

YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Lyell Glacier

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BIRDS OF THE MUSEUM WILDFLOWER GARDEN

By Assistant Park Naturalist R. K. Grater

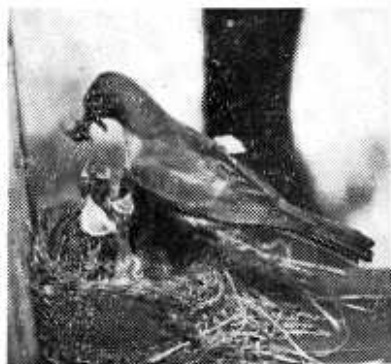
The wildflower garden back of the Yosemite Museum is an attraction of primary importance to the park visitor, and dozens of people stroll along the flower-lined paths each day during the spring and summer months. Relatively unnoticed, however, is another feature of the garden . . . the vast array of birds that daily visit the area to feed on the hundreds of insects found around the flowers or to bathe in the quiet, protected pools.

The garden is rather small, being approximately one acre in extent, and one would normally expect only a few bird species to utilize such a limited area. However, records kept during May, 1943, disclose that such is not the case. These records show that the rather astonishing total of twenty-seven different bird species visited the garden during the month, with others known to have used the area to a somewhat lesser degree. Of these, the following varieties were seen almost daily: Western Robin (with two nesting sites), Black-headed Grosbeak (with three nesting sites), Cassin's Vireo (with one nesting site), Western Warbling

Vireo (with one nesting site), Blue-fronted Jay, Western Tanager, Short-tailed Chickadee, Dwarf Cowbird, Brewer Blackbird, Kern Red-wing, California Woodpecker, Sierra Creeper, and California Yellow Warbler. Seen only occasionally during the month were the Western Evening Grosbeak, Audubon's Warbler, Calliope Hummingbird, Western Wood Pewee, Little Flycatcher, Western Chipping Sparrow, Western House Wren, Modoc Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker and Red-shafted Flicker. Single records were had of the Hudsonian White-crowned Sparrow, Calaveras Warbler, Violet-green Swallow and Willow Woodpecker. In addition, the White-throated Swift was observed hunting above the garden, while wing feathers of the Western Red-tailed Hawk and the Pacific Horned Owl found in the garden indicate that these two birds may have been in the area.

These observations brought out a number of interesting aspects of bird study. Much has been written regarding the territories required by certain bird species during the nest-

ing season. In the garden were a total of seven nests occupied by four different species of birds. Both the Cassin's Vireo and Warbling Vireos would apparently not allow any others of their kind to nest within this small area, while the two pairs of Robins and three pairs of Black-headed Grosbeaks used the same limited territory to rear their families.



Whether the other bird species found the garden undesirable as a home site or whether they were kept out by the species already established could not be determined. Further studies in the Valley may disclose the answer to this problem.

These observations bring out very forcibly the fact that large areas are not necessary in the study of birds. Small gardens, even little clumps of shrubbery, whether they be in the mountains or in the busy cities, will attract a fairly large number of birds at various times in the year. Certainly a large percentage of the resident birds of any region may often be encountered right at one's back door.

MUSEUM NOTES

Glaciers Gain in Volume

The annual glacier survey, conducted during the last week in September, indicated an increase in the size of Yosemite glaciers over that of a year ago. (See Yosemite Nature Notes, November, 1942.)

The increase can be attributed to two factors—the greater snow pack in the high country during the past winter and the very late spring and unseasonal early summer which characterized the Yosemite region this year.—C. F. B.



Grater Leaves Yosemite

Assistant Park Naturalist Grater, who transferred to Yosemite from the park naturalist position in Zion and Bryce National Parks earlier this year, has accepted a position as visual education instructor with the Army Air base at Sacramento starting October 1. The move was necessitated by the elimination of his position due to curtailment of appropriations. We shall miss the Graters and hope to see them back in the naturalist fold following the completion of the present emergency.

—M. E. B.



DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO YOSEMITE

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

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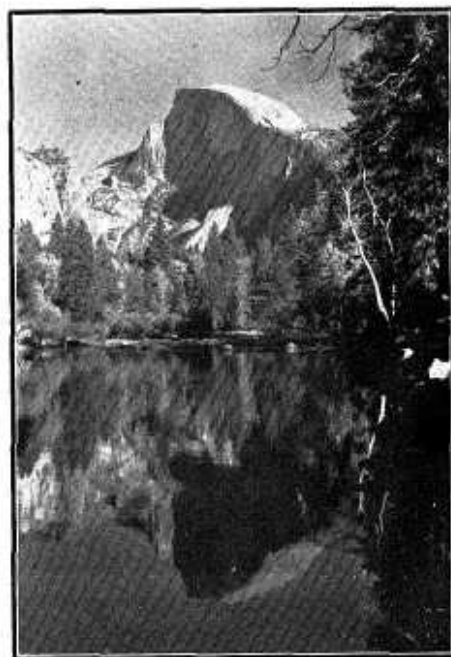
Part III—Transportation Facilities in the Park

(Continued from last month's issue.)

Half Dome Trail

In spite of the fact that editions of "The Yosemite Guide Book" up to and including 1874 predicted that Half Dome would never be climbed, the summit of this great granite mass was to succumb to the tread of man in 1875. It was inevitable that the apparent impossibility of this ascent would appeal to certain adventurous individuals. Such a man was George C. Anderson who, on October 12, 1875, succeeded in reaching the summit after laboriously drilling holes in the granite in which were placed wooden pegs fitted with eye bolts through which a rope was passed. Once Anderson had installed the necessary means of assistance, others also reached the summit and it may be of interest to note that Miss S. L. Dutcher of San Francisco was the first woman to stand upon the broad crest of this dome, accomplishing this feat shortly after Anderson's pioneer ascent. The need for a safer and better passage up the last precipitous slope was recognized as early as 1882 by the Yosemite Valley Commissioners who in that year requested a sum of \$2,000.00 to "put a substantial and safe flight of steps up the rock, with balusters on the sides and fenders to protect the structure from snowslides in winter." This recommendation was never car-

ried out. During the winter of 1883-84 a large part of the rope installed by Anderson, together with a number of eyebolts, was carried away by snow slides. The Commissioners, recognizing the hazards involved in this ascent unless adequate safeguards were provided, did not replace it.



Nevertheless, Hutchings in his "In the Heart of the Sierras" describes an ascent in the summer of 1884 by two men who, equipped with a rope, utilized the remaining eye bolts in reaching the summit and in making a safe return. In 1912, according to

Hall in his "Guide to Yosemite," two adventurous youths again made the ascent. The rope which they used was left in place and in this fashion a number of others reached the top of Half Dome until, in 1919, safer and more adequate assistance to prospective climbers was provided. In that year, under the auspices of the Sierra Club, Hall McAllister provided for the construction of the present trail and cableway up the dome at an expense of \$4,357.57. Thousands of people have reached the crest of Half Dome since that time.

Above Happy Isles one will notice the remains of a trail which branches from the main route a short distance before reaching the log bridge below Vernal Fall. This is a portion of a trail undertaken by George C. Anderson, under contract with the Yosemite Valley Commissioners, in 1881. It was originally planned as a more adequate means of reaching the flat between Vernal and Nevada falls by way of the north side of the canyon, thus replacing the original trail which achieved that destination from the opposite side of the Merced. The undertaking proved to be more difficult and costly than anticipated and, although Anderson worked assiduously upon the project, it was never completed. Construction on the original project was discontinued in 1884 but it was not a total loss since, by 1886, the Merced was bridged and the Anderson trail was connected with its counterpart on the other side of that stream, thus providing essentially the same route

in use above Happy Isles at the present time.

Roads on the Valley Floor

Wheeled transportation to Yosemite Valley was not available until 1874 when the Coulterville and Big Oak Flat Roads were completed. However, the level valley floor did not offer the difficulties that were presented by the rugged valley walls, which effectively retarded the development of roads to this area for many years, and we find evidence of the use of wagons and carriages on the floor of the valley for several years previous to the time when roads penetrated to this area. All vehicles so used had to be dismantled, and parts packed in on mules, and reassembled. The wagon used by Galen Clark, first guardian of the Yosemite Grant (exhibited on the back porch of the Yosemite Museum) was transported here in that fashion, as was the wagon used by Hutchings shortly after he took over the operation of the "Upper Hotel" in 1864. An interesting reference to this latter vehicle was found in an old newspaper clipping, a portion of which reads as follows:

" . . . and in April, 1865, the family effects were packed into the Valley on mules for a distance of 50 miles over a rough and narrow trail . . . The four horse wagon that brought things to Coulterville was taken apart and carried into the Valley on muleback . . ."

