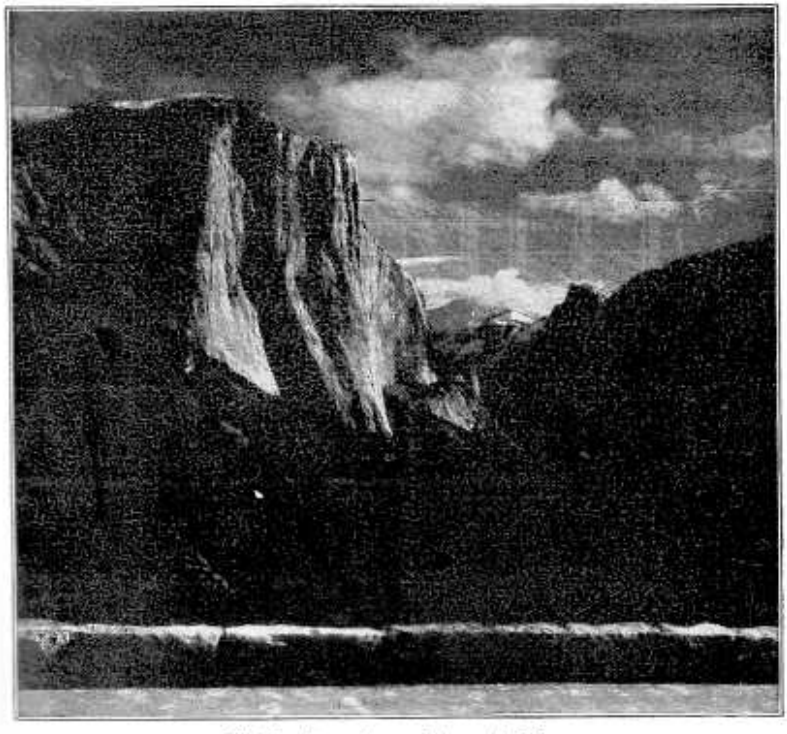
YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



El Capitan from Tunnel View

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Yosemite Nature Notes

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The Story of Campgrounds in Yosemite Valley

By Gabriel Sovulewski Retired Park Supervisor

Many difficult questions are frequently asked by park visitors concerning the automobile camp numbering system in Yosemite. I understand that many of our permanent employees are unacquainted with the historical facts concerning this question. Upon the request of Park Naturalist Harwell and Chief Clerk Sprinkel, I have consented to write a brief history of the development of public camps in Yosemite Valley.

Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees were granted to the State of California by the Act of Congress of June 30, 1864, for the use and recreation of the public. In 1890 Congress created three National Parks in California—Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant National Parks—and the creating Act authorized the use of Army troops, detailed for duty under the Secretary of the Interior, to administer the new National Park areas. The first Army headquarters was necessarily established at Camp A. E. Wood at Wawona since Yosemite Valley was the property of the State of California and state officials made it quite clear at that time that they did not want Army troops permanently situated in Yosemite Valley. In fact, when Army patrols came to Yosemite Valley from Wawona they were forbidden to camp further up the valley than Bridalveil Meadows and the movement of troops in the valley, even when off duty, was quite restrictive.

From 1890 until 1905, the State of California continued to administer Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, both then situated within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park. In 1905 the California legislature voted to recede the Valley and the Big Tree

Grove to the United States. The administration of Yosemite Valley was taken over by the department of the Interior in 1906 when Army Headquarters was moved from Wawona to Yosemite Valley, being set up where the present Yosemite Lodge is located. Facilities were built to accomodate two troops of cavalry, hospital, officers' quarters, etc., involving all the ground west of the Yosemite Creek Bridge and as far as Rocky Point, including Leidig Meadows.

I was employed by the Quartermasters' Department under General Funston and Colonel Clem in San Francisco during the earthquake and fire when Colonel H. C. Benson called me for duty in Yosemite Valley as Park Supervisor. I reported for duty in Yosemite on August 12, 1906. As Park Supervisor Colonel Benson held me responsible for a great many of the details of park administration affecting park visitors and in those early days many problems needed attention. As was always the case with army officers, sanitation took precedence over all other problems. There were no sanitary nor toilet facilities of any kind in any of the camp grounds below the Old Village and on that account camping in camp grounds numbered 1 to 5 was discouraged and by degrees these camps, all located west of the present developed area, were entirely abandoned, but not without many complaints and ill feeling. A great many visitors, not too sympathetic with Army administration, came to headquarters and complained that "I camped there for many years before the Army ever came here, and I want to continue to camp there". But in those days the administrative officers paid no

Gabriel Sovulewski

attention to the desires of park visitors when sanitation was involved.

