxes, canes, little tables and novelties, all showing the work of an expert craftsman. Some of his redwood pieces are now at our Yosemite Museum.

Mr. Bruschi had another experience on the trail. His train was loaded with general supplies. One

mule carried two kegs of nails of 100 pounds each. This mule was knocked off the trail at the Cascades near where Hutchings was killed. The mule fell on his back among the rocks. The kegs were smashed; the nails flew in every direction. The mule, with his feet straight up in the air, lay pinned in a helpless condition. It took several hours to free him. Once back on the trail, he seemed no worse for his experience.

Packing had its risks. One experience impressed itself indelibly on Mr. Bruschi. Mrs. A. G. Black, wife of the hotel keeper, wanted a parlor stove. The mule carrying it was pushed off the trail and, falling on the rocks, the cast iron stove was broken to pieces. "I'll never forget that," said Mr. Bruschi, "because I had to pay for it. It cost me just \$18.50."

Mr. Bruschi told of a big Indian celebration in 1875. To this powwow came Digger Indians from Bull Creek, Coulterville, Greeley Hill, Big Creek and Sonora—approximately 1500. There were songs, dances, games and races. "Every thing in the valley was to come and go as you please and this included the Indians," said Mr. Bruschi.

The first shoemaker was Beans Albold. Most everything was boots. Bruschi also made boots at \$20 a pair and guaranteed them for one year.

"Everything in the valley was open to camp where you pleased, put a store any spot you chose, fish anywhere and all you wanted. The Indians often sold 25 to 30 fish for 25 cents," said Mr. Bruschi.

On being asked about gold nuggets, Mr. Bruschi said, "The largest nugget I ever saw weighed 24 pounds. The first mint in California was at Montefee. Here the 50-pound octagonal slug was made which bore the stamp of California."

"We shall be glad to again have Mr. Bruschi as a visitor to the valley."

Origin of the Name Sequoia

By ALFRED J. BELLUE

Botanists who have genera to publish read article 48 of "Law of Nomenclature," and show judgment and taste by attending to certain rules, one of which is to give the etymology of each name.

In the case of Sequoia, the Australian botanist, S. L. Endlicher, who published the genus in 1847, did not make any statement whatever of the origin of the name, leaving its meaning to be inferred. In an early number of the "Gardener's Monthly," a learned writer, J. H. Lippincott, who was acquainted with the associates of Endlicher, stated that Sequoia was derived from "Sequoyah," the Indian name of George Guess, a half-breed Cherokee, who has the distinction of having invented a syllabic alphabet for his tribe.

Professor Whitney, Dr. Engelmann, Charles Sprague Sargent, Dr. W. L. Jepson, George B. Sudworth, Dr. L. H. Bailey, and many other noted men, have quoted this explanation of the origin down to date.

In 1858 Gordon published in his first edition of *Pinetum* regarding Sequoia—"name not explained."

In 1877 Dr. Gray made the following statement regarding the true origin of Sequoia: "The report of its being derived from Sequoyah, the Cherokee, was doubtless an after-math. Undoubtedly Endlicher derived his name from Sequi or Sequor, alluding to the well known fact that our Redwoods are the followers or remnants of several colossal extinct species." The writer read of this explanation with joy,

as in his estimation, it added greatly to the importance and poetical significance of the name.

Sir Joseph D. Hooker, who was the director of the Royal Kew Gardens, stated in 1890 that he had searched in vain for any printed information as to whether Sequoia was named in honor of an American Indian.

Alphonse De Candolle, early leading authority in the field of botany and leading European dendrologist, stated that the supposed origin of the word Sequoia is entirely fanciful, having no basis; also that Endlicher seems never to have said why he had taken this name.

Karl Goch, in *Dendrology*, 1874, Vol. 2, Part II, Page 173, says: "It has its origin in California," but he gives no proof of the assertion, perhaps assuming that the name from its appearance originated or was taken up from some native word by the native California Indians.

De Candolle, born in 1806, was contemporary with Endlicher, so is enabled to know as much about the origin of the word as anyone. It seems regrettable that the opinion of contemporaries of Endlicher regarding his choice of the name Sequoia should not be given more weight by our present day botanists.

This lack of due consideration has resulted in obscuring what might have been the original intent of Endlicher in regard to the derivation of the word Sequoia, namely Sequi or Sequor, alluding to the well-known fact that our Redwoods are the followers or remnants of several colossal extinct species.

Yosemite Junior Nature School

By J. WENDELL HOWE, Ranger-Naturalist

The Yosemite Junior Nature School was organized the last week of June this year by the educational department to provide the children with an organized program of nature study in the valley during the summer. The nature school plan supersedes the so-called nature walks which have been held for children in past summers.