The foregoing article also states that the first four-horse stage that reached the valley was carried in, piecemeal, on the backs of mules. Further reference to wheeled transport

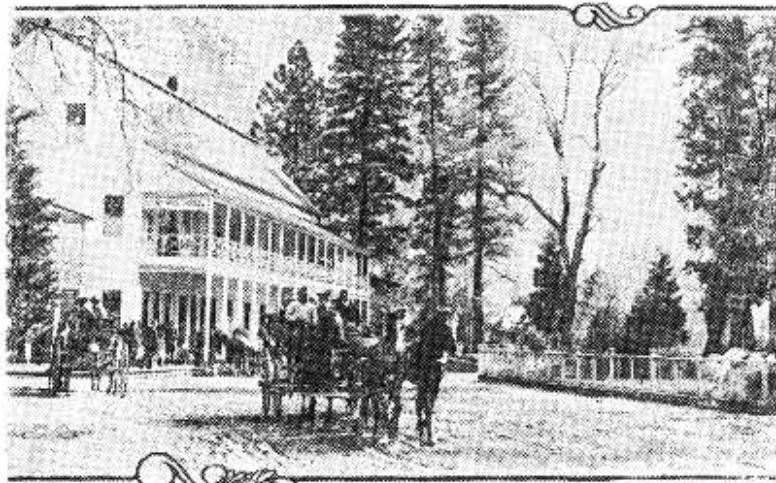
ation on the valley floor is found in "The Undeveloped West" by J. H. Beadle who, in 1871, visited Yosemite Valley by way of the Big Oak Flat trail. After an account of the journey down the tortuous trail from Tamarack Flat (the end of the Big Oak Flat Road at that time) to the valley floor he concludes his description by stating that "Gladly we take the stage and are whirled along in the gathering twilight."

However, these references to vehicles on the valley floor do not indicate an extensive road system in the area at that time. Yet, by 1880 interest crystallized in a road completely about the valley floor, bordering the base of the cliffs. Construction of this project was undertaken in the following year and a road around the north end of the valley was completed from the present site of the Sentinel Bridge to Happy Isles, thence to Tenaya Creek and west to the vicinity of the present Ahwahnee Hotel grounds.

This connected with a meager wagon road which had previously been built to Mirror Lake. In 1882 a road was constructed from Bridalveil Fall to the site of the present Pohono Bridge, thence up the valley on the north side of the Merced to Yosemite Creek. The project was completed in 1884 and formed the basis for the present system of roadways about the valley floor.

The present road through the Mariposa Grove had its origin in the survey ordered by the Yosemite Valley Commissioners in 1878. Construction of this project was undertaken and completed in the following year through an arrangement between the Commissioners and A. H. Washburn who was at that time constructing a road in the immediate vicinity for the Yosemite Stage Company. The "tunnel" through the Wawona Tree was cut in 1881.

The original road from Chinquapin to Glacier Point was constructed by John Conway in 1882 for the



Washburn Brothers who operated the Wawona Hotel for many years.



Wawona Tunnel Tree

Initial Development of High Sierra Trails

The efforts of the Commissioners were naturally confined to developments within the Yosemite Grant itself since their jurisdiction extended only that far. Nevertheless visitors to Yosemite Valley occasionally made pack trips into the more remote areas surrounding the valley, Tuolumne Meadows being a favorite objective. The interest embodied in such trips was given considerable space in early descriptive literature of the park. However it was not until a large area of public domain surrounding Yosemite Valley was established as Yosemite National Park in 1890 that much thought was given to development and improvement of trail facilities in that section of the High Sierra. Since there was no National Park Service at that time and no other means of protecting and administering the newly-

created national park, the U. S. Army was called upon to do this job. Thus from 1891 to 1914 the park area was administered by a succession of officers who, with a number of troops of cavalry, remained in the area during each summer season for that purpose. The record of this chapter in Yosemite history is replete with interest. In many instances the officers in charge were among the most far-sighted of those who have administered this area. At that time the entire northern section of the park was unknown, except to cattlemen and sheepmen who utilized the back country for pasturing their stock and who had divided up the area among themselves, regulating its use on the basis of these agreements. Trespass on specific ranges was punished by the individuals concerned in accordance with the nature of the offense and in a manner which suited their purpose at the moment. Briefly, they formed a law unto themselves and the establishment of vague National Park boundaries on maps meant little to them. Such were conditions in the area that these soldiers were required to protect and administer and the major share of their effort was devoted to the elimination of such activities.

