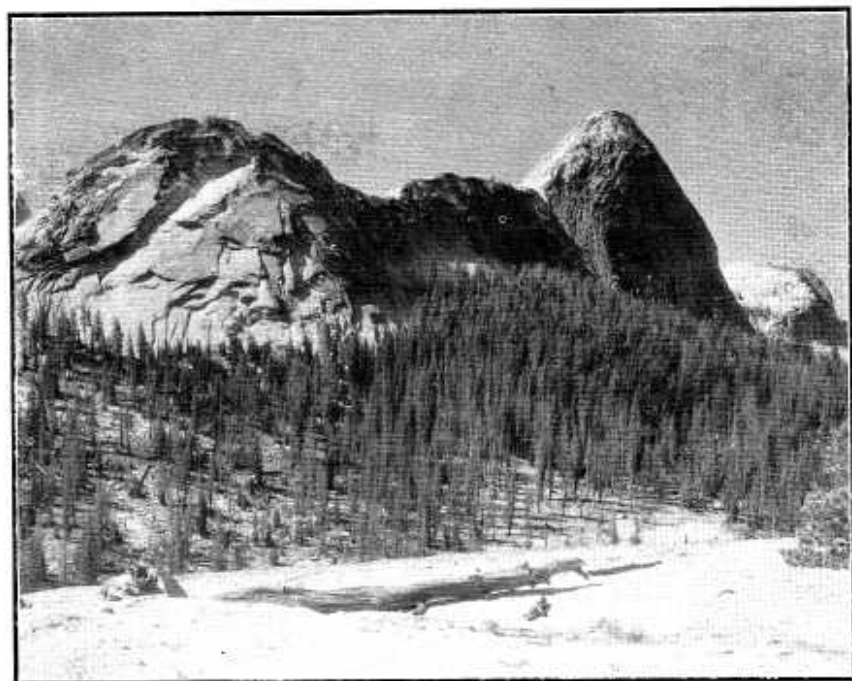


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FAIRVIEW DOME

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FAIRVIEW DOME

By Ranger Naturalist Carl W. Sharsmith

Fairview Dome (9737 feet altitude) is the highest of the Tuolumne Meadows domes, and affords a thrilling yet perfectly safe climb, but it has been much neglected by Tuolumne Meadows hikers. This is no doubt due to its sheer and unclimbable appearance as seen from the Tioga Road along which it is adjacent. It lies to the right when driving east, dominating one's view here just before the road drops downgrade in entering the lower end of Tuolumne Meadows. A day off was spent by the writer in ascertaining the feasibility of leading a group to its summit, and a safe means of ascending it was found. Since then two enthusiastic parties were led to the summit, with the unanimous acclaim that Fairview Dome provides one of the most enjoyable short hikes in Tuolumne Meadows.

The most interesting approach lies in walking along the base of the dome on the side which faces the road. The point of its actual ascent is, however, on the other side of the dome, at the southwest corner. If the hike is begun at the lower end of

Tuolumne Meadows by the road, numerous bear trails are crossed, one of which contours along the hill and is for some distance as graded and well-beaten as a much used man-made trail. Elsewhere along it, in common with the other trails, deep impressions mark the footfalls, since the bears usually step each in the same tracks. The reasons for these numerous bear trails is, of course, because of the proximity to the local garbage pits.

In approaching the dome in this fashion, one eventually skirts the very base of the massive cliff along a natural pathway between it and fine groves of Mountain Hemlocks and occasional fine specimens of Western White Pine and Red Fir. Looking forward or backward here affords striking vistas along the lane, bounded by sheer cliff on the one hand and the wall of forest on the other. It is a unique view not perhaps matched in the Tuolumne Meadows region. When the naturalist parties took this route in late August, 1940, the hemlocks were laden with purple cones like long bunches

of miniature bananas—a crop with-out equal for several past seasons.

The final ascent is by the south-west shoulder. With rubber or composition soled shoes, without which the final climb is not possible, one finds that with a little boldness he can walk safely up. There is no danger of a slip—all one needs is sufficient confidence. The surface of the dome is roughened by large feldspar crystals standing out like knobs, assisting one's steps. The summit of the dome is marked by a well built cairn which has been there many years. Who built this cairn is unknown to the writer, since no other marks of previous ascents were found. The feldspar knobs already referred to occasionally retain the polish of the ancient Tuolumne Glacier, and remind one of the great thickness the ice sheet must have had in order to overwhelm this dome which in itself lies over eleven hundred feet above the floor of Tuolumne Meadows. Fairview Dome is doubtless the "Glacier Monument" referred to by John Muir in his charming account of it in "Our National Parks." The 1940 naturalist parties to visit it, the first to do so, have highly recommended Fairview Dome as an easy, very enjoyable all-day hike, returning early in the afternoon. The return can be made via the south side of the dome, through a dense pure hemlock forest which occurs along much of the way.

