YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Snow Plant, *Sarcodes sanguinea*

Yosemite Nature Notes

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THE RANGER-NATURALIST AND PETER BELL

By Ranger-Naturalist Ernest A. Payne

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

So wrote the English poet William Wordsworth of the unfortunate vagabond Peter Bell.

In this country as in every other there are countless individuals whose lives are as distorted as that of Peter Bell—people whose efforts have been dedicated to the pursuit of social position, economic security, academic accomplishment, or so-called pleasure with gross neglect and emaciation of that side of their beings we often call aesthetic appreciation. It is a sad commentary upon our schools and colleges that thousands of young people pass through their science halls and emerge saturated in formaldehyde and scientific nomenclature but blind to the intangible beauties of a chambered nautilus or dead to the potential spiritual joys to be derived from a fringed gentian.

Dr. Harold C. Bryant must have been thinking of this condition when he inaugurated the nature guide service in Yosemite National Park several years ago and emphasized it as a definite part of the park service program for visitors.

In every conducted hike, walk or lecture the ranger-naturalist has many Peter Bells in his group and it becomes his privilege and opportunity to help them to see more than a yellow flower, a waterfall, or a massive rock. To convert an observation of a physical structure into an emotional or spiritual experience in the lives of his listeners is his task. I do not mean that this is to be achieved through absurd sentimentality but, rather, through the stimulation and encouragement of an attitude or a way of thinking that projects beyond the anatomy, physiology, and chemistry of nature. It is essential, of course, that the naturalist concern himself with, and present to his party, certain pertinent scientific data, but if he helps the members of the group to "read the trailside as they would a book"—a book of lasting value— it must be one that is not too academic.

John Muir devoted most of his life to the unfolding of abstruse scientific truths, yet the commonplace stirred his very soul. To him the water ouzel was nature's darling; moonlight through the mist or a tiny cassiope at timberline thrilled him beyond measure. He climbed the mountains not only to trace the pathway of the ancient glacier but to "get their good tidings and to let nature's peace flow into him as sunshine flows into trees." I believe

John Muir's writings are read and enjoyed by so many people because through his work one is made to see the life and purpose and beauty of the phenomena of which he wrote.

The visitor to Yosemite comes from far and near, and his true appreciation of this Valley Incomparable and the surrounding area is greatly conditioned and modified by his ability to interpret what he sees. Perhaps the following incident will illustrate. It is not unusual. Every naturalist can duplicate it over and over again.

I had spent a very pleasant day on duty at the branch museum in the Mariposa Grove among those superb old monarchs, and was driving slowly down the crooked road that winds its way around and among the sequoias. When I came to the vicinity of the Clothespin Tree I stopped my car, parked, and got out—just to look at the trees. While I was so occupied a high-powered, up-bound car came speeding around the corner, going much too fast for its occupants to see anything along the way, to say nothing of the traffic hazards created. The driver saw me in uniform and without bothering to drive off the road, stopped his car and in a voice and manner hardly becoming the model of the car he drove or the type of clothing he wore, he commanded: "Come over here!"

As I approached the voice continued: "Anything up the road worth seeing?" Anything up the road worth seeing! I bit my lip, and with as much control as I could muster I told him about the trees in the upper grove — Wawona, Telescope, Massachusetts, The Four Guardsmen, and all the rest. "They're just like these, aren't they? Why should

we drive up this road just to see some more trees?" I thought to myself. "No, mister, I'm afraid the drive would not be worth your while. If you are not thrilled by this sacred place by now, it would be a waste of time for you to continue."

What a starved creature! Wealthy in this world's goods and undoubtedly considered a success by his associates, but with a soul utterly blind to the values that make life worth while.

The ranger-naturalist is the one upon whom the opportunity and responsibility of stirring new interests and opening closed eyes largely rests. Will the park visitor return home and still say

"He travelled here, he travelled there;—
But not by the value of one hair
Was heart or head the better.

* * * *

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A yellow primrose was to him,
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or will he experience a true recreation during his days in Yosemite through the guidance of the ranger-naturalist that will enable him to see the beautiful and to receive inspiration in the once unnoticed and ill-appreciated things of nature about his own doorstep and in the hedgerow at home?

