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Yosemite Nature Notes

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AND THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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ELIZABETH H. GODFREY, TRANSFERRED

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

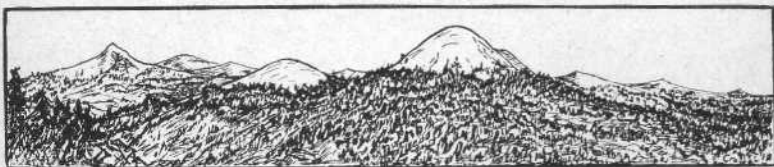
Mrs. Elizabeth H. Godfrey, who has been a steady contributor to Yosemite Nature Notes, recently transferred to the Region Four Office of the National Park Service in San Francisco. Her experience with the National Park Service embraces 13 years, of which 12 have been spent in Yosemite National Park, and one year in the Director's Office, Washington, D. C.

In June 1940, Mrs. Godfrey was transferred from the park engineer's office to the position of Museum Secretary. She remained on the Museum staff until her transfer in January 1943 to the position of secretary to Park Superintendent Frank A. Kittredge.

Readers of Yosemite Nature Notes

will recall the many delightful poems which she has composed for these pages, as well as the numerous other interesting articles, particularly, the series, "Thumbnail Sketches of Yosemite Artists," and the special issue of Yosemite Nature Notes, "Yosemite Indians Yesterday and Today," (July 1941), as well as the special children's number "Diary of a Robin Family," (October 1937).

Although her many friends in Yosemite will miss her, readers of Nature Notes will still have occasion to enjoy the fruits of her facile pen, since her departure from the Valley does not indicate a lack of interest in Yosemite. She has promised to continue to make occasional contributions to this publication.



SLOW FREIGHT TO TUOLUMNE

By Elisabeth C. Crenshaw

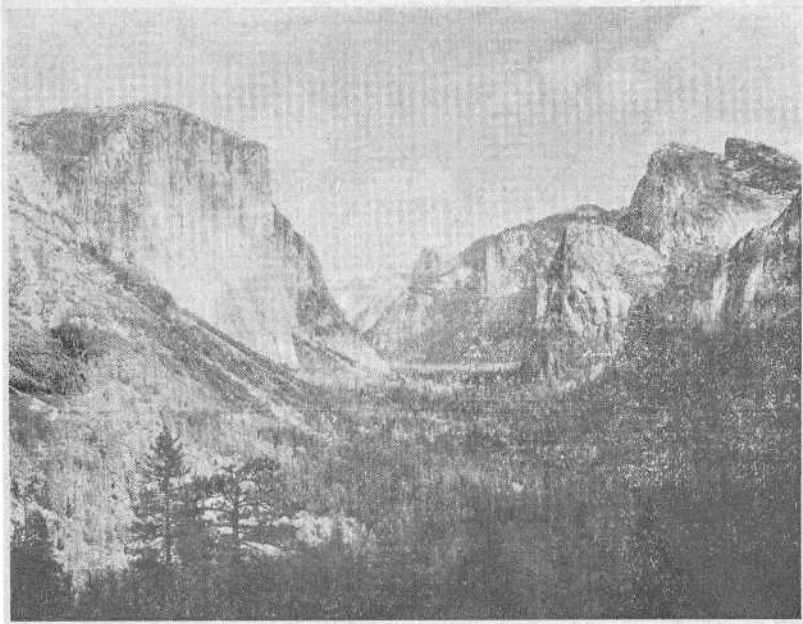
Whenever we crossed the river at Happy Isles and saw the big trail sign there, one of the children would say, "Come on, let's go up to Tuolumne on the Sunrise Trail!" For several years it was just a wish, but in 1943, when we couldn't drive, it appeared that Fate—and the O.P.A.—intended us to walk. It was more fun anyway and gave us a sense of real accomplishment.

Nancy and Kathy and I left the Valley on a hot August day starting at noon because it took us nearly all morning to sort our things and get them neatly lashed on the packboards. The first afternoon we

planned to go only as far as the camp site where the Half Dome Trail turns off.

