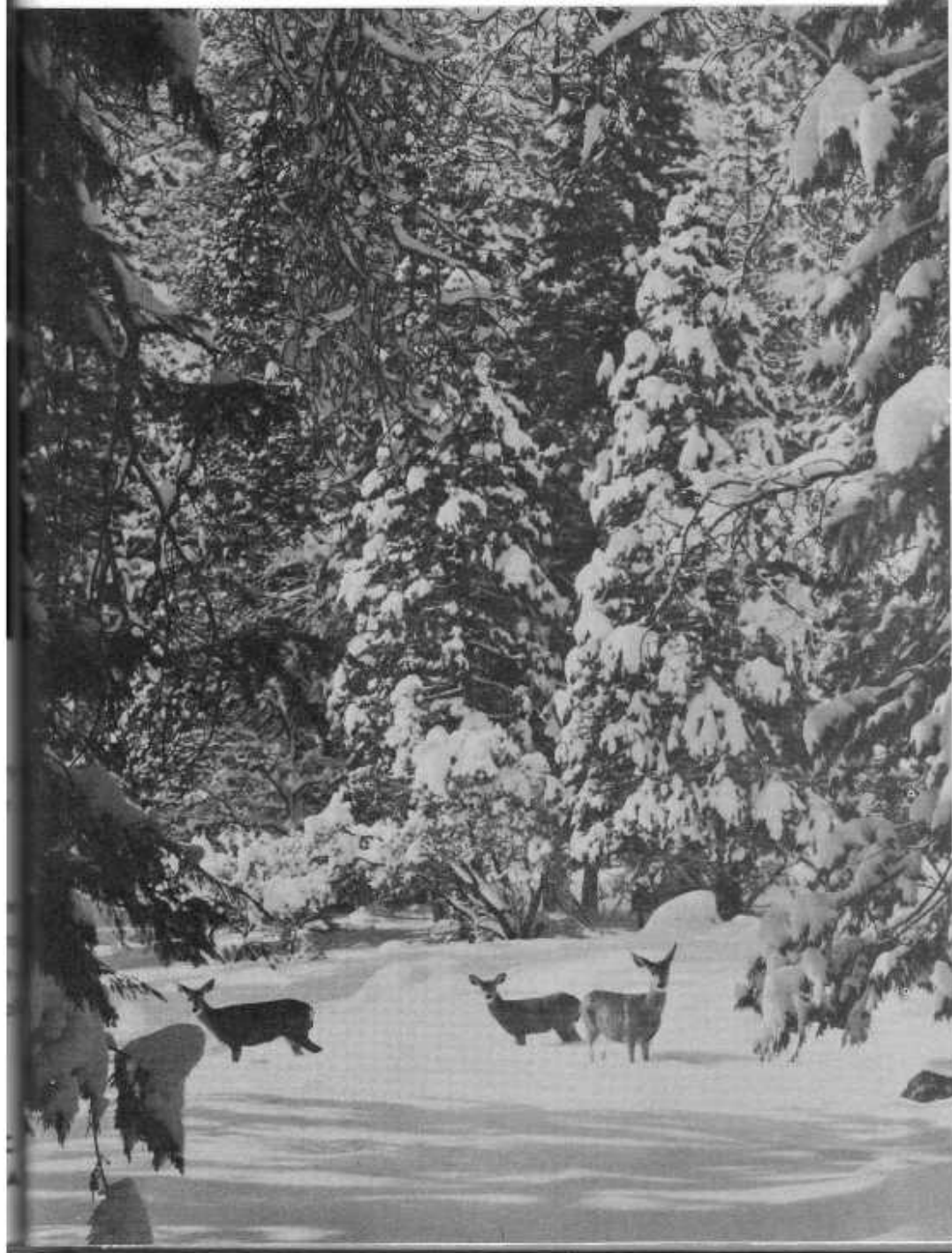


GOULD
& GORRE

YOSEMITE

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IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.