Colonel H. C. Benson was detached from Yosemite in October, 1908, in order to relieve General S. B. M. Young in Yellowstone National Park. I was left in charge of the

park and all of the Army property with the title of "Custodian". In May, 1909, Colonel William W. Forsyth, who was transferred from the Philippine Islands, took command. The matter of numbering the camps in the Valley was brought to Colonel Forsyth's attention and, after discussing the problem for some time, I was instrumental in convincing him to leave the old numbers and go on with new numbers to avoid confusing many yearly visitors who were acquainted with the various camping areas by number. I believed at that time that the old numbers 1 to 5 were so well associated with definite locations that to use these same numbers for new locations would be very confusing.

The location of the original camps, by number, were as follows. As stated above, soon after 1906 when the valley was administered by the Army, Camp Nos. 1 to 5 were abandoned for sanitary reasons:

Camp No. 1: El Capitan Meadows. It is to be noted that a meadow was a requisite to early camps for pasturing horses and mules.

Camp No. 2: Bridalveil Meadows. This camp was used almost exclusively by army troops whenever they were in Yosemite Valley between the years 1890 and 1906, when it was abandoned.

Camp No. 3: Located west of the Old Village on the south side of the Merced River in the trees at the west end of the meadow near the Galen Clark house.

Camp No. 4: Leidig Meadows, including a portion of the present Yosemite Lodge grounds. This camp was retired from public use upon the establishment of Army Headquarters in Yosemite Valley in 1906.

Camp No. 5: Located east of the Yosemite Creek Bridge, extending as far as the apple orchard and the Hutchings Cabin, including the area later occupied by the Park Supervisor's home, built in 1910, being the first residence built in Yosemite Valley by the Department of the Interior.

Camp No. 6: This is a very old site and has remained without change.

Camp No. 7: This is also in the original location with the exception that it was divided in the middle by a new road creating two separate camps and No. 15, the next unused number was assigned to the east portion.

Camp No. 8: This was located above Royal Arch Creek and, with the exception of a small portion, included the present Ahwahnee Hotel grounds. The erection of the Ahwahnee Hotel and the setting aside of this area as the Ahwahnee grounds in 1926 naturally retired Camp No. 8.

Camp No. 9: This is an old site located on Tenaya Creek adjacent to and including Royal Arch Meadows. This camp is still in use, now

known as the "Organization Camp".

Camp No. 10: Was located near Iron Springs on Tenaya Creek, south of the Old Mirror Lake Road. This area offered limited space and as the demand for space in this area grew, camping was discouraged except on special request. Professor Joe Le Conte used to love this particular spot and camped there for years with his family. This camp was abandoned with the change of the road alignment to Mirror Lake, under the administration of former Superintendent W. B. Lewis.

Camp No. 11: Was originally intended to include the area now occupied by the Company stables extending eastward from the stables but this area was never released as a public camp ground and number 11 was assigned to its present site south of Camp 14 on the road to Happy Isles.

Camp No. 12: Is located where it was originally intended, across the river from Camp 14.

Camp No. 13: This camp never existed for superstitious reasons. It was felt by many that to live in a camp with this number would be sure to end disastrously— a tree would fall on you at night or you might run into serious difficulties with a bear. Hence we come to Camp No. 14, which is in its original location.

Camp No. 15: This has already been discussed. It is one half of the original Camp No. 7.

Camp No. 16: This was originally open to auto camping, but at present has been reserved for visitors desiring rental equipment and housekeeping facilities.

Camp No. 17: This camp, known at one time as "Camp Tecoya" is now utilized for permanent residences of employees of the Yosemite Park and Curry Company.

Camp No. 18: Is now occupied by the Post Office and photographic studios.

Camp No. 20: Is now occupied by the Church Bowl.

These three camps, i.e. 17, 18, and 20, have given way to modern development in the New Village area, which took place in 1918.

Camp No. 19: This camp, formerly a public campground, is now used by Government employees only, located about 600 feet southwest of Sentinel Bridge. About 1912 we discovered that we could not mix employees with park visitors in the camp grounds and a gradual segregation took place until all empoyees were competely isolated. forbidding them camping space in the regular public campgrounds.

