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A White-headed Woodpecker Gets Experience Early in Life

By NATASHA SMITH
Field School 1932

On the river bank near El Capitan meadows is a venerable old oak. The main trunk is dead and drilled by many a woodpecker. A side limb still lives and grows. Some of its branches spread about the dead trunk, casting quaint leaf patterns on the old barkless wood and offering shade and a perching place for the birds that nest in the woodpecker holes.

Every summer that I have investigated, there has been a nest in this old tree. In the summer of 1930 there were two at the same time. A violet-green swallow and young were established in the top-most hole overlooking the river. Lower down and looking out on El Capitan was a white-headed woodpecker's home. Both mothers were busy feeding their babies. And both sets of youngsters were old enough to poke their heads out of their respective nests, on the morning I sat down to watch.

I soon noticed that a precocious young woodpecker with a large scarlet dot on his head managed to dominate the woodpecker hole. He

ate most of the food and made most of the noise. Once when his mother was longer than usual returning with food, he climbed right out and started hitching himself up the trunk in true woodpecker fashion. All would have been well if he had not circled as he climbed. This resulted in his coming up under the swallow's nest. One of the old swallows returning with food was furious, flew at the defenseless little fellow, pecked him, and soon knocked him to the ground below. There he screeched for his mother like any lost baby. Then she came and coaxed him off to a yellow pine some 50 feet away, where he climbed with renewed joy. His mother demonstrated and soon he, too, was looking in cracks and crannies for dainty eatables.

When he was well up on the tree and while his mother was away he suddenly decided to try his wings. Off he flew in fine style, that is, at least for the first 100 feet or so. In his ignorance he had chosen the open river side. There was no near tree to alight on. After the first

joy of flying he began to tire. Slowly he lost altitude and then with a small splash he landed in the river. After a few futile struggles he became quiet. Hastily I removed my shoes and waded in, yanked him out, held him up by the feet while the water drained, and rolled him in a handkerchief. There he lay shivering, a very sorry-looking youngster compared to the cocky one that started up the tree trunk a few minutes before. When he was as dry as I could get him, I climbed up the tree and stuffed him in his home hole.

I like to think he lived and grew up to be one of the finest of the woodpecker clan and that he was a wiser and better bird for his early experiences. At any rate, when I

returned some five days later both families were gone. To my joy



there was no trace of a dead woodpecker in the lower nest.

Rare Picture Writing Found in Yosemite

By STEPHEN TRIPP

Recent road-building operations bring to light traces of early Indian culture now long forgotten by present-day Yosemite. Tom Roach, engineer, while following along Bridal Veil Creek in search of a rock "hollow," discovered a large boulder on which were early picture writings. One of the local Indians, Chief Lemee (Meaning shimmering water) and the writer visited this location September 24, 1933.

One hundred yards downstream from where the new Glacier Point Road crosses Bridal Veil Creek, lay much in the line of artifacts that one could identify with an early Indian village. Scattered over the sandy loam were abundance of obsidian chips broken off in the process of making arrow points. At the lower west edge of the village site, near the creek, were three large granite boulders

on which were located some 22 mortar holes used for pounding acorns and other foods of early Indian diet. Many cooking stones strewn about on the ground nearby indicated the location of their "o mu-choos" (houses) and cooking places.

A little over one hundred yards below the village stood a large rock about 15 feet high and 12 feet across. Near the right-hand side of the boulder 4 feet or so above the ground, were two odd-looking circles about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, in the center of which were dots $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Directly under them was a large oblong circle about $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by 7 inches wide enclosing 15 lines some five inches long and broken in the center. The coloring matter used was a red pigment, and from the shape and thickness of the lines it may

have been put on by the finger. By carefully looking over the rock three or four other such figures could be outlined.

We sat for some time trying to reason out the meaning for this "writing," or what may have prompted it. As we studied the figures in the light of ancient mythology the crude pictures gradually took the form of faces. The rough circles with the dots in the centers were the "eyes," the large oblong circle with the divided lines represented the "mouth" and "teeth." Study of the shape of the rock on which the paintings are located brought out the profile of a skull.

Could it be the outcropping of the mythological "wild giant" who was supposed to do away with all Indians he found? Had he turned into stone, there to remain forever? The resemblance to a skull probably is the reason this rock was chosen. All early tribes had strong beliefs in the "Great Spirit of Coyote Man," and perhaps, thinking this an evidence of his work, had offered some tribute to it. Most acts of this type were the work of the Shaman (medicine man). He had more time to wonder and more time to think up tales that would substantiate his mystic dances and panaceas. Should some other Shaman pass the rock and notice the writings and the "face," it would be his duty to likewise pay tribute, which may have been the cause for all of these forms' being so nearly alike. Just what pigments they used to make their marks is not definitely known. This rusty red color may have been brought over by the Monos from their "Red Mountain," the coloring being used on their faces during ceremonial dances.