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DEER TRAILS IN THE MARIPOSA GROVE

Clare E. Britt

The Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, Yosemite National Park, is well known to those who love the forest. A summer spent in the area is not soon forgotten, one truly finds peace of mind in the cathedral-like atmosphere—and in all the immensity one is quick to realize how insignificant is man. But also, without a doubt, the little things mean a great deal — a snowplant thrusting its head through the brown crust of earth, a colony of beavers at Wawona; columbine growing from a scraggly, rocky point; a lizard pumping in the sun. And of course, the deer, the gentle, graceful deer.

Early in the season perhaps the deer wondered at we human folk going in and out of the lodge at Big Trees. All during the opening process they gaze timidly from their forest sanctuary, nibbling at the manzanita and the mountain lilac. The proud buck rears his head, and scents the breeze laden with manmade smells. Within a few days he is seen only at dusk — or if one is up and about

quite early in the morning there is promise of meeting him on the trail.

The does, inquisitive, venture closer, tempted by crackers or other food, and are fast to learn that salt is available on every table top. As the month of May wanes and June approaches, the deer feed upon the snowplant, the chinquapin and various undergrowth. The does are soon to grow nervous — indeed irritable and wary, even with their new made friends. One realizes there is a reason for this—and then comes the day when the doe steals into the shadowed forest alone — seeks a secluded spot, and awaits the birth of her young.

I shall never forget the first fawn of the year at Mariposa Grove. I chanced upon this new arrival, a bit early in the season, as I took a pre-breakfast hike from the Lodge to the Wawona Tree. The date was May 29, (most fawns arrive in June). He looked damp and rusty, so I was sure he had been born within the hour — in the little meadow across



"In seclusion — a small Bambi."

the road from the Lodge, and on the way to the Grove Museum. The meadow perhaps at one time had been a lake — but now the forest was creeping in — and it was filled with wild flowers. A little stream tinkled merrily by. I crawled upon a log to cross over and there, in the seclusion afforded by the tall grass, lay a miniature Bambi.

My first impulse was to pick up this frail creature, weighing no more, I am sure, than three or four pounds. I had never seen one so young before. On second thought I knew the mother had not abandoned it, but would certainly do so if I attempted to take over. So I left him there in the grass, where the sunlight flickered through and warmed his dappled coat, which looked so much like a piece of velvet. The next day I took the same path, and much to my surprise saw the new fawn, on slender legs, following his mother. Within the next two weeks I became somewhat distantly acquainted with nine new babies, including twin fawns, born within sight of the Grove Museum. To myself, I began to call this area "Little Deer Meadow," and as far as I know it does not have a more appropriate name.

At birth, fawns have a coat like

velvet or plush, almost bronze in color, flecked with irregular white spots. They gaze upon the intruder with innocent eyes, deep brown and wondering. Before many days, at the slightest hint of danger — the sound of a hastened footstep — they bound out of sight with the infinite grace known only to the very fleet of limb.

In a few weeks the fawn, grown taller and stronger, follows the mother across the meadows, over the weathered hills and through the deep forest. If the humans are not too noisy or quick in their movements, the family will come right into the yard which surrounds the lodge. There they walk daintily among the lupines, blue as Lake Tenaya; browse 'neath the azaleas and frolic on the forest floor which is carpeted with needles from white fir and pine. By July the fawn's coat is less tawny and the white spots are not to be seen — and he continues to grow slender and graceful as no human can ever hope to be. Throughout the summer the young one races through the forest, bounds up the wooded slopes — stops to drink at the clear and crystal streams. In September his coat is sleek and grayish brown and the doe that had been his mother claims him no longer. For sustenance

he must depend on himself—by now he has learned the woodland ways.

Soon the proud buck will return, perhaps rounding up a harem. He ranges over the hills, with head held high, the better to display his new set of antlers — which he has slowly and tortuously grown. The velvet he has rubbed against the sturdy trees; his antlers are hard as the stones beneath his hooves, polished bright as a harvest moon, and as sharp as a hunter's knife. He stands ready and willing to fight unto his death for the right to claim his mate.