THE MOLE & THE ANGLE WORMS

By Ranger Naturalist Enid Michael

There had been no rain in over a month. The dry earth in front of the tent was covered with a layer of brown pine needles. A mole was working about an inch under the surface, and slowly humping up a mole-hill. The animal worked at its plowing for fourteen minutes, and in that time had a hill sixteen inches long and about eight inches wide. Apparently, the mole was foraging, and not attempting to go places for it was not moving in a straight line. In the fourteen minutes that I watched the up-humping of the soil, I saw three angle worms escape their enemy.

When the first angle worm slipped out of the loose earth, loosened by the mole, I could not believe that it was making a deliberate attempt to escape its natural enemy, but when a second, and then a third angle worm came to the surface, and hurriedly wormed away over the brown pine needles, I became convinced that the worms, feeling vibrations in the soil, became aware that danger threatened. Two of the angle worms, after moving a foot or so, slid under the cover of pine needles, and disappeared; the third was "out of the frying pan into the fire" for on its overland journey it fell victim of a sharp-eyed robin. And that robin surely could handle his spaghetti!



DEER ATTACKS FOX

By Museum Assistant Elwood Wolfe

On November 3, 1940, at about 5 o'clock in the evening, the writer received a telephone call from Mr. Darwin Tiemann with the information that a buck Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus hemionus*) was attacking a California Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereocargenteus californicus*) in back of the Lost Arrow Studio. Upon reaching the scene, I found that Mr. Tiemann had driven off the buck, and the fox was lying on the ground, apparently badly injured. As we neared the fox, it rose feebly to its feet. In pitiful efforts of self-defense, it attempted to bite Mr. Tiemann's legs, but lacking strength, often crouched down with a sharp, piercing cry.

After we had retreated to observe what would happen, the injured fox struggled slowly off into the Museum Garden, whimpering as it moved, as though in great pain. To put the animal out of its misery was the next task, so I left Tiemann, and went to the museum for rags and carbon tetrachloride.

The following day the fox was prepared for the museum research collection. Examination revealed that the left side of the thoracic cavity had been crushed, with two ribs piercing the lungs. The flesh of the neck was bruised and bloody, although the skin of that region was not torn.

As to be expected, at this time of the year, the fox was in excellent pelage and physical condition. It weighed six and three-quarters pounds. Measurements were: total length, 937.5 mm.; tail, 406 mm.; hind foot, 131 mm.; ear, 75 mm.

Mr. Tiemann informed me that although there were several other deer present, the buck which attacked the fox would not permit any of the others to approach, and carried on the fight entirely alone. From this incident and other similar records, it may be inferred that deer are not the timid and defenseless creatures many park visitors believe them to be.

NOTES ON A LARGE PORCUPINE

By Ranger Naturalist George A. Petrides

On September 9, 1940, a large female, yellow-haired Porcupine (*Erethizon e. epixanthum* Brandt) was found dead near the bear feeding grounds in Yosemite Valley where it had been struck by a car. In preparing this individual as a museum specimen, several interesting facts were noted.



Although reports of porcupines weighing as much as thirty-five pounds are occasionally heard, to the best of the author's knowledge no records of individuals actually weighed appear in Yosemite literature. The individual under discussion measured 29.1 inches in total length, including the 8.6 inches which comprised the tail (total length, 72.7 cm.; tail 21.5 cm.; hind foot, 9.2 cm.; ear, 1.9 cm.), and weighed 17 pounds.

The animal, which was quite well fortified with sharp, barbed quills,

possessed strong muscles for the better manipulation of these modified hairs. The skin of the dorsal (back) region was underlain by strong, muscle sheets evidently capable of erecting the quills of this region. Unlike most animals whose internal tail structure is but loosely attached to the skin, the muscles of the tail of the porcupine are large and numerous. They attach directly to the skin, originating under the caudal vertebrae, and seem easily capable of swinging the tail in a club-like manner and, at the same time, erecting the many quills of this appendage. It was only with the utmost difficulty that the tail of this animal was skinned out.

The feet of the porcupine possess several modifications for climbing. Strong muscles operate stout claws. These are aided by the thick, heavy sole of the foot, which possesses a canvas-like tread to further enable the animal to grip the tree to be climbed. The skull is massive in structure. Extremely stout incisor teeth and heavy molars form the dental equipment of this rodent. Strong muscles, attaching to the skull, operate the powerful jaws which are normally used in stripping the bark from trees—usually Lodgepole Pines.

