

YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Yosemite Nature Guide Service

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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

P R E S S P L E A S E C O P Y

SIERRA SUMMITS OPENED TO ALL

New joys await the nature lover who visits Yosemite in 1924.

The vacationist who loves to leave the crowd behind may gratify his most ardent desires this summer even in the popular Yosemite. Hikers' camps will be located in the wild back country.

Hikers may start on a lengthy trip into the high country with no more thought of preparation than were the trip to be a day's climb to Glacier Point and return. At the end of each day's travel will be found a bounteous spread and a bed.

And to take advantage of these camps it will not be necessary to follow the beaten paths made common place by the tread of throngs! They will be located on the most beautiful of Sierra trails and situated in spots near the greatest wonders - wonders undreamed of by the tourist who believes he has seen Yosemite when he but visits the valley and its adjacent rim.

Starting from Yosemite Valley an easy day's climb brings one to the first camp, which is located at the head of Little Yosemite Valley. In proceeding to the second camp, on Merced Lake, he will not need to rush to reach the lake in time to enjoy fishing before nightfall. The next camp is situated on picturesque Booth Lake near Tuolumne Pass. Camp No. 4 is at the head of Lyell Canyon, just under the living Lyell Glacier, which pushes down from the 13,000 foot summit just above. A very easy day's travel down the Lyell Canyon brings the hiker to the Tuolumne Meadows Camp. The trail from here to the sixth camp at Glenn Aulin is unsurpassed for variety and beauty. A very short distance from this camp are the famed Waterwheel Falls. From Glen Aulin the trail passes through forest aisles and over summits to Tenaya Lake. This is the seventh and last camp of the present series, and from here the homeward trail descends to the valley. It is safe to say that no similar accommodations elsewhere make accessible such a wealth of natural wonders.

To avail oneself of the opportunities of the hikers' camps it is only necessary to notify the clerk at Yosemite Lodge the night before starting.

It is obvious that these camps will increase the possibilities of the Yosemite Nature Guide Service. Regular trips will be scheduled, and a competent scientist will aid parties in learning first hand of the natural history of the high country. This service is provided free by the government.

SOME FEBRUARY BOTANY NOTES

The month of February, clad in radiant robes of sunshine, has passed over the Yosemite, bestowing but two days of rain. In spite of the fact that our proverbially stormiest month has treated us in an unusual manner, the plants on the floor of the Valley thrive. Six low-growing annuals (*Gilia gracilis*, *Montia perfoliata*, *Erodium cicutarium*, *Brassica campestris*, *Lepidium densiflorum*, and *Cryptantha flaccida*) are in bloom on the south slope of the valley, and their delicate jewel-like flowers deck the warm sandy earth. Determined waves of green have taken possession of the gray meadows and are overflowing the old withered grasses. Tender wild grasses lay vivid green lawns under the Kellogg Oaks and whisper sweet messages of spring to the leafless trees.

The buds of the Kellogg Oaks continue to expand. On last spring's twigs of both Kellogg Oak and *Chrysolepis* Oak are many small acorns. These acorns are about nine months old and should be ripe this fall. If all goes well with these babies, the acorn crop will be a splendid one.

The twigs of the willows are red or orange, and the swelling buds along the stems stand out like plump beads. The willows have not changed greatly during the month with the exception of the Nuttall willow. This willow (*Salix scouleriana*) bears delightful downy catkins.

Throughout all the clear weather the sun beat upon the talus of the north wall. Growing here, the Mariposa Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos mariposa*), a great lover of hot sunshine, is decked with countless clusters of delightful pink bells. These fine shrubs with fresh foliage, glowing red stems, and lovely flowers are in marked contrast to the rough granite with its sunburnt moss and lichens. The butterflies have found these flowering shrubs and great throngs hover about the

honeybells. The California Laurel (*Umbellularia californica*) also likes the talus of the north wall. It displayed fine buds in January and now it is in flower. --Enid Michael

HYLAS ARE BREEDING

The pools of Yosemite meadows now contain interesting little amphibians (Pacific Tree-toad), whose liquid voices contribute notably to the spirit of spring time that pervades.