On returning to the valley and talking with some of the old-time Indians, no memory was clear enough to recall any such writings by Yosemite Indians. Just how far back these writings go and what tribes may have put them there is impossible to state. Their age and makers will probably ever remain a mystery.

The rarity of these "paintings" is well known throughout California. According to Kroeber in his "Handbook of the Indians of California": "About 50 sites with carved or painted rocks have become known in California. These range from boulders bearing a few scratches to walls of caves or overhanging cliffs covered with long assemblage of red, yellow, black and white. Practically all of these drawings were in the Shoshonean District."

THAT IMP!
THE BLUE-FRONTED JAY
 By JOE BURGESS
 Ranger Naturalist

To me, the jay is not a vicious bird, but one full of mischief; full of the joy of being alive; at least different in his habits from most birds and often doing the unexpected. I usually renew my acquaintance around the end of June, when I find jays peaceably feeding on my bird table in company with grosbeaks, tanagers and an occasional nuthatch. Not so the Western robin for he would have the entire tray to himself and be constantly quarreling with other birds.

Full of mischief is the blue-fronted jay. Carrying away a baby golden-mantled ground squirrel and depositing him at our camp was one of his deeds while we were stationed at the Mariposa Grove of

Big Trees. We adopted the squirrel, named him Micky, and with the aid of a medicine dropper from which he learned to drink cocomalt, we were able to raise him. But back to jays.

Who, of nature lovers, has not enjoyed watching jays as they hop from branch to branch as though full of tempered springs? Who has not listened attentively while, a few feet above one's head, a jay sings a song, in a small far-away voice, as sweetly as any canary and with just as full a repertoire?

Different he certainly is as he buries an acorn and in the way he eats. Holding the food on a branch with his feet and using his entire body he just hammers away with his bill until the hardest crust is broken and contents devoured.



As for the unexpected, one day I watched him fly from one car to another, clinging to the radiators while he got his lunch from the bugs embedded thereon.

So here's to the blue-fronted jay. With all of his noise and impudence, I like him.

He, at least, has the courage to be different.

MUSEUM LIBRARY NEEDS MATERIAL

By ANN HUNT,
1933 Field School

Under the CWA appropriation for museum activities, we have been able to obtain a cataloguer for a limited period. She is engaged in organizing and cataloging the museum's large collection of pamphlet and monograph material as well as books.

In making the subject index for the former class of scientific matter, much comes to light that is not particularly valuable to this library. We should, therefore, be glad to make exchanges with other institutions, or to receive donations of any kind of publication or exhibit which, by nature, belongs in such a collection as ours.

The emphasis is being placed upon Yosemiteana of all kinds, especially upon early publications regarding the history of Yosemite Valley and Central California. We have some duplicate numbers of such magazines as "Nature," "The Condor," "Hutchings' Magazine" and would be happy to co-operate with anyone who has such periodicals for exchange or donation.

Please address communications to the Park Naturalist's Office.

FROM FIELD NOTES

Fine sunny weather during our supposed winter season has had its effect on bird life as is witnessed by the observation of a flock of 20 or more Western robins near the Ranger Club on January 10, 1934. Even during severe winter an occasional robin or two may stay during the period but a large group such as this one is quite uncommon—M. E. Beatty.



Pioneer Shrines in Yosemite

By GRACE NICHOLS
Field School, 1933

(Editor's Note: Below appears the second article in a series dealing with early-day personalities of Yosemite. The first appeared last month in Yosemite Nature Notes. The concluding article will appear one month hence.)

Hutchings House survives in the present Cedar Cottage, situated in the Old Village opposite Sentinel Bridge. This building, which is the oldest existing structure in Yosemite National Park, is celebrated today for its so-called "big tree room," which is unique in structure in that it is erected around a huge incense cedar whose crown towers high above the cottage roof.

The majestic bole of the tree occupies a central location in the room in which many famous guests have been entertained. Before its hospitable hearth sat Horace Greeley. Here also came James A. Garfield, later to be a martyr President; Ralph Waldo Emerson, Prof. J. D. Whitney, in honor of whom Mt. Whitney was named, the Duke of Sutherland, the two famous landscape artists, William Keith and Thomas Moran—the list of those who enjoyed the Big Tree Room's hospitality includes the leaders of the world in their times. In later years there have been two Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Taft, and one king, Albert of Bel-

gium, accompanied by his queen and their son, the Duke of Brabant, who came to see this unique place.