Although the bark of this tree is said to provide almost the sole food of the porcupine, the stomach of this specimen was distended with other plant material: Grass (sp?) formed

approximately 40 per cent of this food; acorns comprised 20 per cent; while fruits and leaves tentatively identified as belonging to *Arceuthobium americanum* (a mistletoe parasitic upon the Lodgepole Pine) its last meal. Incidentally, its appendix, containing several short side branches, measured over a foot in

formed the remaining 40 per cent of length.

The condition of the reproductive organs indicated that a single young, a normal litter, had been born much earlier in the season. The four mammae in the pectoral region appeared to be inactive.

THE BLUE GROSBEAK, A NEW RECORD FOR YOSEMITE

By Ranger Naturalist Enid Michael

It was the morning of August 8, 1940. There had been no rain for many weeks; wide patches of meadow had turned brown, and the tall, velvet grass had gone to seed. However, the late blooming thistles were in full flower, with a few early heads parachuting their seeds away on the wings of the wind. In low-lying sections of the meadow were standing pools of clear water. Thorny stems of blackberries reached up through the foliage of the dense azalea thicket. Robins and Black-headed Grosbeaks were feasting on blackberries, and under the berry bushes young Spotted Towhees were scratching for food. From perches above the azalea thicket, Traill Flycatchers dashed out now and then to pluck passing insects from the air. In the Kellogg Oak grove across the meadow California Woodpeckers were shouting, and coursing the high skies were companies of swifts, both White-throated and Black Swifts. The noisy chatter, the wild, erratic flight, and the twinkling wings were the characteristics which differentiated the White-throated from the leisurely sailing and silent Black Swifts.

Such a flight of the rare Black Swifts was indeed a thrilling sight, but the big adventure of the morning was yet to come. Moving out into the meadow to get a better view of the Green-backed Goldfinches that were plucking seeds from the thistle heads, we came upon two strange birds. At the moment I caught sight of them, they were swaying on the stems of the velvet grass, and I knew they were birds I had never seen before. They were brown birds—smaller than Black-headed Grosbeaks, but with the same swollen, grosbeak bills. Dull brown wing-bars—a double bar on each wing—were the only conspicuous markings, but when the birds flew from one grass stalk to another there was a flash of blue on the rump. With this flash of blue, it suddenly dawned on me that I was looking at a couple of young Blue Grosbeaks.

Of course, it is rather a pleasure to add one more name to the long list of birds seen in the Yosemite Valley; however, I have yet to see a male Blue Grosbeak in full plumage, and have yet to hear his song.

TWO NEW LOCALITIES FOR THE MOUNT LYELL SALAMANDER

By Ranger Naturalist George A. Petrides
and Catherine D. Hemphill

On July 31, 1940, a dead Mount Lyell Salamander (*Hydromantes platycephala* Camp) was found by George Petrides on the Ledge Trail to Glacier Point at an elevation of approximately 6700 feet. The animal was discovered in a dried condition in the steep pathway about six feet from a small stream. The excellent, though desiccated condition of the specimen left no doubt as to its identity.

Twelve living specimens of the Mount Lyell Salamander were collected by Catherine Hemphill and Orlin Anderson on a Field School expedition to Triple Divide Peak on August 1, 1940, at about 10,700 feet elevation. The species was found to be quite common in this locality—the dozen specimens having been taken in an hour's search. The favored habitat was under flat, granite rocks and slabs in a small meadow some twenty yards below a melting snowslide on the ridge northeast of the peaks. The ground under the rocks was damp, but not wet. A search of the rocks in the small streams from the melting snow patches failed to reveal any salamanders in this wetter habitat, nor were any found in a second meadow at a thousand feet lower elevation.

These records provide the fourth and fifth known localities for the

Mount Lyell Salamander within Yosemite National Park and the eighth and ninth for the Sierra Nevada mountains—the only region where it is known to occur. First collected on Mount Lyell, 10,800 feet, on July 18, 1915, as recorded by Grinnell and Storer in their "Animal Life in Yosemite." This species has since been taken at Half Dome, 8850 feet; Tenaya Canyon 5800 feet; Upper Yosemite Fall, 5100 feet, and now near Glacier Point, 6700 feet, and near Triple Divide Peak, 10,700 feet.