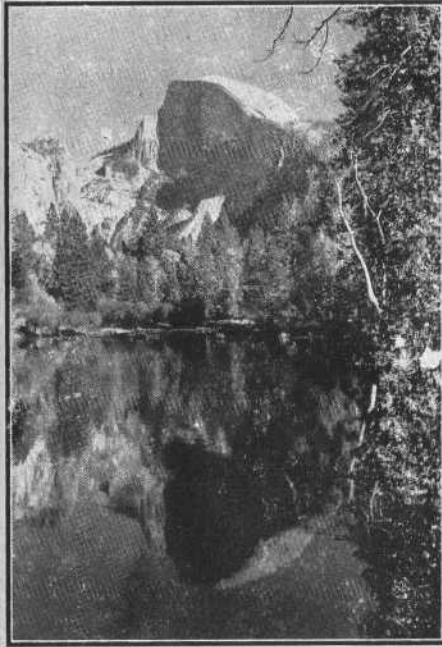
As we toiled up the horse trail with our packs, people stopped and stared and asked where we were bound. One man shook his head and remarked "Well, it sure looks like the slow freight through Arkansas!"

While we were making camp, two girls came in leading a burro. Nancy and Kathy begged to be allowed to water the animal, and after supper the girls invited us to toast marshmallows around their fire. What pleasant recollections! The Merced singing along in the dark, the fire



crackling, good talk about maps and trails and places, and now and then poor, lonesome Jennie, feeling left out, gives a raucous hee-haw followed by sympathetic laughter from the children.

Next morning we were on our way by daylight, climbing up through the



forests below Half Dome. Deer moved lightly away through the trees, and the early morning sunlight made gold and orange patterns on the pine needle carpet. When we reached Sunrise Creek, the water was high, and we had to wade to the log that served as a bridge. At noon we left the trail to find a spot where we could look at the cliffs and domes of Little Yosemite while we ate our crackers and cheese and fruit. It was

a dry lunch, though, and we soon went on to find water.

When we reached it, the creek was merely a small stream almost hidden by banks of Lewis monkey flower (*Mimulus lewisii*) and milkwhite habeneria (*Habenaria leucostachys*).

At first we were so pleased with the flowers and the creek pouring over the rocks below the trail that we ignored the steepness of the climb. Later, when we had left the stream behind us and there was still no top in sight, I wondered if we would ever get our packs up that last sandy ridge. We plodded on, one weary step at a time, walk fifteen minutes, rest five, too tired even to laugh at what the man on the horse trail would think of us now. After a long time there were more zig-zags below us than above and finally we were at the top looking through wind blown trees at a magnificent view of Mt. Clark.

There was level going for awhile. Then we descended to a small, very green meadow. Two bucks went bounding away up the rocks as we approached; everywhere else was the quiet of late afternoon. We went on across another level stretch of open forest until we stopped to gaze and gaze, for suddenly ahead of us, miles away, we saw the familiar shapes of Echo and Cathedral Peaks. We knew Long Meadow, where we wanted to camp, must be at the bottom of the next wooded slope, but it was discouraging not to have a glimpse of it. Just to keep up morale,

I offered an extra candy bar to whoever saw the meadow first. At last Nancy sang out, "There it is! I see it! It looks like a lake, but it's green grass."



YAY PARK SERVICE PHOTO

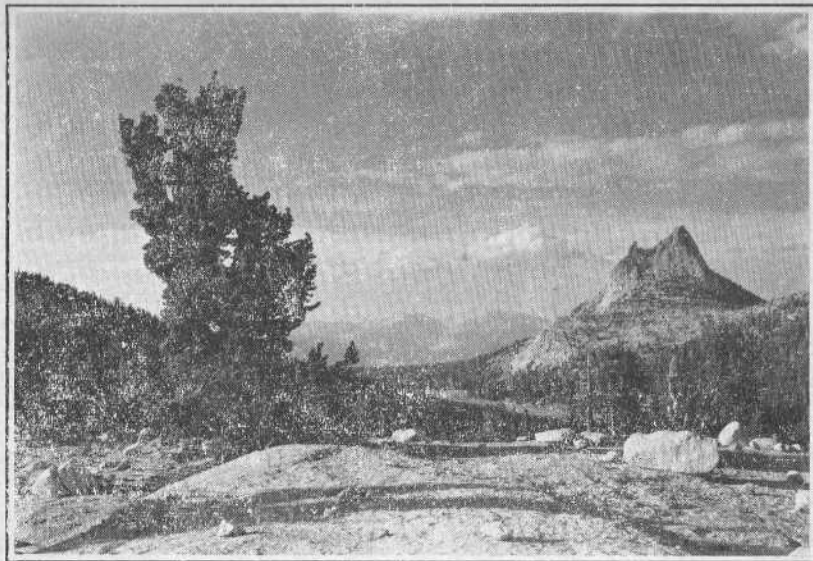
When we finally reached the meadow, shadows were long on the peaks to the eastward. We found a rock shelf above the dampness and laid out our sleeping bags in a warm sandy spot. A stream ran through our camp site and down to the meadow in miniature cascades. We ate supper as the alpenglow faded and hastened to crawl into our beds before we were chilled. The fire glowed and flickered and died, and the temperature went down and down. Late at night I awoke and saw a big buck staring at us. As I stirred, he galloped off with a whistling snort. I wondered if he had found the salt we always put out for the deer, the box of candy one brings to one's hostess!