Rounded jellatinous egg masses, the size of a thimble, are seen attached to submerged sticks and underwater vegetation. It is the business of depositing these eggs that brings the Hylas from their winter quarters to the pools. As they swell their vocal pouches while crouched in the water, the notes which they emit sound slightly more musical than the croaks they send from the tree tops in the summer. Even now both notes may be heard, for some Hylas are active far up on the cold cliff walls and their unmusical song mingles with the notes from the pools.

Living specimens of the Tree-toad and eggs in various stages of development may be seen in the Yosemite Museum.

LIBERATED ZOO BEAR AGAIN APPEARS

In the December, 1923 number of "Nature Notes" it was recorded that the two captive bears of the Yosemite Zoo were freed. "Billie", the large male, was induced to vacate his cage only after days of attempts. After being lured from his cage (the door was slammed at his unsuspecting back) he continued to visit the zoo each night until December 15. After that date no evidence of his activity could be found, and we must suppose that he retired for the usual bear's winter sleep.

How long does a bear hibernate?

This particular bear put in his first 1924 appearance the evening of February 29. Since then he has been seen a time or two, and overturned garbage cans attest to his activity. (Written March 4) A few other Yosemite bears are active about the garbage dump, and we may reasonably believe that "Billie" has behaved normally, considering the early spring experienced.

Had "Billie" visited his former cage the night of March 3, he would have found it occupied by a stranger. A "movie" bear, brought to the Yosemite with the Tom Mix Company, was billeted there, but for one night only. It seems even movie bears have a temperament. This one was so upset by the scent left by the former occupants that he was not disposed to play his parts, and it was necessary to give him quarters in a horse barn. Here he regained his poise.

UNANTLERED BUCKS

The apparent absence of bucks in Yosemite at the present time prompts some tourists to ask the whereabouts of the male deer population. For the past few weeks the now useless antlers have been dropping from the proud heads of their owners. The bucks resemble does to most visitors. If one is fortunate, he may find a dropped antler on the valley floor, (One was picked up on March 4.)

Each year the splendid headgear is doomed to die and drop off. Beginning at the points, death progresses downward until the junction of antler and skull is reached. It is during this slow dying that the antlers serve their purpose - weapons of buck warfare.

A few weeks after the shedding new structures begin to bud at the points from which the old ones fell. At first they are extremely soft and subject to injury. This surplus energy of the buck goes to the developing antlers, and the growth is surprisingly rapid.

YOSEMITE DOMES

It requires no scientific turn of mind to discover that Yosemite landscapes are characterized by huge, bulging masses of base granite, swelling out from the timbered slopes. Thoughtful study of the domes reveals the fact that each and every one is divided, at the surface, into curved plates. Removing an outer plate reveals another, and the domes seem, like an onion, to be composed of concentric layers.

Geologists, in explaining these peculiar structures, have developed two general theories. According to one theory, the granite of the domes has always been divided into curved plates. Because of this layered structure it has been possible for water and ice to model the rounded domes.

The other theory holds that the layered formation originated subsequent to the forming of the domes and was caused by unequal expansion and contraction at the surface of the solid mass of granite. Mr. F. E. Matthes of the U.S. Geological Survey, who has made clear the story of Yosemite, points out that this layering of the domes develops only at the surface and that only monoliths - solid rock masses - may form domes.

We see, then, that in spite of what has been written of the action of glaciers, sculpturing Sierra domes, we may look upon them not as plastic masses that responded to the glacier's modeling touch but rather as rock masses, which, by virtue of their extreme solidity, have escaped remodeling by the ice. Indeed, some of them, Half Dome and Sentinel Dome for example, were never covered by the ice flood.



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