Soon the winter will march over the sawtoothed range, leaving the ground hardened with frost and blanketed with snow. No longer can a deer survive, for the manzanita and the chinquapin, the snowplant and the lichen which grew so lush are covered and hidden—the boughs of the little firs and pines are weighted down — only the green of the Giant Sequoia, above its cinnamon bark, can be seen towering over the cold and white and solitary land. With knowledge inborn, our

summer friends have realized the branches, the sprouts, the acorns are not to be had, so have started the descent to the valley before winter moves in and traps them in a frozen land.

The fawn, now quite grown up follows his leader, knowing he cannot survive this new thing that has moved upon them. Come one more spring though, he will wear his winter's shaggy coat, there will be a wild playfulness in his heart. True, he will not be able to boast a handsome set of antlers, as does his sire—but he will be growing to full maturity—and he will seek the mountain tops — where the wind sings softly through the trees — and throughout the summer he will browse through all the woodland, as generations before have done.

For who can tell what one more fall, and one more spring can bring? He too may seek his mate, and work his way down to Wawona meadow, Chinquapin, Indian Creek, El Portal, Bridalveil — to the valley where food may be found.

"I became acquainted with Twin Fawns."



THE NOISIEST BIRD IN YOSEMITE

R. E. Woodard

Chances are the first bird the visitor to Yosemite National Park will hear, even if he does not see it, will be the Steller's jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis*). He is somewhat larger than a robin, measuring 12 to 13 inches in length, and the only western jay with a crest; in fact, the only blue bird of any sort with a crest found between the Pacific and the Rockies. His crest (which he often lowers in flight), head, breast and upper back are black; while his lower back, wings and tail are a deep, dark purplish-blue, the latter two being crossed with narrow black bars. It is difficult to distinguish the female from the male, although she tends to be smaller.

Our subspecies of the Steller's jay is a common resident in the coniferous forests along the humid Pacific coastal belt, and the inner mountain ranges of northern California. The lower limit of its range is where coniferous mountain forest gives way to foothill oaks; while the upper range extends to about 8,000 or 9,000 feet, or to the lower limit of the Hudsonian Life Zone.

The jay's voice is extremely varied including raucous calls and chatter that echo more or less continuously from early morning until dark throughout the floor of the valley. Then upon occasion, and seemingly completely out of character, you may hear a formless succession of liquid, pleasing notes emanating from a dense thicket. I don't know how many times I have been fooled into thinking I had discovered a new bird when it was only a jay.

Steller's jays are wonderful nest builders. Nesting occurs from mid April through early June depending on the altitude. One brood a year is raised, the female laying from 3 to 5 eggs that are greenish and speckled with olive-brown. During egg laying the male is very attentive to his mate, while both are kind to their children and good providers. The most frequently used nest site is a young conifer with the nest placed about 10 feet up, near the main trunk and supported by horizontal branches, although it may occur from 5 to 50 feet above the ground.

The nest begins with a structure of twigs, (usually black oak), each carefully selected and snapped from a tree or shrub, and seldom picked

The Noisy One.

—Hood, NPS



off the ground. Upon this platform is built a well-formed cup of softer material which includes weed stems, rootlets, string, grasses and pine needles which are crossed and re-crossed to make a porous interior lining. Walls are plastered with mud to hold them together. The finished nest is a large, bulky affair that completely hides the female except for the tip of her bill and tail. Incubation lasts about 16 days, the male assisting in these duties. After the broods leave the nest the full-grown young and their parents remain for a time in family parties, but with the onset of fall the parental and filial instincts wane and the individuals scatter rather uniformly throughout the forest.

Steller's jays eat about 75% vegetable and 25% animal matter, the latter consisting largely of insects, primarily wasps, bees and beetles. Vegetable matter includes fruits and acorns. The "blue-front" is criticized for the destruction of smaller bird's eggs, although it is felt by some ornithologists that he is blamed for more damage than that for which he is actually responsible.