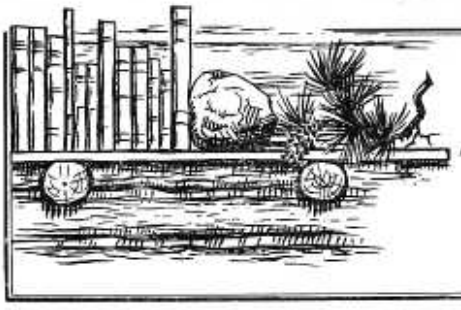
TRACKS

By Ranger-Naturalist Enid Michael

The soft silt of the dusty road presented ideal conditions for registering footprints of bird, beast and creeping insects. A lace-work of beetle tracks was very pretty. Millipeds left tracks like the tread of a miniature tractor. There were bear, deer and coyote tracks. There were also tracks of some mammal that had us mystified. These tracks were laid down in pairs — long narrow heeled hind feet that broadened out at the toes—much shorter and more rounded fore feet. Tracks that might have been made by a rabbit that hopped leisurely along the road. But the feature that mystified us was the fact that on each side of the trail of tracks, and paralleling the footprints, were delicate markings as though the silt beside the footprints had been lightly touched with a brush. And this was exactly what had happened as we were to learn the next day when we saw a gray squirrel laying down just such tracks. The animal was moving most deliberately and appeared to be sniffing the ground, its head held low. Its long tail lay flat on its back and extended beyond its nose. With each deliberate hop the tip of the tail brushed the ground, first on one side of its head and then on the other side. Thus the mystifying light markings were left in the fine silt.

NATURE NOTELET

District Ranger G. M. Eastman reports seeing two pair of Pacific Loons and one male Ruddy Duck on Lake Eleanor April 11. Lake Eleanor seems to be a natural place for water fowl to gather each spring and fall, at which time hundreds may be seen.



Book Notes

THE YOSEMITE MUSEUM NATURE LIBRARY

By Dorothy Simmons, Librarian

The Yosemite Museum Nature Library was the first real library to be established in any of our National parks, and a survey of library conditions in all the parks seems to show that Yosemite has the largest collection of books.

The collection of over 11,000 items is made up almost entirely of books on the history of Yosemite and books on nature study, especially that represented in Yosemite National Park. A large collection of magazines and separates on the same subjects has been indexed and filed. It is primarily a library for research and reference, and it is the aim of the library to secure all printed material on Yosemite and to acquire pictures of Yosemite. All books have been obtained through the contributions of visitors, organizations and institutions interested in the National Parks educational work. The Yosemite Natural History Association is a consistent donor.

Most of the books are now shelved in an attractive reading room on the first floor of the Yosemite Museum. Books belonging to the Yosemite Museum Nature Library are not ordinarily loaned to visitors, but they are given free access to those volumes on the reading room shelves, and may be granted access to the valuable historical and scientific material in the locked cases in the presence of the librarian.

The library was needed to furnish information to the Park Naturalist and his staff, to the Yosemite School of Field Natural History, to visiting scientists who frequently come to the park to make special investigations, and to furnish information to the visiting public and the permanent park residents.

The idea of establishing a library in Yosemite National Park had its inception in 1904, when Major John Bigelow, Acting Superintendent, said in his report, in reference to the arboretum: "I hope it will some day be supplemented by a building serving the purpose of a museum and library." The present museum building was opened to the public in 1926. The book collection has been built up largely through the efforts of the three Park Naturalists

who have served in Yosemite, Ansel F. Hall, Dr. C. P. Russell, and C. A. Harwell.

During the summers of 1929 and 1930 Mrs. H. J. Taylor of Berkeley served in the Yosemite Museum as librarian on a voluntary basis. She did a great deal of work in organizing our collections of books and in demonstrating the needs for a strong library program in connection with the Naturalist effort in Yosemite National Park. Mrs. Taylor was especially interested in the Indians and early history of the region.

