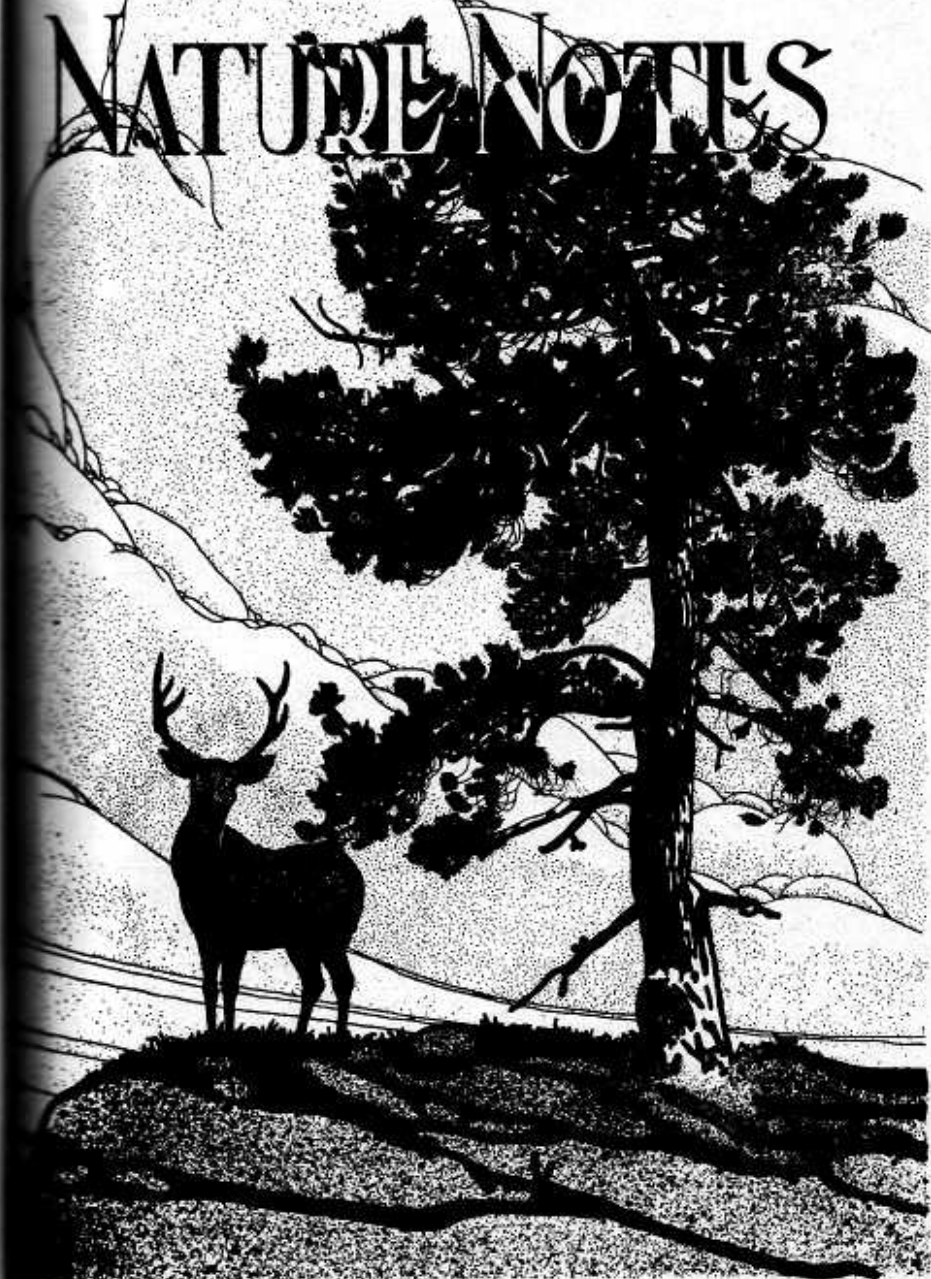


YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



Volume IV

September 1, 1925

Number 15

A PERSONAL INVITATION.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK IS YOURS! WE OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WANT TO HELP YOU TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR PARK AND TO UNDERSTAND IT IN ITS EVERY MOOD. ALL OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICE IS OFFERED TO YOU *free* BY YOUR GOVERNMENT:

Visit the Yosemite Museum!