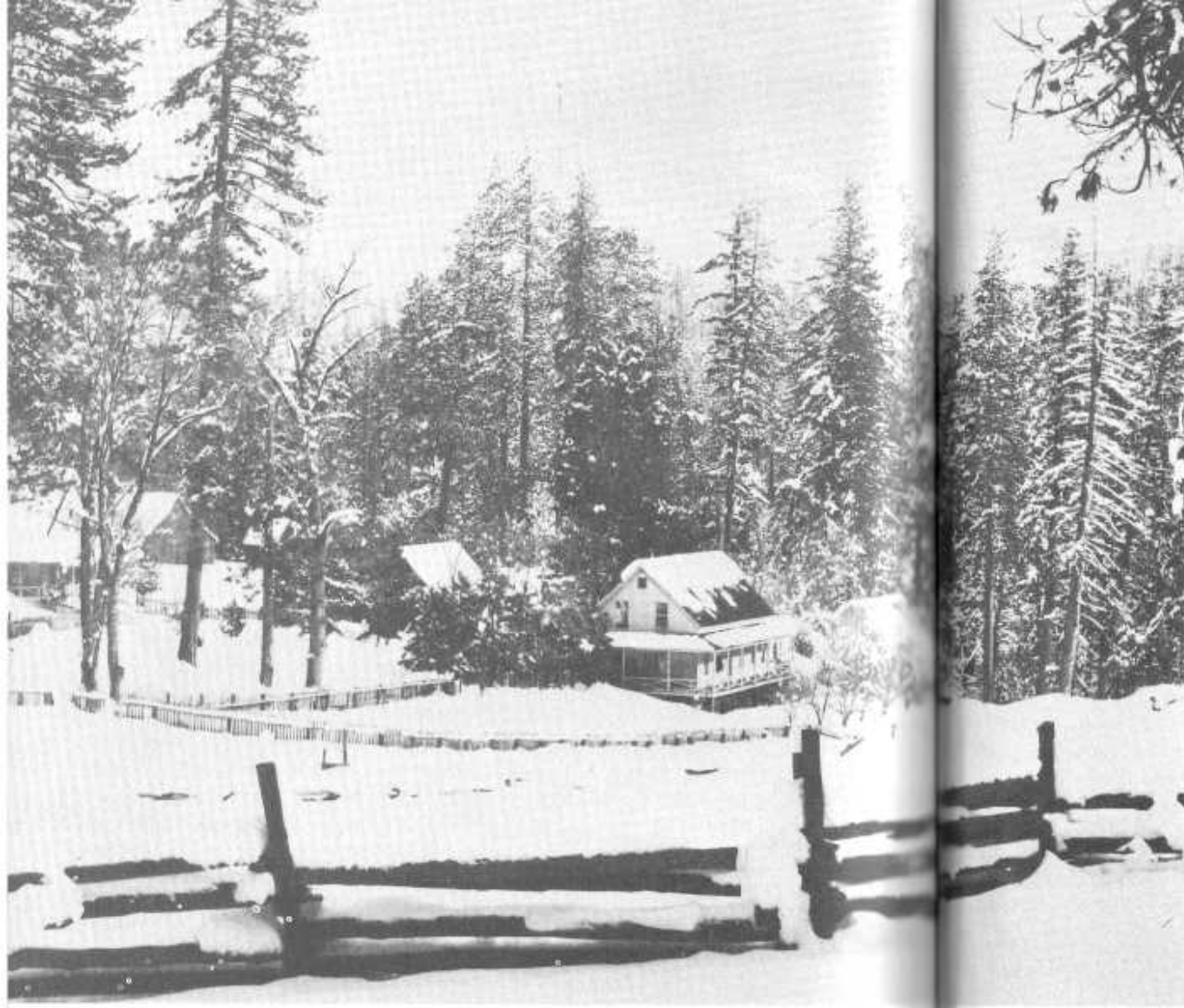
Although most common of our birds, Steller's jays have interesting modes of behavior. Even though they are non-flocking they will assemble very quickly about any object or sound that incites their curiosity, and thus act as an alarm-sounder for other birds and animals. On the other hand, there are two times when they are as silent as they are noisy; namely, when they are egg stealing

and at nesting time. Even the young jays instinctively remain quiet while in the nest.

