

YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Volume II

July 17, 1923.

Number 6

W. B. Lewis, Superintendent

Ansel F. Hall, Chief Naturalist

THE HIGH SIERRA OPENED TO HIKERS

At last hiking trips through Yosemite's High Sierra are being made possible --- and at a price so low as to be within the means of everyone. By request of the National Park Service the Yosemite National Park Company has arranged to establish a series of hikers' camps, one at Merced Lake, one at Tuolumne Meadows, and one at Tenaya Lake. Simple but wholesome meals will be furnished for 75 cents each and lodging for 75 cents per night. Accommodations are limited to twelve persons, so reservations should be made before leaving Yosemite.

The camps will be opened on Friday, July 20. On this day a party will start from Yosemite under the leadership of a member of the Yosemite Nature Guide Service, making the initial four-day round trip. The first day's walk will lead the party from Happy Isles past Vernal and Nevada Falls to Little Yosemite and thence over the Moraine Dome trail to Merced Lake, a distance of 16 miles. On the second day the party will hike to Tuolumne Meadows via the Babcock and Emeric Lake Trail and Tuolumne Pass, about 15 miles. From Tuolumne Meadows the trip will continue on the third day down the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne to Waterwheel Falls, thence over the McGee Lake Trail to Lake Tenaya, a distance of 10 to 17 miles depending upon how far down the Tuolumne Canyon one wishes to go. The return to the Yosemite on the fourth day will be made via Ten Mile Meadow, Snow Creek, and Mirror Lake.

This new arrangement offers a splendid opportunity for hikers to explore the high country without the necessity of carrying an ounce of supplies or equipment excepting his lunch for the first day, a sweater, and perhaps a fishing rod or camera. The entire cost of the four-day round trip will be about \$9.00. A bulletin describing the trails in detail can be obtained at the Yosemite Museum or at the Government office in Yosemite Village.

THE GLACIERS OF YOSEMITE

Early visitors to Yosemite Valley sought to ascribe its origin to one great convulsion of Nature. Others, foremost among whom was John Muir, thought that this great gorge and all the other canyons of the Sierra were carved solely by great glaciers.

The studies of Francois E. Matthes of the United States Geological Survey during the past decade have demonstrated the fact that the story of Yosemite's glaciers is but the last chapter in its Book of Genesis. These glaciers occupied the Valley during the last quarter of a million years and left it in very nearly its present form about twenty thousand years ago.

Prior to this cold period the Merced River had been working for some fifty million years steadily carving its canyon until it finally had reached a depth of 2,400 feet measured from the rim of El Capitan and about 2,000 feet measured from Glacier Point.

The glaciers, then, deepened Yosemite Valley from 600 to 1500 feet. At the same time they greatly widened it, plucking out granite blocks from the bases of the cliffs so that many of the walls are now almost vertical.

The origin of Yosemite is the subject of a daily lecture given at the Yosemite Museum at 10:30 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. by Chief Naturalist Ansel F. Hall of the United States National Park Service.

POHONO TRAIL

Friday and Saturday, July 20 and 21, Government Nature Guides are to lead a trip over the Pohono Trail. The party will leave the foot of the Ledge Trail at 2:30 P.M. and climb to Glacier Point, where they will spend the night. The following morning an early start will be made from the hotel. Thirteen miles of easy going will bring the party to Inspiration Point; here they will be picked up by stages and brought into the Valley. The trail leads through wonderful forests and flower-filled meadows, and following close along the south rim, as it does, many fine views are to be had both up and down the Valley.

IT IS DESIRED THAT THE PUBLIC TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE FREE NATURE TRIPS. REGISTER WITH THE NATURE GUIDE AT THE MUSEUM.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW NESTS IN CLIFF.

Have you ever observed a swallow disappear in the face of a cliff? Some of the hikers on the Nature Guide trip to the top of Yosemite Falls Saturday had it impressed upon them that violet-green swallows do not always nest in trees. A pair of these birds were watched for some fifteen minutes as they captured flying insects and carried them to their young. The flights were short, as insects apparently were plentiful, and the stops at the nest between forages were hesitating. The young birds kept up a continuous twittering which increased as the parent neared the nest. The nest was located under a partially loosened slab in the face of the cliff a short distance above the foot of upper Yosemite Falls. The trail passed directly under the nest at no greater distance than 30 feet. The opening of the cranny in which the nest was built appeared much too small to admit even a swallow.

THE WASHINGTON LILY.

Hikers along the Pohono Trail should look for the Washington Lily -- the most glorious member of the lily tribe found in the Park. They are most apt to be found at the lower end of the trail, where their great stalks reach above the chaparral. The blossoms of this lily are white and closely resemble the Easter Lily of the florist. All flower lovers, who can, should take a trip along the Pohono Trail as here the finest gardens are found at this season.

THE LITTLE LEOPARD LILY

The Little Leopard Lily is in bloom. Look for its bright orange flowers in the marshes and along the streams. It sends up a tall stalk with a perfect whorl of green leaves, topped by a cluster of lovely lilies. Sometimes the blossoms in these clusters number more than twenty-five.

HOW A RATTLE SNAKE FEETS.

Some one finds Deer Mice plentiful and brings them alive in numbers to the Museum. Snake captives at the Museum find them quite to their liking and provide the Nature Guides and visitors with interesting observations on feeding habits. A twenty-inch Pacific Rattlesnake, but two days in captivity, feeds readily, while one slightly larger that has been in the same cage for a much longer time refuses food. The hungry one, upon being presented with a live mouse, lifts his head and regards his dinner carefully. Then he edged to within four inches of his trembling victim and lightly strikes. The snake's head drives forward with such speed and precision that it is difficult to determine what has happened. The mouse is struck in the head, not a blow that bowls him over, but apparently one of just sufficient force to sink the fangs. There is usually no clinging to the prey; the snake's head comes back to the coils as rapidly as it shot out. The mouse shakes its injured head, scampers about a bit, and in about 40 seconds sprawls in a convulsion that shortly ends in death. Thereupon the slayer crawls to the dead animal, noses it over, and with jaws distended engulfs his prey. The mouse's tail is the last to disappear.

THE CARDINAL MONKEY-FLOWER.

There are many forms of *Mimulus* (Monkey-flower) about the Yosemite Valley. Most of these are yellow and occur in moist meadows, and along streams. There are, however, pink forms which spread mats of color on the open sandy spaces. At this season the most showy one is neither low-growing or yellow, but a large cardinal-flowered form. This Monkey-flower (*Mimulus cardinalis*) is one that favors the cold mountain streams which tumble into the Valley from the "rim." It may be seen where streams cross either the Yosemite Falls or the Four Mile Trail. The plant is tall with deep-green leaves and large red blossoms, and in its setting of moss and ferns it is considered by many the most handsome of all Monkey-flowers.

THE CHARLED DWARFS OF YOSEMITE'S RIM

Stunted trees of apparently great age excited much comment when the Nature Guide Party bound for Eagle's Peak reached the top of Yosemite Falls. These rigid oddities were in some cases nearly as thick through the base of the distorted trunk as they were high. Not infrequently their growth and adversities have been such as to cause them to crouch like some fearsome beast. Their every character denotes great age and John Muir was led to estimate that some have been growing for two thousand years. Other characters that readily distinguish the Juniper are its brown stringy bark, its scale-like leaves pressed close to the branch, and its blue berry-like fruits. Very rarely a Juniper may be found on the floor of the Valley. A young specimen is to be seen at the south end of Camp 16.



Digitized by
Yosemite Online Library

<http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library>

Dan Anderson