Here you will learn the full story of the Park — what tools were used by the great Sculptor in carving this mighty granite-walled gorge; who lived here before the white man came; how the Days of Gold led to Yosemite's discovery; how the pioneers prepared the way for you; and how the birds and mammals and trees and flowers live together in congenial communities waiting to make your acquaintance.

Plan your trail trips on the large scale models in the Geography Room.

The Yosemite Library in the museum provides references on all phases of Yosemite history and natural history.

Popular lectures on Yosemite geology and other branches of natural history are given by nature guides at scheduled times each day.

The nature guide on duty will be more than willing to answer your questions on any subject.

Go Afield with a Nature Guide!

Take advantage of this free service that will help you to know your Park. A competent scientist will conduct you over Yosemite trails, and from him you may learn first hand of the native flowers, trees, birds, mammals, and geological features.

See Schedule of Nature Guide Field Trips.

Visit Glacier Point Lookout!

From there you will obtain an unexcelled view of Yosemite's High Sierra. The binocular telescope will bring Mt. Lyell to within one third of a mile from where you stand; you can recognize friends climbing trails several miles away. The Nature Guide in attendance will help you to operate it and will explain what you see.

A small library is at your command.

You will enjoy the informal nightly campfire talks given here.

Attend the Nature Guide Campfire Talks!

In addition to the museum lectures members of the educational staff give talks as a part of the evening program at Camp Curry and Yosemite Lodge. Non-technical explanations of how Yosemite came to be; what you may expect of Yosemite bears; how the local Indians lived; what birds you see about your camps; what trout you will catch in Yosemite waters; how you may best visit the wonderland of the summit region; and scores of similar subjects are given by the National Park Service Nature Guides.

ALL OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE BY YOUR GOVERNMENT.

—TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM—



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INHABITANTS OF A FALLEN YELLOW PINE

By R. D. Harwood

Many interesting forms of life play inconspicuous but none the less important roles in great life cycles. This was well illustrated by examining a fallen yellow pine tree on a recent trip to Little Yosemite. This tree has been dead for many years as indicated by the advanced state of decay.

The first insect to be encountered when the loose bark of the stump was removed was a large click beetle. There were a half dozen of these of the same species of *Elatér*, known as the eyed click beetle. They are dark gray with two large black spots resembling eyes on the pro-thorax. When placed on their backs these beetles, by a vigorous movement at the joint between the pro-thorax and meso-thorax, jump into the air to a height of three inches, at the same time righting themselves. The click made at this movement was distinctly audible. A smaller light brown click beetle was found nearby.

The removal of another section of the bark showed the activity of the large mountain termites, *Termopsis nevadensis*. These termites, incorrectly called white ants, by their tunnelling greatly facilitate the decomposition of the wood. The saw-dust so formed is fine and similar to that from the true wood ants. Termites are blind but their skin is sensitive to the light, which they

always avoid. These soft-bodied blind workers were the most abundant but there were several soldiers with their massive thoraxes and jaws in outline like the adult soldier. Somewhere in the depth of the catacomb ruled the dependent queen, a mere egg-laying machine.

A colony of the black wood ants was found doing a piece of work similar to that of the termites. The presence of the dried and bleached remains of a number of lady-bird beetles, *Hippodamia convergens*, under loose bark would indicate that they were the few of a large colony which did not survive the hibernation period.

Two blue scorpions and three centipedes were found in the same old yellow pine. Since they live on small insects there were probably other inhabitants which were not seen.

These insects and weather are are working continuously to return the trees to the soil.—R. R. Harwood.



Copyright Photo by J. T. Boysen.

The Wawona Tree

Copyright Photo by J. T. Boysen

Driver—Sam Owens; center—Galen Clark, discoverer of Mariposa Grove and for many years guardian of Yosemite Valley; right—J. J. Cook, proprietor of Stoneman House in Yosemite Valley.