One of the most pronounced habits is the "climbing" of some tall pine or fir, starting on one of the lower branches and hopping from branch to branch around the trunk as if climbing a spiral staircase. They often do this until they reach the summit, even traveling thru the forest this way, descending from the top of one tree to the lower branches of another.

In winter the "blue-fronts" desert to a large extent their summer haunts in the cool mountain forests and wander about the foothills and valleys, often visiting camps and ranches in search of food. At times they rob the California woodpecker, and some squirrels, of their stores of acorns, but have some difficulty in obtaining any appreciable amount from the former as woodpeckers wedge their acorns in such tight-fitting holes in trees that it usually takes a woodpecker bill to remove them. The Steller's jay does little damage economically, as any grain he may consume is loose or stray, and, generally speaking, he is too shy to visit the more cultivated districts to prey on fruit trees. On the other hand, he is of no particular value economically, as he feeds on very few of the harmful insects.

Nevertheless, in spite of a few bad habits, I think most people will agree that the Steller's jay is one of the more intelligent, interesting, and beautiful birds of Yosemite National Park.



Crocker's Station — February 9, 1901.

Celia Crocker Thompson

An early log cabin a dilapidated mansion, an Indian mound, fundamentally characteristic of the American scene may seem to the persons with an individual point of view, to stand in the way of progress. But actually such buildings may be an invaluable State or national asset, as real as a hundred square miles of forest and more completely irreplaceable when lost. Such structures provide us with a feeling of continuity in our development, as they recall to our minds our most valuable traditions, such as pioneer courage or the general social impulses of colonial days they give us faith in our ancestry, and they provide us with visual symbols to join in our minds our past and future development.

—ARNO B. CAMMERER, FORMER
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PASSING OF THE LANDMARKS

Mrs. May Crocker

Listening in on Thursday's Sentinel article, "Big Trees Saved," awakens a host of answering memories of this same locality: Familiar scenes of by-gone days when there was life and stir in the old place known as Crockers; when daily stages of the six-horse variety and carriages of all description, from the smartest turnout to the most cumbersome camp equipment and two-wheeled cart rolled into Crockers, bringing passengers from all over the world in varying degrees of the great and near-great, and in the humble walks of life.

One had to have keen powers of discernment to tell who was who in those days — as many times those who ranked highest in the realms of science, art and learning, or with an abundance of this world's goods, came in garb and appearance of the lowly—frequently walking with only a contrary little donkey bearing their camp burdens. A chance work or perhaps a name on the register might give us a hint that a celebrity had come and gone.

It was our pride that a member of the cabinet, several congressmen and governors had been our guests; that many writers of books had shared our table. We delighted to remember that S. Weir Mitchell, John Muir, Grove Carl Gilbert, Edward

Stuart White, Edwin Markham, George Wharton James and many other distinguished writers had broken bread with us. That a Keith, a Hill and a Robinson had been on our guest list and of the social world we have only to mention the famed Stuyvesant Fishes and Harry Lehrs. All this might seem of passing interest in the valleys — but on the mountain tops it was most truly surprising to the pines.

When the busy day's work was done it was a delight to wander to the campground and share the evening's entertainment with our camper guests. There was always music —sometimes the violin and the banjo —and once an entire band, "The Columbia Boys," surprised our sedate old pines with many exquisite selections. There was always someone gifted in recitations and amateur performances making the woods ring with mirth. There were sabbaths when the voice of the preacher was heard proclaiming from the Holy Writ, and sacred songs ascended from the campground. Once a beloved son was brought in his last sleep to this campground, having been suddenly over-taken in the higher Sierra. It is pleasant to remember that guests from the house gathered many floral offerings to spread upon his improvised bier.