In the morning the meadows were white with frost and our sleeping bags were stiff. I made a big fire and warmed the children's shoes and extra sweaters. After putting on everything they could inside the sleeping bags, they made a dash for the fire and hot oatmeal.

The sun was warm by the time we started again though, and the trail led through the wet meadows, skirting little pools.

Then came a short climb to Cathedral Pass. The trail wound among white granite rocks and lodgepole pines with lovely views of the Echo Peaks. We thought it was a charming place, like something out of a fairy tale.

Suddenly, in the grass alongside the trail we were startled to see a small bird flying back and forth as if it were tied to a string. It appeared to be a young Audubon warbler, and when we leaned over to see what was the matter, we found it had swallowed a stalk of grass and was firmly anchored. We thought it must have swooped after an insect and swallowed the grass, too. Kathy caught the bird, and we discovered it not only had grass in its throat but by this time was entangled. She carefully freed the bird's wings, and while she held it, Nancy gently and steadily began to pull the stalk of grass from its throat. At first it seemed hopeless. I was afraid we would kill the bird anyway, but with patience we got the grass out and the poor little creature sat blinking in



Kathy's hand. After a moment it spread its wings and sailed off into a thicket of lodgepole pines.

The trail gradually descended to Upper Cathedral Lake, which lay blue and sparkling in its grassy basin. We stopped there for lunch and made quite a feast of all the remaining raisins and cheese and crackers. A lovely sandy beach was an invitation to swim, but the mosquitoes were unbearable so we reluctantly hastened on toward Tuolumne.

Along the trail above Cathedral Lake we met the first people we had seen since leaving our camp at the Half Dome junction. The two men were riding, and we recognized the ranger from Tuolumne Meadows and later decided that his companion

was the Superintendent of the Park. They reined in their horses and stopped to talk. They asked how long we had been on the trail, and when we told them we had left the Valley two days before, they smiled but said kindly that we were doing all right.

With that encouragement we made good time to the Meadows. The trail was familiar to us, and it was all down grade. By three o'clock we were on the Tioga Road. But what did we want with roads? We cut across the meadows to the Soda Springs and slipped off our packs, though to say we crawled out of them would be more truthful.

"Well," we said, with utter satisfaction, "we may be slow freight, but we got here!"



TWO IS COMPANY—THREE IS A CROWD

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

One Yosemite doe, judging from the antics of her hungry progeny at meal time, certainly gave evidence of a belief in the oft-repeated statement which titles this article. It is not a usual thing for deer to bear triplets but on August 8 of the past summer such an event took place.

The birth of the fawns occurred over a rather wide period and because this event happened not too far from the Government mess hall it could be recorded fairly accurately. The first fawn entered this world on the morning of August 7; the second made its appearance in the late afternoon of the same day; and early the next morning, as the workmen were gathering for breakfast, the third new-born animal was first seen. As might be expected the last one was somewhat smaller than the others, but, nevertheless, it soon demonstrated its ability to fend for itself.

Needless to say these animals were a source of considerable interest to residents of the Valley, many of whom kept close watch over their

movements in order to satisfy themselves as to their continued well being. Park visitors, on the other hand, were rarely accorded the privilege of observing this interesting deer family. The doe kept her fawns hidden throughout most of the day in the tall grass of nearby meadows, recognizing that regular appearances would excite too great public attention from well meaning people. Yet, most every evening the doe would wander about certain parts of the Government residence area where she and her young could be watched at a respectable distance.