J. T. Boysen, pioneer photographer of Yosemite, made this picture at the request of Washburn Brothers, builders of the Wawona road. For many years an enormous enlargement of the photograph hung in the old Sentinel Hotel, Yosemite Valley. Mrs. E. A. Oviatt of Santa Barbara admired the masterpiece on many Yosemite visits, and in 1924 she declared it should have a place in the new Yosemite museum. Mr. Boysen was consulted and he very gladly presented the old favorite. An ordinary suspension from the wall would do. Indeed, this generous lady built a great fireplace in the museum library, and in a niche, planned expressly for it, "The Wawona Tree" will remind Yosemite tourists for all time to come of the romantic days of the horse coach.

THE WAWONA TREE TUNNEL.

By C. P. Russell

Park Naturalist, Yosemite National Park

Early-day records of happenings in Yosemite valley and the Mariposa Grove were not always kept with the same exactness as now prevail. Frequently the question has come, "When was the famous tunnel through the Wawona tree made?" Search as we might, no direct reference to this historic event could be found. Mr. Ellsworth in writing his book, "The Giant Sequoia," determined that in all probability the tunnel was cut when Washburn built the road through the Mariposa Grove, in "the early seventies."

Now comes word from the tourist who made the first drive through the tree, and the year and month is at last recorded. Frank Strausser of San Diego, Calif., in writing to Chief Naturalist Hall, informs us that he was a member of a party of fourteen Knights Templar from Philadelphia who, in 1881, visited Yosemite. Thousands of early-day tourists who came in horse-drawn stages, and other thousands of motorists will be glad to read the part of Mr. Strausser's letter which is here quoted:

We took the stage at Merced and entered the Yosemite valley early in August, 1881. Approaching Wawona, our coach of six

came to a stop. Alighting, we noticed a number of workmen engaged in cutting the passageway through the tree, one side of which was well along to the finish, but the other side was quite rough. The foreman of the crew said to the stage driver: "Take your stage through and let's see if you can make it." I said, "Wait a minute. I'll go through with you." It was just possible to go through as the one side I referred to was not yet cut to dimensions contemplated. I remember we stopped in the center of the cut and I stood up and touched the roof of the opening. Arriving on the other side, I stepped down and the foreman and each of the workmen engaged in the work surprised me by shaking hands with me and congratulating me, saying I had the distinction of being the first one to drive through. I little dreamt at the time that this was anything remarkable, and that this giant tree called "Wawona" would become famous. But it has come to pass, and, as you remarked during our conversation, "Why not claim the distinction?" and so I do.

AFIELD WITH THE NATURE GUIDES

NESTING ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS.

Both rough-winged swallows were busy this morning feeding young. One or the other of the two birds entered the nest every three or four minutes. This morning the parent birds were collecting food over a stretch of river not far from the nest. The whole range would not cover more than 200 yards. Usually they skimmed the river within a few inches of the surface, but occasionally they dived ten or twenty feet in the air. When the birds approach the nest with food they do not dive directly in, but make a dozen or more narrow circles and several false dives to the nest. When at last they do decide to enter the nest the approach is made from below in a perfect bound which takes them into the hole without touching the bank. The nest hole is ten feet above the surface of the river in a clayey, sandy bank. In leaving the nest the birds seem to glide out at a decided drop which takes them within a few inches of the water. The excrement from the nest is dropped in the river directly in front of the nest hole and not carried far away, as is often the case with other kinds of birds. The current quickly carries away the waste. On one occasion it was noted that the waste from the nest was dropped too soon. It struck the bank, however, and rolled into the river. Once a bird, leaving the nest, swooped low and broke the surface of the water with his bill; presumably a process of cleaning the bill. Other birds have different methods; the white-headed woodpecker taps his bill to clean it, the black-headed grosbeak shakes his head.—Enid Michael.

* * *

JULY PROVES A RECORD-BREAKING MONTH

Never before have so many Yosemite visitors taken advantage of the educational service in the park. With ten naturalists present to aid in familiarizing nature lovers with the wonders preserved for them a fairly satisfactory result has been obtained in the attempt to meet the growing spirit of wanting-to-know. Four thousand two hundred and twenty-eight individuals went afield with nature guides and learned through personal contact that there is a wealth of Yosemite attractions to be appreciated besides the mile-high cliffs. Lectures and museum activities reached a total of forty-eight thousand four hundred and twenty-six. The totals for 1925 are going to eclipse all previous records. This is due in part to the fact that more visitors this year came to Yosemite, and in part to the fact that three additional nature guides have been employed. But we believe it also signifies a growing desire of the public to "Know Your Park."—C. P. Russell.

