

**YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES**

Volume III

September 30, 1924

No. 14

Yosemite Nature Guide Service

C. P. Russell, Park Naturalist

This is one of a series of bulletins issued from time to time for the information of those interested in the natural history and scientific features of the park and the educational opportunities the park affords for the study of these subjects.

Utilization of these bulletins by those receiving them to the end that the information contained therein might be as extensively distributed as possible will be appreciated.

W. B. Lewis, Superintendent

**THE EDUCATIONAL WORK OF 1924.**

With the coming of September and its attendant school days, the Yosemite Nature Guide Service closed the 1924 season. The members of the staff feel that the work has been successful and in spite of the fact that the number reached this year is smaller than last year's total, a distinct upward step has been made.

A splendid response on the part of those served has stimulated the Nature Guides, to exert every effort in supplying the demands of Americans who are hungry for knowledge of their Parks. Sincere expressions of appreciation, written and verbal, from hundreds of Yosemite visitors have taken all drudgery from the business of teaching how "to read the trailside." The recognition accorded the work by President Coolidge's Wild Life Conference has added an impetus already felt. The splendid gift of the Rockefeller Foundation assures Yosemite of a very firm foundation upon which to build further and at the same time holds a promise for Educational work in other Parks. It appears that 1924 marks the opening of a new era in the Nature Guide work of our National Parks.

The activities of June, July and August are here Summarized:

Attendance at Lectures.....	37,736
Attendance at Museum.....	31,061
Attendance on Field Trips.....	2,618
Total Served.....	71,415

81,346 visited Yosemite during this period.

## NOTES ON THE NESTING OF BAND-TAILED PIGEONS IN YOSEMITE

On the morning of July 22, a pair of Band-tailed pigeons were discovered at work on a nest. As is their custom the birds divided the work. The female sat at the point of construction and the male brought the material which he gathered by snapping dry twigs from a near by cedar tree. On July 24, the nest was again visited and we found the female bird roosting. The nest was a flimsy affair made of course twigs carelessly flung together. It was placed on a horizontal limb about twenty feet above the ground. The limb on which the nest was placed was eight inches in diameter and the bird sat parallel to the limb, and from beneath she was almost concealed from view.

July 22 seemed late in the season for pigeons to be nesting, but on July 28 two more nests were found, and on each was a roosting female. The nests were all alike; flimsy affairs placed on a horizontal limb of such size as to form a base on which the incubating bird could rest, sitting parallel to the limb. Here it might be well to state that nests found on other occasions were not placed on horizontal limbs, but built in the spreading crotch of smaller branches.

ENID MICHAEL

## SNOW-SHOE RABBITS

Tuolumne Meadows affords the Nature lover a place in which to study many little known forms of animal life. Perhaps no other easily reached spot in the Sierras presents so good an opportunity for tourists to become acquainted with the most interesting Snow-Shoe Rabbit. Here, these high mountain creatures have become accustomed to the presence of man and have dismissed a part of their usual timidity. It is no unusual sight to observe one of the animals, in late afternoon, boldly making its way on the open ridges at the edge of the forest. Any of the many trails which radiate from Tuolumne Meadows will take one through Lodge-pole Pine forest in which these hares abound. The trail to Lambert Dome and Dog Lake penetrates especially good rabbit territory and any hiker may see one of the long legged creatures by following this trail. Should it happen that no rabbit happens to jump from the timber, it is only necessary to digress from the path sufficiently to approach a few of the many fallen lodge-pole pines along the way. The local Snow-shoe Rabbits appear to make the debris of the tops of these fallen trees, their play time cover. The writer has frightened dozens of rabbits from such dead falls in the forests about Tuolumne Meadows.

In the summer no "forms" are occupied. The animals merely hide themselves between the trunk and the ground or in the maze of branches, yet on the fallen trunk. Frequently these Tuolumne Meadows rabbits make no attempt at "freezing" while under the protection of this cover. Their long ears flop about and they may even hop confidently from place to place within the dead fall. In fact only very close approach will frighten them sufficiently to cause them to bound away through the timber.

The summer coat of the hare is grey and blends well with the surroundings in which it lives. In the fall a molt takes place and, like the weasel, the snow-shoe rabbit becomes white. At the high altitudes (8000 feet and up) in which it lives, snow accumulates to a great depth, and of course, the white coat of fur adds greatly to the chance of the animal escaping its many natural enemies.

Judge W. Fry of the Sequoia Nature Guide Service recently published a splendid account of the occurrence and habits of the Sierra Snow-Shoe Rabbit, based upon his own careful observations. His entire account makes a plea for the protection of this unique member of the California Fauna which at present is not recognized as existing by our state's Conservation Laws. Nevada has seen in the animal a form to be saved for the future and it is given protection. Only California and Nevada need be concerned in the matter for *Lepus campestris sierrae* is found in the Sierras only. Nevada has set a good example that California might well follow.

#### - CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG -

The Park Naturalist was recently surprised to find Red-legged Frogs (*RANA AURORA DRAYTONII*) quite abundant at Mather Station. The altitude of Mather is about 4600 feet. This particular *Rana* has been recorded at Smith Creek (3000 feet) in the Yosemite region but is known as a resident of the low altitudes rather than a mountain form. The four individuals now at the Yosemite Museum were taken from a drying pond at the San Francisco Saw Mill (Mather). Other frogs of the same species were caught and examined at the large mill pond on the same property.

The Red-legged Frog is the largest frog of the Yosemite region. Because of its size and the edible quality of its hind legs it is known in some localities as "French Frog." It is ordinarily more wary than the Yellow-legged frog, whose range it invades slightly, and perhaps for that reason it is sometimes overlooked. However the specimens that occasion this "Note" were very easily captured.

In keeping with this surprise in amphibians was the discovery of more than a dozen Pacific Mud Turtles swimming themselves along the shores of the mill pond.

### BUGLING OF THE ELK

Through the day and night, since Aug. 5, Yosemite Valley has been treated to that fine, wild music of the bugling bull elk. This year, as never before, the clear, ascending bugle notes of the single active bull of the herd, are frequently followed by a series of fierce grunts. It now becomes more apparent why the elk's challenge has been likened by sportsmen of some sections, to the braying of a jackass.

One bull holds full power over the little herd of cows. One or another of the less pugnacious males may mischievously approach to within a few hundred yards of the lord and his harem, but with the big bull's first challenging note he stops short. The first steps made by the possessor of the harem sends the interloper away in swift flight. There is little chance of a combat in the Yosemite elk herd.



Digitized by  
**Yosemite Online Library**

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

Dan Anderson