The Junior school runs for six weeks, terminating the week before the local schools open. During this time those attending have ample opportunity to study all features of natural science, utilizing the material in the museum and the out-of-doors. The course is divided into six parts, each subject being given on the same day each week. Thus, on Mondays trees are studied; on Thursdays, birds; Wednesdays, flowers; Thursdays, animals; Fridays, geology, and Saturdays, Indians. On each day a complete lesson is given. This enables children of families who do not remain in the valley very long to obtain a complete understanding of one particular subject by attending only one day. On the first Monday a study of the local pine trees was carried on. The children examined the types of pines found in the valley and learned to tell the difference between them by the number of needles in a bundle, cones and bark.

The school work is in charge of two ranger-naturalists who have had previous experience in this type of work, and they are assisted by several of the ladies resident in the valley. This plan has worked out very well because it enables the National Park Service to provide instruction to children in groups according to age and intelligence and at the same time does not require a large personnel. The plan which

has been carried out this summer includes an opening exercise and roll call in the clubroom of the museum, followed by a short walk to a convenient and cool spot outside, where the children discuss the subject of the day as a whole. Following this discussion, which ordinarily lasts about 30 to 40 minutes, the whole group is divided into three portions. Divisions are made to include children in the following groups: Group A, first to fourth grades inclusive; Group B, fifth to eighth grades inclusive; Group C, high school ages. The high school group is taken by the ranger-naturalist in charge and the two smaller groups are conducted by the two mothers assisting for that day. The two younger groups usually return to the museum to be dismissed in an hour's time, while the older group remains out for one and a half to two hours, depending on the destination of the walk, material in sight and other factors.

The Yosemite valley is particularly rich in natural phenomena which awaken the interest of the normal child and give rise to a great many questions in his mind. These questions must be answered in order that he may gain an idea of the causes of nature's land marks around him. If a child is with a group of adults, his questions, which to many of them will seem too elementary and in many cases too simple, are usually ignored by the naturalist in charge of the party for obvious reasons. In case they are not ignored, the answering soon tires the older ones, to whom this information is already known. Therefore, a need arises for a carefully selected group, according to age and intelligence, in which the

child will feel perfectly at home with the leader and the rest of the party. Such a condition will cause him to ask questions in his own way and make possible giving answers fitted to needs.

The Junior Nature School attempts to go a little further than does the average nature guide walk, which especially brings about questions concerning things observed at the trail side and so does not stimulate thinking much beyond the

things actually present. It attempts to use the objects at hand not merely to stimulate questions, but to stimulate individual thinking as to the causes of certain things.

We find that children and parents are responding with enthusiasm to this idea. The attendance during the first season has been extremely gratifying, inasmuch as no advertising effort was specifically made. The average attendance thus far has been 30.

Playing Tag With a Chickaree

By LLOYD C. SWEETMAN,

Ranger-Naturalist

One of the joys of living in Yosemite is the opportunity one has of making the intimate acquaintance of many of the animal residents. In our camp we have two black-headed grosbeaks, a robin, a fawn and a red squirrel or chickaree, all of them so friendly that they have no fear of any of us. Kindness wins us many friends not only among men but among animals and the rewards in both cases are great.

Not long ago I came into possession of a chickaree about a week old, evidently suffering from a broken leg caused by a fall from its nest. With careful attention the leg healed and during the process we became fast friends. Today our camp has a most interesting member, a friend of all who do not break faith with him and the cause of many moments of hilarious laughter.

Pee Wee runs about the camp free of any confines and we may find him in the bottom of the clothes basket, in the sugar bowl, on the bed or out on a branch about 20 or 30 feet above the ground. One must be constantly on the lookout for the tiny fellow as he runs trustingly about the ground or the floor of the tents. It is not uncommon for him to crawl in bed with the neighbors and spend the rest of the night asleep in one spot.

Last evening he gave the camp a half hour of most delightful entertainment. Several times he has followed me as I have gone for water but on this occasion he chased me about the camp. The faster I would run the faster he would gallop along after me. Quick turns around the trees meant nothing to him, for he would leap to the tree trunk and meet me as I came around the other side. It was comical to see him dash along behind flipping his tail. It was not long before the entire camp was enjoying the episode and the children ran out to see the game. Pee Wee was full of life and as the children ran out to watch him he gave chase after them seeming to delight in making them scream.

When we finally became tired from our constant running he climbed up a nearby tree and begged for more. I called him down, fed him his milk and crackers, stroked his head and in a few minutes he jumped from the table, ran along the boards of the tent down into the pocket of an old sweater hanging on the wall, curled up and went fast asleep.