PYGMY OWL EATS CHIPMUNK

A party with a nature guide in Lost Valley above Little Yosemite Valley came upon a pygmy owl during his meal hour. The pygmy owl hunts by day and so it was not remarkable to find him hungry in mid-afternoon, but his fare was a little extraordinary. This owl was varying the customary fare of mice and reptiles with a full-grown Tahoe chipmunk. The victim was half eaten when we approached, but the owner dropped the remainder and, giving us a resentful survey, flew away to a more secluded place.—David D. Keck.

* * *

AUGUST IS FLOWERY IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

The majority of people visiting the Yosemite valley take their outings in an automobile driving along the dusty roads. These tourists may notice a few flowers blooming along the dusty ways, but unless they are fortunate enough to take a walk or to yield to the persuasions of a nature guide and indulge in a "flower walk" they will not know that many spring flowers still bloom in the valley. These fortunate ones who have the courage to leave their machine and try their feet may find luxuriant flowers in full bloom. The Sentinel Meadow still sweet and airy in its garb of seeding grasses, has many lovely "posies." There is the towering white top of Yarrow (*Acutella millefolium*) and the delicate fluff of Queen Ann's Lace (*Carum lemmoni*). St. Johnswort (*Hypericum formosum*) and Goldenrod (*Solidago elonata*) are generous with their gold. Where the grass is low Candelabra (*Erythraea venusta*) spreads a bright garment of pink. A few late blue violets bloom down in the grass.

On the moist banks blossoming mints create glorious gardens. Giant Hyssop (*Agastache urticifolia*) and Pennyroyal (*Mentzelia odoratissima*) are as loud of scent as they are bright of flower.

The moist areas bordering the forests are beloved by many kinds of plants. Now White Collinsonia (*Collinsonia tinctoria*) and Farewell-to-Spring (*Godetia viminea*) gladden these forest ways with masses of delightful flowers.

There are beds of Spanish Clover (*Hosackia americana*), ditches filled with golden Monkey flower (*Mimulus luteus*), there is a tarweed (*Madia*) and gilia and many other charming flowering plants. These are not along the roads, however; the lovely flowers have fled the roads where all day long, in ceaseless procession, the autos roll in dust, and now they make sweet gardens only in secluded places where flower lovers walk the trails.—Enid Michael.

THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION ITS PURPOSES

To gather and disseminate information on the wild-life of the Sierras.

To develop and enlarge the Yosemite Museum (in co-operation with the National Park Service) and to establish subsidiary units, such as the Glacier Point lookout and branches of similar nature.

To promote the educational work of the Yosemite Nature Guide Service.

To publish (in co-operation with the U. S. National Park Service) "Yosemite Nature Notes".

To study living conditions, past and present, of the Indians of the Yosemite region.

To maintain in Yosemite Valley a library of historical, scientific, and popular interest.

To further scientific investigation along lines of greatest popular interest and to publish, from time to time, bulletins of non-technical nature.

To strictly limit the activities of the association to purposes which shall be scientific and educational, in order that the organization shall not be operated for profit.

MAY WE SEND YOU EACH ISSUE OF YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES?

Your check for \$2.00 sent to the Park Naturalist, Yosemite National Park, will help to pay the cost of its publication for the year and make you a member of the Yosemite Natural History Association for the same period.

FROM THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON OUT-DOOR RECREATION

Called by PRESIDENT COOLIDGE

THAT THE CONFERENCE ENDORSE NATURE STUDY IN SCHOOLS AND THE EXTENSION OF THE NATURE STUDY IDEA TO EVERY AMERICAN SCHOOL AND FAMILY; THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MUSEUMS OF NATURAL HISTORY IN NATIONAL PARKS WILL INCREASE THE EDUCATIONAL RECREATIONAL VALUE OF THE PARKS".—Resolution of the Conference.

A scenic view of a river flowing through a forested valley with mountains in the background. The river is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery and the blue sky. The foreground shows large, smooth rocks in the water. The background features steep, rocky mountains under a clear blue sky.

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Dan Anderson