On June 8, 1931, Mrs. Ruth Casaday, on leave of absence from the Oakland Free Library for the summer, began the organization and cataloging of the Yosemite Museum Nature Library. The following summer her work was continued. On July 1, 1939, the writer was appointed librarian in Yosemite for these months. She undertook the work of classifying and cataloging the books that had been acquired during the intervening years. With that part of the work completed, and with present plans that call for a Librarian to continue the work each summer, it is felt that the Library will progress rapidly and fulfill its purpose.

THE WESTERN MEADOWLARK IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Vincent Mowbray, Field School '39

On April 2, 1940, I found a freshly killed Meadowlark near the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley. Dissection showed the bird to be a female with fertilized eggs. The largest egg measured four mm. at the greatest diameter and had an embryo in a stage of development about equivalent to the 24-hour stage of the chicken. The gizzard and intestine were both empty. The crop was missing so it was impossible to tell if the bird had eaten anything that morning.

From these observations I believe it possible that the bird had come up from a lower elevation early in the morning, before feeding, and was killed soon after reaching the valley. This record is of interest because the Western Meadowlark is a wanderer in Yosemite Valley and is generally observed in the fall rather than in the spring. This species nests each summer at Wawona in the park, but has not been found nesting in Yosemite Valley since 1926.

MUSEUM NOTES

RECORDS OF DUCKS AND GEESE IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Vincent Mowbray, Field School '39

While in Yosemite during the past winter (1939-40) I made a number of observations of ducks on the floor of the valley and became curious as to previous records of these birds in the valley. In Grinnell and Storer, "Animal Life in the Yosemite," I found only three species of ducks were observed by them during their studies in the valley. These were the Common Mallard, the Shoveller, and the Western Harlequin Duck. Other sources of records which I have been able to find are the monthly bird reports of C. W. Michaels, for the period from 1921 to 1932. From 1933 to October 1935 there are few records due to the fact that no one in the valley carried on regular observations during that period. From October 1935 to the present I have used the records of Walter Fitzpatrick and my own notes for the winter of 1939-40. A number of records were also found in the Yosemite Nature Notes, the park naturalist's monthly report, and in the specimens in the Yosemite Museum.

Of the species which have been observed to date only three have been known to breed in the valley. The Common Mallard was found breeding in 1922 and 1925, and its occurrence in the valley during the breeding seasons from 1921 to 1926 would tend to indicate that this species bred here regularly during that period. In 1916 Grinnell and Storer found a female Western Harlequin Duck with downy young on the Merced River near Sentinel Bridge. The third breeding species is the American Merganser which was found in 1939 by C. W. Schwartz. This record was of a downy young collected near Camp 16 on June 6.

Hooded Merganser

One new species of duck was added to the park list on January 15, 1940. This was a female American Golden-eye which was observed on Mirror Lake by C. A. Harwell (Park Naturalist), M. E. Beatty (Assistant Park Naturalist), Walter Fitzpatrick and the writer. The bird remained on the lake from at least 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., but was gone the next day.

The accompanying chart shows all of the available records year by year. Those species which are of fairly regular occurrence I have listed only by the month in which they were observed; all the others have the exact date given when available.