Long before there was even a wagon road into Yosemite, Cedar Cottage was begun by Buck Beardsley and G. Hite, pioneer hotel keepers. The lumber was hewed and whipsawed from virgin timber, and all the hardware had to be packed in by mules. The building was commenced in 1857, but progress was so slow that it was not ready for occupancy until May, 1859, and then, as the foregoing description given by Hutchings indicates, it was a mere shell. The Big Tree room itself came into existence about 1866, serving as the sitting room of the famous Hutchings House. The Incense cedar is close to 175 feet in height and is nine feet in diameter at the base.

3. JAMES C. LAMON

JAMES C. LAMON, a Virginian by birth, who had spent his early years adventuring in Illinois, Texas and the Calaveras and Mariposa gold fields of California, took up a pre-emption claim in the upper end of the valley in the fall of 1839 erecting a cabin and planting a garden and an orchard of pear, peach and apple trees opposite Half Dome. Later he built a second cabin for the winter use beneath the Royal Arches, and, Hutchings

adds in his account, "lived in its basement as a precaution against Indian treachery." The first permanent resident in the valley, Lamon made his home here until the day of his death in the autumn of 1876. His cabin has long since fallen into ruin, but a part of his orchard may still be seen in the meadow near Camp Curry.

Apple trees seem endued with more of the true pioneer spirit than any of our other cultivated trees. Wherever one wanders through the wilderness of the West one finds these old trees singly or in groups, marking the site of some homestead now vanished. Inexpressibly gnarled and twisted, with trunks riddled by woodpeckers they still hold out their leafy, blossom-laden branches to the spring sunshine, and shower their autumn largess of fruit upon the eager wood folk. And so, although the other fruit trees which composed the orchard are for the most part gone, James Lamon's apple trees still flourish. Seen in the height of the summer tourist season when the orchard becomes an auxiliary parking area for Camp Curry, the trees appear as archaic survivals of a more leisurely, gracious age long since departed; but in blossom time in mid-April when the fragrant pink petals drift down like spring snow-flakes, or in late September when the harvest moon floods the valley with molten silver, they come again into their own. Then one may wander among them and see in fancy the Yosemite as James Lamon saw it from his cabin door more than a half century ago.