(This story came to light recently and seemed appropriate for publication. It was written in 1926 by May Crocker who, with her husband Henry R. Crocker, operated Crocker's stage station on the Big Oak Flat Road from 1880 to 1910. None of the many buildings remain though the careful observer may locate the site of the once quite busy stage coach stop. Celia Crocker Thompson has donated much of the family memorabilia to the Yosemite Museum. Photos on pages 261 and 264 are from old plate glass negatives a part of the Crocker collection. —Editor)

All periods of these mountain districts have been distinctly interesting from the unbroken and untravelled wilds, down to the first dawning of tourist-travel to the newly discovered Yosemite, wherein James G. Hutchings was the outstanding character, on down to the period when surveys made possible the purchase of timber tracts; to the period when Yosemite and surroundings became a national park and was under the surveillance of soldiery, to the transsumit Tioga road-building, which gave to the world the most complete scenic highway in existence.

With due respect to the possible convenience of the all-year highway following the Merced river into the Yosemite valley, I have to say after many years' experience, to gain the best scenic effects, one must climb the mountains; one's way must lead to the heights over the mountain tops where nature's best is gradually unfolding its grandeur of forests, crags and mountain streams.

It would be saddening indeed that the substantially built houses of Crockers are going to decay — only that it is the inevitable end of all



John Muir and Theodore P. Lukens visit Crockers August 12, 1895.

structures, but the living trees surrounding them are still there in all their glory, undismayed by the changes all about them, and it is the hope of their onetime owner that they may be spared, a blessing to many generations to come.

W. H. and Celio Crocker Thompson leaving on their wedding trip—December 9, 1903.



EL CAPITAN HIKE

Woodrow W. Smith, Ranger-Naturalist

When Yosemite Falls go on vacation early in August and the zig-zags of the upper fall trail are blistering hot and dusty, it's time to seek an alternate route to the north rim view. Not that the energetic hikers wanting more than a short valley walk are "cream puffs" or lazy, but there is a genus of valley visitor that is attracted by the unusual and interesting secondary trail to little known vistas — and there are naturalists who find it an enriching experience to lead the "explorers" along a seldom-traveled route to the top of El Capitan.

Two dozen adventurers were willing to pay the price by driving twenty-five miles to Tamarack Flat, arriving at the starting point of our hike by 8:30 on a warm Wednesday morning. Setting out on the trail 3 miles south of the campground, where it crosses the road coming up from the former Gentry station, we moved through a splendid stand of sugar pine and up through cedar, black oak, and Ponderosa pine taking care to watch for indications of change from the yellow pine of the transition life zone to the Jeffrey variety, pungent with vanilla odor seeming to ooze from the deeply fissured bark.

Our group was evenly balanced with teeners and adults, and since all had been warned in advance to expect a fairly strenuous walk of over 5 miles to our destination—probably dry and warm most of the way—most of the hikers were prepared with canteens and an abundance of mouth-moistening life-savers.

The forest thinned to occasional

pine and an abundance of green leaf manzanita as we reached the sandy and rocky ridge traveling east. So that each member of the group would have a first-hand chance to chat with the ranger-naturalist as we hiked along, we numbered off and rotated several from front to back each time we took a rest break. It was understood that during the climb if any member of the party felt the need of a breather, he could call out "break" and the group would halt briefly at the nearest shady spot. At such time the naturalist took the opportunity to talk to the group about the evidence of life zone indicators, explain surrounding features, lead into discussions of conservation values, history of the area, — just whatever would come to the surface from ant lions to lightning fires. Nuthatches, flickers, red-tailed hawks, flycatchers, Sierra grouse, and sapsuckers—some seen and others heard — were noted during these quiet rest stops. One might assume that our free-for-all method of taking breaks would result in too slow progress for an eleven mile round trip, but no more than a half dozen were called, and these seemed adequate for our needs.

We descended from the ridge, dropped down into a meadow, passed through flower gardens of senecio, common monkey flower, scarlet mimulus, corn lily, columbine, white yarrow, paint brush, and we didn't realize until we passed on around a bend and down into a second glade that we had already reached Ribbon Creek.