NATURE NOTELET

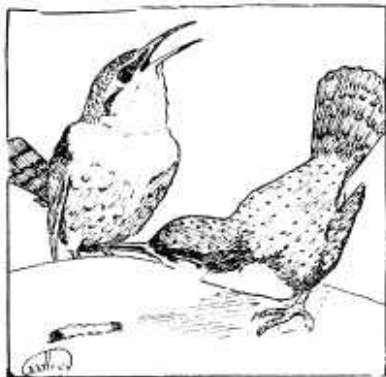
By Ranger Naturalist Vincent
Mowbray

The Lewis Woodpecker is of irregular occurrence in Yosemite, usually appearing after the nesting season and during the winter. On September 18, 1940, I observed five of these woodpeckers on the Big Oak Flat road at an elevation of about 5500 feet. They were all perched on a large, damp boulder next to the road, but flew off when the car approached them. When I next looked for them they were in the dead top of an Incense Cedar below the road; finally, they flew off down toward the main Merced Canyon.

DOTTED CANYON WREN NESTING RECORDS AND SONGS

By Ranger Naturalist Verlin Baysinger

During the hot days of late summer in Yosemite Valley, bird songs are at a premium. Several times this past summer of 1940, however, as hiking parties trudged up the steep, dusty trails, or jumped along over the hot boulder fields, the participants were rewarded with an un-



usual song, that of the Dotted Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus punctulatus*). The bubbling notes of the descending crescendo of this bird were so delightful and distinctive that just to hear them was well worth the climb.

Some of the dates of personal observations made on the Dotted Canyon Wren are noteworthy:

On July 15, a hiking party had the opportunity to observe this bird in

the upper box of Tenaya Canyon. (Another hiking party had previously reported hearing one in the same location.) It was watched closely for about twenty minutes, and we were quite sure that it had a nest on a ledge about one hundred feet above the stream.

On July 21, a Canyon Wren was seen by another hiking group with the writer near Devil's Bath Tub. It also was nesting, and made considerable fuss over our approach.

On July 31, the song of Canyon Wren was heard while standing near the railing at Glacier Point. It apparently came up from a position down around Firefall Point.

On August 7, a song was heard at Rocky Point while driving along the highway.

On August 8, heard singing in the gorge of the ledge while climbing with party to Sunnyside Bench. The bird sang for some time, but was not seen.

These observations are interesting, since previous reports indicated that during the past several years the appearance and song of the Canyon Wren were more or less rare occurrences in Yosemite National Park.

LOW ELEVATION RECORDS OF THE DUSKY SHREW

By Ranger Naturalist Vincent Mowbray

The Dusky Shrew (*Sorex obscurus* Merriam) is in most cases to be expected at elevations above 6000 feet. In the collection of the Yosemite Mu-

seum there are two specimens of this shrew which were collected on the floor of Yosemite Valley which is about 4000 feet elevation. The

first one was collected in Sentinel Meadow on July 6, 1934, by R. M. Gilmore and E. O. Godwin, while the second was collected in the meadow behind the Rangers' Club on September 11, 1940, by the writer. There are two other records only in the collection of this species below the 8,000 foot level, one being

at Deer Camp (elevation 6500 feet) on December 16, 1935, and the other at a meadow near Crane Flat (elevation 6500 feet) on September 18, 1940. The first two records give some evidence that at least in Yosemite the Dusky Shrew may be found at elevations below the level at which it is ordinarily expected.

THE CASE OF LILIUM PARDALINUM IN YOSEMITE

By Ranger Naturalist Enid Michael

Rumor has it that some thirty years ago *Lilium pardalinum*, commonly known as the Tiger or Leopard Lily, flourished in Yosemite Valley. This handsome lily likes to grow along the banks of little streams, so in the old days it may have graced Tenaya and Yosemite Creeks, and the little stream that flows from the spring at Happy Isles. Be that as it may, during my time in the Yosemite Valley, I have never seen the lily in the wild.

About five years ago a friend brought me Tiger Lily seeds from plants growing about a spring near Mather. These I scattered along the north side of the brook in the Museum Garden. Three years passed, and the memory of this planting had left my mind. But one morning in June, when I was wandering down the main path of the Museum Garden, the sight of a thrifty Tiger Lily bearing two buds brought me to a sudden stop. A few days after the discovery one of the buds blossomed, and in a day or two the second bud opened. It was a gala day

for the garden when the first Tiger Lily bore its two handsome flowers. Each blossom nodded on a long spreading stem, and with petals rolled back had all the style of a jaunty Turk's cap.

With the petals drawn out the lily measured about six inches across. The center was yellow and the rolling petals bright red-orange. The gay face of the flower was generously freckled with large purple spots.

Since the first surprise of Tiger Lilies in the Museum Garden they have been increasing along the brook. This season the original plant had two lusty stalks five feet high, and produced thirty-one large blossoms. Three other tall stalks, each bearing a crown of flowers and buds, put in their appearance, and clumps of young Tiger Lilies bore them company.

From this encouraging situation in the garden, it would seem that in the course of time Tiger Lilies might be established in other parts of the Yosemite Valley.



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Dan Anderson