Hours of joy can be ours if we will but teach our animal friends that we can be trusted. Patiently waiting, slow movements, steady feeding and absence of manning will reward one with a friendship that is most worthwhile.

AFIELD WITH RANGER NATURALISTS

GREAT ABUNDANCE OF PINE DROPS AND SNOW PLANT be hoped that they will continue to flourish and multiply, furnishing brilliant contrasts of color in the dim shade of the forest.

By Ranger-Naturalist P. J. White

The unprecedented increase in the number of pine drops (*Pteropora andromedea*) and snow plant (*Sarcodes sanguinea*), reported as seen during the past week, indicates an unusually good season for these saprophytes.

This writer and his High Sierra party counted more than 100 beautiful examples of this most popular mountain plant, the snow plant, along the trail from Tenaya Lake to Yosemite Valley. It was a thrill never to be forgotten when the party unexpectedly came upon a large group of this scarlet miracle, making a flash of brilliant color in the shadow of the darkened forest. Thirty-one were counted growing in such a compact group that they all could be encircled by your two arms. Another such a group was reported near the trail back of North Dome.

On the floor of the valley we do not find the snow plant in bloom during July, but to take its place we have the pine drop, sending up its tall, slender stem beneath the pine trees. During the past few years this plant, which lives on rotting wood and is therefore a saprophyte, has become quite rare. This year on the Lost Arrow trail, a census shows 43 pine drops where but three or four grew last summer.

It is a constant source of gratification to the park visitor to see so many of these most interesting plants, which have no chlorophyll, a green color, with which to manufacture their own food. It is to

HORNED TOAD FOUND IN YOSEMITE

By Ranger-Naturalist C. C. Presnell

One of the noteworthy acquisitions of the Yosemite Museum during June was a live California horned toad (*Phrynosoma blainvillii* Frontale), collected near the Yosemite Lodge by Ranger John Bingaman. Although this species is common in the San Joaquin valley up to an elevation of 3000 feet, there is no previous record of its occurrence in Yosemite National Park. Grinnell and Storer in "Animal Life in the Yosemite" state that their highest record for horned toads was at Smith creek, outside the park boundary, and at about 3000 feet elevation. Dr. H. C. Bryant informs me that this is the first horned toad that he has seen in Yosemite. Inquiry among several old residents of Yosemite has failed to bring to light any previous occurrence of horned toads in the valley. This would lead one to think that perhaps the specimen which we have was accidentally brought in by some tourist.

Ranger Bingaman found the specimen on June 15 in a warm, sandy spot near the north wall of the valley at an elevation of 4000 feet. He says it was running about in the sand, catching flies or other insects. It measures 13.5 centimeters.

Yosemite Bird Report for June, 1930.

By Enid Michael, Ranger-Naturalist

Ornithologically the outstanding feature of the month in Yosemite Valley was, of course, the activities of our various nesting birds. Taken as a whole the weather was kindly to them. There were days when the weather was too hot for comfort while brooding birds sat panting on their nests to shelter eggs or young from excessive heat. And there was one heavy down-pour of rain about the middle of the month when shivering birds sat sheltering their eggs and young.

Only 53 species of birds were noted by us during the month which number brought out 10-year average of species noted during June down to 54.8. No sort of duck was noted during the month. Audubon Warbler, Townsend solitaire and hermit thrush, all birds that we expect to note occasionally during June, were also missing. Perhaps the light winter and the warm June weather caused many birds to wander higher into the mountains to spend the summer. Or possibly the valley is becoming improved beyond the liking of certain species. In any event there was a noticeable lack of bird life in Yosemite Valley this year both in regard to number of species and number of individuals.

Snouted Sandpiper—Present daily. Three pairs to the mile along the river. Nest with four eggs noted June 30.

Band-Tailed Pigeon—No doubt present daily. Probably four nesting pairs. Nest in the process of construction noted June 1.

Sharp-Shinned Hawk—A single bird noted June 1.

Cooper Hawk—A lone bird noted June 29.

Golden Eagle—A lone bird twice noted during the last week of the month. Two of them observed above Eagle Peak by park naturalist June 18.

Sparrow Hawk—Seldom seen during the month, but on June 29 two occupied nests were discovered.

Horned Owl—A lone bird noted on four evenings. Occasionally heard at night.

Pigmy Owl—Rare. Silent this

month. Only one nesting pair discovered.

Belted Kingfisher—At least two nesting pairs, probably three. These birds hold their own, but seem never to increase the number of nesting pairs.

Hairy Woodpecker—Several nesting pairs. Young had all left the nests by the middle of the month.