The foregoing data has been written purely from memory. It is possible, of course, relying entirely upon memory, that I have made some mistakes in the above statements. If anyone can correct any part of this article, I would welcome the information.

YOSEMITE TREES

Age of the Fir Trees at Glacier Point

By Ranger Naturalist Elmer L. Lucas

Visitors to the Glacier Point camp ground have repeatedly asked the question—"How old are the larger fir trees?" This question prompted an attempt to determine at least approximately the age of the average tree according to its size. Fortunately, for my purpose, there were a number of large firs in the area where trees were felled in recent years by sawing.

Everyone is familiar with the ring-shaped markings on the surface of the cross section. Applying the term "annual rings" to them requires some limitation. However, for all practical purposes a ring includes the wood production of one year and the age of the tree may be determined by counting the annual rings.

A total of twelve stumps including White Firs and six Red Firs were chosen that possessed clearly defined rings. The cross sections varied from two to five feet in diameter. The most striking feature observed in making the ring count was the irregularities in ring breadth, the rings being wider usually near the center of the trunk. Other noticeable variations were probably due to changing climates, defoliation of the crown by insect attack years of plentiful seed production, a more isolated position or a response to action of gravity and mechanical forces. Eccentric diameter growth was also characteristic of the cross sections studied.

The ring count of the Red Firs varied from 241 years with a diameter of two and one-half feet to 289 years with a diameter of five feet. The variation of the White Firs was from 186 years with an average diameter of four and one-half feet. The average ring count of the White firs was 246 years with an average diameter of three and two-thirds feet. The Red Firs with an average radius of two and one-half feet

average 117 rings for each foot of growth and the White Firs with an average radius of one and eighty-five hundredths feet average 134 rings per foot of growth.

The greater the number of cross sections studied, the more accurate the conclusion, but the lack of a greater number of stumps limits this brief study. The following conclusion is tentative and is subject to revision when further studies throw more light upon the age of the trees.

The larger fir trees standing in the Glacier Point camp grounds today are probably about 300 years old. The application of these studies to the trees of the past indicates that it is entirely possible that 60 tree generations may have come and gone since the retreat of the last glacier from Yosemite valley.

PHONEY DISTRIBUTION

By Ranger Lon Garrison

In a trip from Glacier Point down towards the Fish Hatchery and Happy Isles, (with a rescue party) about 500 feet below Glacier Point was noticed a Douglas Fir growing beside a Juniper tree. This is low for the Juniper and high for the Douglas Fir, and the first time I've ever encountered them growing naturally in the same life zone. Other plants in the same area were Mountain Maple, Huckleberry Oak, Live Oak, Jeffrey Pine, Sage Brush, Rock Penstemon.

AMERICAN MAGPIE, NEW PARK RECORD

M. E. Beatty
Assistant Park Naturalist

It is always a thrilling experience to be able to add a new bird to the park check list especially when that list already numbers over two hundred. Such was the writer's privilege, together with that of Jr. Park Naturalist Cole and Ranger-Naturalist Lowell Adams, while returning to Tuolumne Meadows after measuring the Lyell and Maclure glaciers.

We were eating our lunch at the middle Lyell base camp, elevation 9,500 feet, on September 26, 1937, when we were attracted by a Jay-like call though decidedly softer and less racous than the familiar cry of the Blue-fronted Jay. The bird was easily located about a hundred yards away teetering on the limb of a lodgepole pine. The black and white coloration together with the long streamer-like tail immediately identified the bird as a magpie. Yellow-billed Magpies had been recorded along the western boundary of the park, but this individual had the black bill of the species east of the Sierra and common around Mono Lake. We therefore decided to collect the bird for our study skin collection. It proved to be a female American Magpie (Pica pica hudsonia-Sabine) and is now number 470 in our bird study skin collection.

A NEW FOOD OF THE SIERRA CHICKAREE

By Walter G. Heil
Ranger-Naturalist

On the morning of July 23, about 9:30, a group of about 25 observed several Sierra Chickarees (Sciurus douglassii albolimbatus Allen) busily cutting the leaves from the Willows (Salix lasiandra abramsi Ball, S. lasiandra lancifolia of Jepson) which grow along the edges of Mirror Lake. The chickarees would reach up for a leaf, cut it loose from the branch and after chewing at the petiole for a moment would allow it to drop to the ground and then repeat the process.