It was interesting to observe the patience of this wild mother with her impetuous young. Lying quietly under the protection of the deep meadow grass or a tangled mass of bracken fern, the fawns would bound from cover as the doe approached and dash headlong toward her in anticipation of a meal. Tails upraised, they would jostle and crowd about her. The effect was not unlike that of human beings lining up before a war-time restaurant in a vigor-

ous attempt to place themselves in a forward position to obtain choice items on a war-time menu. The doe, aware that each of her young should have its proper share, would permit the lucky ones to nurse for only a few moments before she would unceremoniously move off in order to permit them to re-shuffle themselves. This system seemed to be quite successful, for in spite of the scramble that occurred at each "new deal" it was apparent from the healthy and lively nature of each of the triplets that all were securing an ample and just share of nourishment. The doe, too, seemed to be capable of ministering to the needs of her family. Her appearance gave little evidence of the responsibility which her triplets entailed.

AN INQUISITIVE WEASEL

By D. A. Miller

Boldness is a characteristic trait of the weasel so, although it was a trifle unusual, it wasn't too surprising when one of these crafty hunters was observed searching the area in the vicinity of the blacksmith shop last July 28th. Unsatisfied with the results of its nervous meanderings in the nearby area it finally approached the broad entrance to the shop, gave the interior a quick survey, and without the slightest hesitation scurried inside. For fifteen minutes it poked about the edges of the large room, threaded its slender body among tools stacked at various points, ex-



amined the base of the forge and work bench, and searched all possible nooks and crannies that might serve as places of refuge for its prey. Finally, after first giving this observer what might pass for a disdainful look, it carefully examined the area about my feet before, satisfied that the blacksmith shop held no further possibilities, it whisked outdoors to continue its hunt.

* * *

Judging from numerous observations, weasels are becoming more abundant in Yosemite Valley. In addition to the one noted above a family of about six weasels were seen foraging in Camp Six during the summer. Further, another family of these animals has been noted on numerous occasions by Ranger Billy Nelson and Mrs. Nelson in the vicinity of their residence near the

Sentinel Bridge and a single animal has established itself in the woodpile near the home of Park Photographer Ralph Anderson. (C.F.B.)

SKUNKS EVICTED AGAIN

Readers of Yosemite Nature Notes may remember an interesting article (October 1944) by Park Ranger Paul Easterbrook concerning an interesting experience with a family of skunks which had established themselves beneath his tent prior to his arrival in the park early in the summer of 1944. Suffice to say that the departure of these animals to

another abode shortly after their discovery was a source of considerable relief to the Easterbrooks.

Yet the area beneath this tent in Camp 12 must have some particular attraction for such animals. Upon reporting again for summer duty in June of the past season Paul and his family were surprised to find that their friends—or at least a reasonable facsimile—had again set up housekeeping in the same location. The problem, one of delicate diplomacy, was satisfactorily solved soon after when the skunks of their own accord again found other quarters. (C.F.B.)

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Each year many books are ordered through the Yosemite Natural History Association for Christmas gifts. Although we have experienced some difficulty this past year in keeping books in stock, due to the restrictions on print paper, we hope to have on hand a supply adequate to fill all Christmas orders.

Your cooperation is requested, however, in the handling of these special mail orders at Christmas time. We would appreciate receiving your order well in advance of the holiday rush, and we especially request that you include in your check or money order the 2½% state sales tax which we are required to collect on our book sales.

On the inside back cover of this issue of Yosemite Nature Notes there

is a complete list of the publications which we plan to have in stock for the Christmas Season.

There are also a number of gift subscriptions to Yosemite Nature Notes, Nature Magazine, and American Forests received each year. Allocation of some monthly issues of these magazines are made as much as two months in advance, and frequently the entire issue is exhausted, thus making it necessary to postpone entering your subscription at least until the following month. To avoid this inconvenience we suggest that you enter your subscription well in advance of the Christmas season. You may request, however, that the subscription begin with the January number and run for the calendar year. —M. V. Walker



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Dan Anderson