We moved on with our goal in

reach — lunch on El Capitan. Sooner than expected we rounded a turn and beheld the canyon rim a few hundred yards to the south. Triumph was apparent in the faces and voices down the line as we hurried to obtain breathtaking views out and down to the valley below, the winding river, the old Big Oak Flat road through part of the talus slope still recognizable where avalanches had not obliterated it, the distant tunnel entrance to the west, with gnat-sized cars appearing at intervals from its mouth, and to the east, the fissured defile separating us from the massive monolith that was our objective. It didn't take long to skirt the narrow canyon and follow the path fringing the western approach to the famous cliff. Along the slope were several junipers and clinging to cracks in the decomposing granite were colonies of stonecrop with companion patches of pussy paws and mouse tails in the loose gravel beside the trail. Ascending to the dome, the highest prominence, we found a tipped-over snag upset by the strong winds of winter. Attached to it was a register for all to sign; few had come this way apparently since only a dozen names had been written in the book for this season. It was high noon, a welcome lunch time in the shade of a half dozen pines, and an unsurpassed vista on all sides to enjoy as we relaxed. While most of the group rested, several others descended with the naturalist to see what closer view of the valley could be obtained from the edge of the precipice. The distance was deceiving; the gradient of the slope grew steeper to the point that after a half-mile of climbing down to reach the edge, it became obvious that there was no opportunity to view the cliff face from above. El Capitan over-



El Capitan.

—Anderson, NPS

hangs most of its upper third, and without ropes it was unsafe to approach the drop-off for a vertical view. We returned to the top where we could look out and over Half Dome to the high Sierra panorama to the east. Mt. Conness, Vogelsang, McClure, Florence, Rodgers, Electra, and Forrester were identifiable peaks on the horizon. Eagle Peak hid the rim area of Yosemite Falls. The castle crags of Mt. Hoffman were clearly defined to the northeast. Afternoon showers the day preceding had left the atmosphere sharp for camera enthusiasts.

At one o'clock we retraced our steps with the cool waters of Ribbon Creep uppermost as our first rest-break objective. Our group moved with few pauses, already displaying that confidence that comes from real-

izing that all hiking tests promised by the naturalist at the beginning were to be passed with ease. Just as the ascent from the meadows to the ridge was begun a surprise stop was called; all members were invited to gather close in a semi-circle behind the naturalist. One after another exclaimed in delight as they looked down to see at the feet of the naturalist alongside the trail and a few yards from the stream a very young spotted fawn lying curled in the grass, ears flattened, scarcely breathing, but eyes wide open watching our every movement. As the minutes passed and we talked about the natural camouflage, the protective coloring and scentlessness, the fawn maintained its motionless vigil. We moved away quietly, but with some misgiving considering that there was questionable security in the choice of a hide-out so close to the trail. What if a

mountain lion or bear should happen along our path? That's the chance in nature, and what the odds were in favor or against the deer we could only guess. With one mountain lion per 100 square miles estimated, and with most of the bear gravitation toward valley campground dinner scraps, there was little danger.

We sallied back down the ridge, the zig-zags, and through the sugar pines in good time. It was 3:45 p.m. when we reached our cars, and if there were complaints of blisters or fatigue, they were unspoken; sore muscles were to be noticed the following day, of course. These are the battle ribbons worn proudly, though, since now the veteran hikers could fashion colorful superlatives to describe their high point adventure to their valley-bound friends — an adventure to be remembered the rest of their lives as "that time we climbed to the top of El Capitan."

A CONSERVATION QUOTE

No Nation ever had a larger or more valuable heritage in transcendently inspiring natural scenery than the United States of America. In the colonial era and the early days of the Republic beautiful scenery, like standing forests, seemed a drug on the market. No matter how much was exploited for commercial purposes, it was thought there would always be plenty left. We can be thankful today for those early conservationists who made possible Yellowstone National Park and consequently all the others in the system. Horace M. Albright, former Director, National Park Service.

A ONE PICTURE STORY



CHRISTMAS
at the
OLD SENTINEL HOTEL



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Dan Anderson