It appeared that the squirrels were finding the petiole of the leaf a good bit of food but after picking up some of the leaves that were dropped by them it was found that they were cutting into the insect galls that are so numerous on the petioles of this tree. The reaction of the tree to the insect is to send an excellent supply of food into these galls which the squirrels had discovered as an excellent food supply.

Due to the fact that the willows as a group have an astringent bark it seemed unusual that the chickaree would make use of these insect galls that were covered with the green bark. By cutting the galls open it was found that although the outer layer of the gall had an astringent or somewhat bitter flavor but the most central part of the gall was quite free from this taste. It was also noticed that the squirrels did not eat much of the gall but seemed to open it up and eat only a small portion of it. This leads one to believe that the galls are opened up and if an edible portion is found it is eaten while if the bitterness continues throughout the gall it is dropped and another is opened up for the same purpose.

BEARS FEEDING ON HONEYDEW

By C. A. Harwell,
Park Naturalist

During early May 1937, Messrs. F. E. Todd, Wm. G. Watkins and G. H. Vansell, Apiculturists of the Bureau of Entomology of the Department of Agriculture were in the park for several days. They called my attention to the scale insect, Xyloccocculus macrocarpae, which was then secreting honeydew, especially on Incense Cedars, on the floor of Yosemite Valley. Bears were observed licking the trees for the honeydew. This is seemingly a new record of bear food for the California mountains.

Bears often prefer to climb the Incense Cedar rather than the pine or other tree, perhaps because the bark is thick and soft, providing better claw hold and perhaps also because of the possibility of finding honeydew.

ANOTHER ENEMY TO FISH

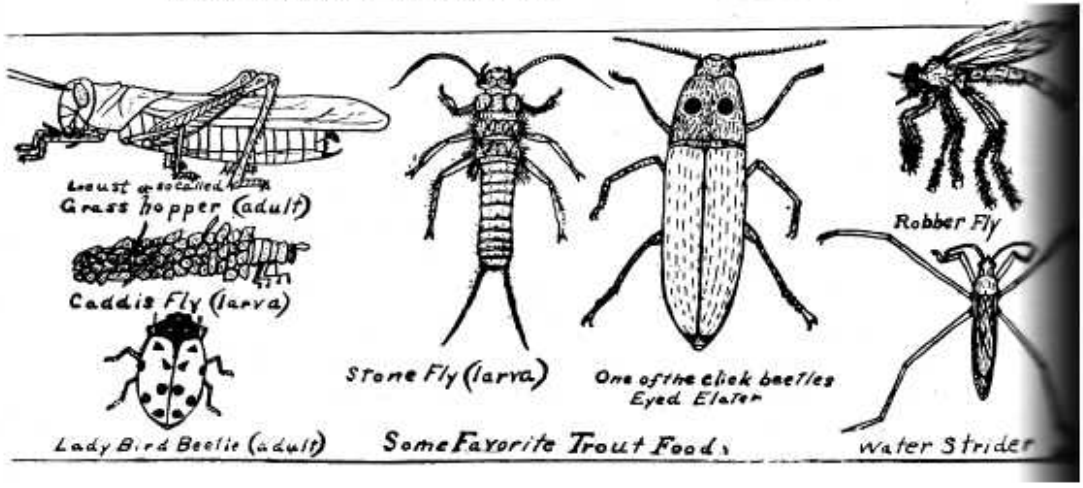
Ranger Lon Garrison

Water Snakes, Kingfishers, Otters, predatory fish, and man are usually considered the most common foes of the trout fry that are planted in the lakes and streams of Yosemite each year. To this list must now be added insects. Recently when Given's Lake was planted by Ranger Ross Cecil and packer Harold Williams, they noticed a large bug busily nabbing into the new'y released one-inch rainbow. The assassin was coralled in a fish can strainer lid and brought to Deer Camp. I took it to Entomologist Yuill at the Bureau of Entomology camp at Eight Mile, who identified it as the nymph of the genus Odonata, the dragon flies.

According to Yuill, while the nymph is definitely predacious and capable of catching small fish, the species is not numerous enough to afford any distinct hazard to the trout. But it adds one more item for the considera:ion of pisiculturists.

YOSEMITE TRAVEL FOR YEAR

October, 1936	13,501
November, 1936	8,176
December, 1936	7,847
Januai y, 1937	14,047
February, 1937	15,799
March, 1937	13,540
Apr'l, 1937	16,943
May, 1937	58,10)
June, 1937	80,703
July, 1937	120,736
August, 1937	90,437
September, 1937	41,654
TOTAL for year	481,492



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Dan Anderson