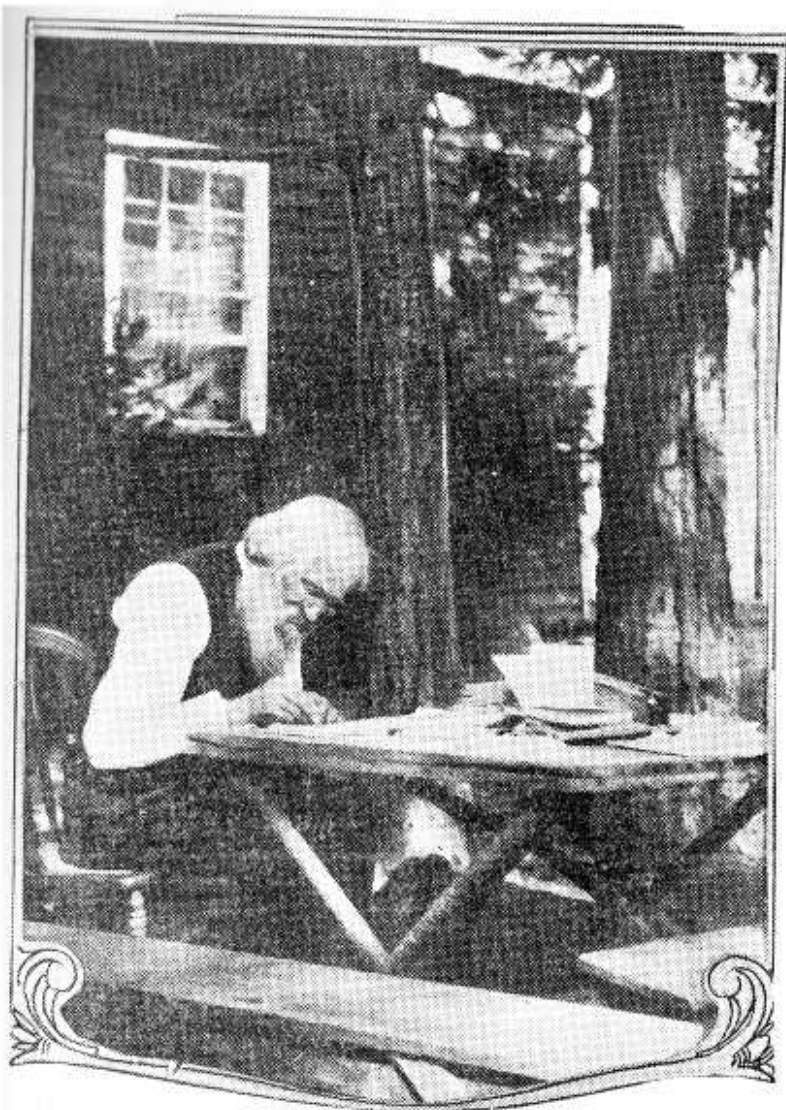
4. GALEN CLARK

For 14 years after Yosemite valley and the Mariposa Grove were

declared a State park in 1864, Galen Clark held the position of guardian of the park, being elected again and again to this office by the board of commissioners because of his efficiency and his deep love for the valley and of the Sequoias. John Muir says of him "Mr. Clark was truly and literally a gentleman. . . . He was the best mountaineer I ever met, and one of the kindest and most amiable of all my mountain friends. . . . His kindness to all Yosemite visitors and mountaineers was marvelously constant and uniform. From his hospitable and well-supplied cabin no weary wanderer ever went away hungry or unrested." And J. M. Hutchings in his book "In the Heart of the Sierras," advises visitors to the effect that "Galen Clark will be found intelligent, obliging and efficient in everything he undertakes."

Although not the first to see the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, Clark was the first to explore it after he had heard from a prospector that "there were some wonderful big trees up there on top of Wawona Hill." Clark thoroughly explored the grove, counting the trees and taking the measurements of the largest among them. He also explored the forest to the southward and discovered the much larger Fresno Grove, a portion of which, unfortunately, was subsequently cut for lumber.

For a number of years after he gave up the position of guardian of the park, he used to take visitors through the Valley in his wagon. This vehicle was the first to be brought into the Valley, having been taken apart and packed in on mules in the days before there were roads into the park. This wagon is now preserved in the Yosemite Mu-



GALEN CLARK
When Guardian of Yosemite

seum. When the wagon arrived, it was necessary for Clark to construct a road upon the Valley floor in order that visitors might be transported to points of interest. During the intervening years, new roads have been constructed and the old ones rerouted, but a fragment of this first road is preserved between the Incense cedars near the bear pits. These were known as "The Golden Gate," and the historic old roadway ran between them.

Coming to the Sierra originally for his health, Galen Clark lived for many years in a cabin at Clark's Station, now known as Wawona, later moving into the Valley and erecting a house in the meadow below the Old Village where the remainder of his life was spent. As an ardent lover of trees, he brought a number of seedling Sequoias from Mariposa Grove some 20 years before his death. Some of these he planted in what are now the Awahnee Hotel grounds, and the remaining 12 were planted around the little plot in the Yosemite cemetery which he had chosen for his final resting place. The soil was dry and gravelly, but by means of frequent watering and much care a number of the seedlings were nourished into sturdy young Sequoias, five of which now shade his grave—as dignified and impressive a memorial as one might hope to have.

Death held no terrors for him. Having enjoyed a long and useful life, he went to his rest as simply and fearlessly as did the patriarchs of old, leaving behind him a fine tradition of generous hospitality and gracious and unflinching courtesy in all his dealings with the public, as a heritage to those who should come after him as guardians of the Valley.

(Concluded Next Month)

FEEDING RATTLESNAKES

By RANGER-NATURALIST
CRAIG THOMAS

It has been often asserted that rattlesnakes rarely eat in captivity. But at the Yosemite Museum we have two that eat without hesitation. Gophers, mice and small ground squirrels form the major portion of their diet while members of the live snake exhibit. It is of unusual interest to watch a rattlesnake kill and swallow its prey.

Our rattlesnakes show an immediate interest in the "main course" as soon as it is put in; striking quickly. It is often merely a matter of seconds before the animal falls in a coma. The snake waits a moment or two and then moves slowly up to the victim, carefully testing with its sensitive tongue as it goes. It decides which is the head of its prey, and then proceeds to swallow the animal.

The bones in a snake's jaws are connected, not solidly as in most animals, but with elastic ligaments like little rubber bands, and the skin is quite elastic, so that a snake with a small head can yet swallow an object two or three times its size. The two sides of the lower jaw move independently of each other and the fangs in the upper jaw act as little independent claws to pull the food in. In other words, a snake literally crawls around its food. Starting at the head, the front legs provide the most trouble, but once they are well on their way, the rest is plain sailing. Rattlesnakes have been known to live for over a year without eating, yet one of our snakes ate a mouse and a gopher one morning, a gopher two days later and was still hungry. "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," seems to be their motto.



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Dan Anderson