Willow Woodpecker—Rare. A family of young just out of the nest was noted June 30.

White-Headed Woodpecker—Probably four nesting pairs. Of the three nests under observation young remains in only one nest at the end of the month.

Pileated Woodpecker—A lone bird noted on two occasions.

California Woodpecker—Common in all of the Kellogg oak groves. Young birds both abroad and still in the nest on the last day of the month.

Red-Shafted Flicker—At least three nesting pairs within a mile of the new village. The young of the one nest actually discovered were still in the nest on the last day of the month.

Black Swift—On June 3, 10 birds were seen sailing together. After this date lone birds were occasionally seen.

White-throated Swift—Present daily. The usual nesting colonies to be found about the valley.

Calliope Hummingbird—A lone male was noted daily until June 11. On June 20 a female was seen.

Black Phoebe—A lone bird seen June 27 and 28.

Wood Pewee—One of the most common birds. Many nests discovered. No young had as yet left the nest on the last day of the month.

Traill Flycatcher—Present daily, but not in half the numbers of other years. One pair seen at work on nest June 30.

Western Flycatcher—Probably two nesting pairs along Tenaya creek below Mirror lake. No nests discovered and birds not noted elsewhere.

Blue-fronted Jay—One of the common nesting birds. Most of the young had left the nest by the end

of the month.

Red-winged Blackbird—Perhaps a dozen nesting pairs. Birds still being fed in the nest on the last day of the month.

Brewer Blackbird—Young out of the nest early in the month. Many had left the valley before the end of the month. For some unknown reason the Brewers deserted the mistletoe bunches and were again nesting in the pines.

Evening Grosbeak—Present daily. Three nests discovered. No young birds out of the nest were seen during the month.

California Purple Finch—Perhaps five nesting pairs within a mile of the village.

White-crowned Sparrow—A lone bird seen June 1.

Chipping Sparrow—Rather common nesting birds. Most of the young were out of the nests before the end of the month.

Sierra Junco—Not one of the most common birds. Several nests discovered. Young out of the nest by the middle of the month. A nest on the last day of June had three eggs.

Lincoln Sparrow—Not noted except for a single pair whose nest was found. Young in the nest being fed June 11.

Sacramento Towhee—The usual number of nesting pairs to be found about the valley. Unhatched eggs still in the nest on the last day of the month.

Black-headed Grosbeak—The most common nesting bird this year. Full grown young out of the nest and birds still incubating eggs on June 30.

Lazuli Bunting—A singing male noted June 13 and 14.

Western Tanager—As usual not an uncommon nesting bird. Young still being fed in the nest on the last day of the month. Young out of the nest were first noted June 25.

Violet-green Swallow—Probably a few pairs nesting in the valley. Lone birds noted almost daily. Young being fed in the nest June 23.

Rough-winged Swallow—Three pairs, perhaps four, nesting in the valley. Young still in the nest on the last day of the month and on June 30 a bird was seen picking up pine needles as though she was just starting nest.

Warbling Vireo—A common nest-

ing bird, but not so numerous as in other years. Most of the young out of the nest before the end of the month.

Cassin Vireo—Not so numerous as in other years, but many nests were found. By the end of the month young had left some nests while other pairs of Cassins were still incubating eggs.

Calaveras Warbler—Common on the oak-covered talus slopes but seldom seen on the floor of the valley. Last heard singing June 30.

Yellow Warbler—The most common warbler. Several nests, all in willow trees.

Black-throated Gray Warbler—Seldom noted after the first week of the month.

Hermit Warbler—At least four nesting pairs within a mile of the village. Young out of the nest June 30.

Tolmie Warbler—Probably five nesting pairs within a mile of the village. Nest containing four young birds seen June 11.

Pileolated Warbler—A lone bird noted June 1.

Water Ouzel—A lone bird noted at Happy Isles June 26.

Canyon Wren—Rare. However, pairs were always to be found in three different sections of the valley.

Sierra Creeper—Found in all sections of the valley. Young out of the nests early in the month. One pair of birds still incubating eggs on the last day of the month.

Red-breasted Nuthatch—Perhaps a half-dozen pairs nested in the valley. So far as is known all young had left the nests by the middle of the month.

Mountain Chickadee—Probably two nesting pairs, although we failed to actually find their nests.

Western Gnatcatcher—A lone bird was present in the oaks about the new village June 26, 27, 28 and 29. June 26 the bird was seen carrying bark fiber as though at work on a nest.

Russet-backed Thrush—Rare, possibly four nesting pairs within a mile of the village.

Western Robin—Next to the black-headed grosbeak, the most common nesting bird. In other years the robin was always the most common bird. Some robins still incubating eggs on June 30.

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