	CANADA GOOSE	COMMON MALLARD	GREEN-WINGED TEAL	CINNAMON TEAL	SHOVELLER	WOOD DUCK	RING-NECKED DUCK	CANVAS-BACK	LESSER SCAUP DUCK	AMERICAN GOLDEN-EYE	BUFFLE-HEAD	WESTERN HARLEQUIN DUCK	RUDDY DUCK	HOODED MERGANSER	AMERICAN MERGANSER
Before 1921		Casual visitant			December 26, 1914							Apr., May 1916 & May, June July 1920			
1921		Jan.-Feb.-Mar.-May-July-Aug.-Dec.					Feb.				Apr. 3	Mar.-Apr. May			
1922		Mar.-Apr.-May-June-July-Aug.-Nov.-Dec.					Feb.-Mar.-Dec.					Mar.-Apr. May			
1923		Apr.-May-July-Aug.-Oct.-Nove-Dec.					Jan.-Feb.-Dec.								
1924		Jan.-Mar.-Apr.-May-Aug.-Sept.-Oct.-Nov.-Dec.					Jan.-Dec.								
1925		Jan.-Feb.-Mar.-Apr.-May-July-Oct.					Jan.-Feb.-Mar.							Feb. 2-4	
1926		Feb.-Mar.-Apr.-May-July-Aug.-Nov.					Feb.								
1927		March-April-May					Jan.-Dec.					May		Jan. 2	
1928		October-November		Aug. 28			Feb.				Mar. 5		Dec. 6	Nov. 26, Dec. 26	
1929		August											Apr. 22		April 1, Oct. 25
1930		Jan.-Mar.-May-Nov.-Dec.	Oct. 6				Jan.-Feb.-Dec.						Nov. 24	Nov. 26	
1931		Jan.-Feb.-Apr.-Nov.-Dec.					Jan.-Feb.-Dec.								
1932		May-October		May 3		Oct. 28-29	Jan.		Mar. 5						March 5, April 28
1933		April		May 9											
1934	Mar. 10-22														Dec. 20
1935		Aug.-Nov.-Dec.													January
1936		Feb.-Dec.		Apr. 5-6				Sept. 28					Oct. 29-30		
1937		Jan.-Feb.-Mar.-Apr.-Dec.	Mar. 3, May 9					Oct. 22							Feb. 1
1938		March	Mar. 27				Jan.-Feb.								March 31
1939	Feb. 27	Mar.-July-Aug.-Sept.-Nov.	Mar. 4-10, Oct. 10-15	May 1-5		Nov. 12-Dec. 6	Jan.-Mar.							Dec. 15-31	June 6 (Downy young)
1940			Feb. 19	Jan. 11, Mar. 21	Mar. 31		Jan.-Feb.			Jan. 15	Mar. 3			Jan. 19-31, Feb. 1, Mar. 1	Jan. 19, Feb. 15, Mar. 19

A NEW FERN FOR YOSEMITE

By Edward C. Butts, Field School '39

During the High Sierra trip of the 1939 Field School one and possibly two new range extensions for Sword ferns (Polystichum) was believed to have been discovered. That one of these may be a new record for the Sierra Nevada seems likely.

On August 2, 1939, the writer, accompanied by James E. Cole, climbed the south slopes of Twin Peaks at the head of Virginia Canyon. At an altitude of 10,800 feet a short distance south of the creek which drains from a small unnamed lake north of Red Peak the writer found a small cluster of densely green fern fronds, about four to six inches long, with pinnae closely imbricated. The ferns were growing in a vertical crack of metamorphic rock in a dry southern exposure.

This plant is believed to be **Polystichum scopolinum** (Eaton) although the lower pinnae are scarcely lobed and the sori cluster too near the end of the fronds. This plant seems to resemble both **P. scopulinum** and **P. lemmoni,** and also resembles Jepson's **Polystichum munitum imbricans** of Mendocino County, California. Seems a likely new extension or sub-species.

Later, in the same region, on the same morning, another **Polystichum** resembling **lemmoni** was found. The fronds were longer, six to twelve inches, and decidedly weaker in structure. The basal pinnae were decidedly lobed and must be the Shasta Fern (Polystichum lemmoni) which to date has been unreported for Yosemite.

Only two plants of these species were collected despite an all-day search of other likely habitats. It is an odd fact that only one cluster of each of this fern was found at the head of Virginia Canyon, despite the fact that countless habitats similar to where they were found were located.

IS CALIFORNIA WEATHER GETTING WARMER?

By Park Forester Emil Ernst

Contra-seasonal natural functions were observed on October 20, 1939, in the Wawona region in the opening of new buds on some of the azaleas, the appearance of new leaves as much as one-half inch across on the Wild Gooseberry (Ribes roezli Regel), the presence of several flowers on the Kit-kit-dizze (Chamaebatia foliolosa Benth), and then the appearance of a group of three snow plants breaking thru the duff. This is the second time in several years that snow plants have been observed making their appearance late in the fall.