In 1891 when Captain A. E. Ward and the first troop of cavalry arrived in the park the back country trail system consisted only of (1) the Tioga Road, constructed in 1882-1883, which had fallen into disrepair

and which had been reduced to the status of a trail, (2) a trail along the southern boundary, such as exists at the present time, from Wawona to Crescent and Johnson lakes and Chiquito Pass, from which point it continued to Devil Postpile, that area then being included in the park, (3) the original Indian route which connected the Wawona area with Tuolumne Meadows, via Alder Creek, Mono Meadows, Little Yosemite and Cathedral Pass, and (4) two Hetch Hetchy and Lake Eleanor trails from Hog Ranch (near the present Mather Ranger Station) which at that time was the terminus of a small branch road from the Big Oak Flat route. In addition to the foregoing, of course, there were the trails in Yosemite Valley (over which the soldiers had no jurisdiction since it remained in control of the State until 1906), Glacier Point was accessible by road as well as trail, and a trail was available from Tuolumne Meadows to Mt. Conness. Anyone familiar with the wild and rugged High Sierra will recognize that this was indeed a meager trail system with which to undertake the administration and protection of the newly created park in the face of conditions at that time. Consequently, most of the back country trails in the Yosemite area date from the days of the Army Administration. Regular patrol routes were set up and the soldiers marked—and in some cases built—the routes needed as they proceeded about their duties of policing the area.

In the early days it was customary for each soldier in the detail, while on patrol, to carry a hand hatchet hung from the saddle in a leather boot so that whenever trees were available they could be readily blazed to mark the route. In un-forested areas the route was marked by small cairns of rock or, as they are familiarly known to High Sierra hikers, "ducks." In the "back country" today many hikers and riders are reminded of the Army's influence here by familiar blazes on trees—a large T—many of which were placed there by the soldiers while on patrol during those early days.

Most of the original work of trail blazing and construction in the Yosemite High Country, particularly in the northern section of the park, was undertaken during the administration of Captain Alex. Rodgers who served as acting superintendent in 1895 and 1897. As a capable outdoor man interested in the work he was doing, he was assisted by several junior officers who were equally able and equally interested, such as Lieut. N. F. McClure, Lieut. W. R. Smedberg and Lieut. H. C. Benson. With details of soldiers these officers tirelessly roamed through the park, exploring the remote sections, rigorously enforcing the regulations against grazing of cattle and sheep in the area, blazing and building trails for more efficient patrols in the future and generally carrying out their arduous duties in a manner that cannot be too highly commend-

ed. In many cases they were not familiar with the rugged terrain as were the herders whose activities they were seeking to eliminate and they often resorted to ruses by which they could acquaint themselves with new areas. In such instances captured herders were forced to lead their captors through sections that had heretofore been unexplored by the soldiers. In that manner the troops not only became familiar with unknown sections of the park and any illegal activities that were carried on therein, but routes were also blazed through such sections so that future patrols could be accomplished with greater ease.

Lieut. Benson, later promoted to Captain and Major, continued his association with Yosemite National Park, serving as acting superintendent from 1905 through 1908.

When the Yosemite Grant and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees was returned to Federal administration and incorporated into Yosemite National Park in 1906, the original trail system of 1891 had been extended up Little Yosemite Valley to Merced Lake, Vogelsang Pass and thence down Rafferty Creek to Tuolumne Meadows, a route that is familiar to all High Sierra hikers of the present day. The Isberg Pass trail to the east boundary of the park had been marked and Fernandez Pass, farther to the south, had also been rendered accessible by a trail that

branched from the original trail along the southern boundary. The present trail from Tuolumne Meadows up the Lyell Fork of the Tuolumne to Donohue Pass also dates from this period. From Tuolumne Meadows a trail also reached out into the remote northern portion of the park to the vicinity of Glen Aulin, thence up Alkali Creek to Cold, Virginia and Matterhorn Canyons. From the latter point this route continued westward to Smedberg Lake, down Rogers Canyon, eventually passing through Pleasant Valley and over Rancheria Mountain to Hetch Hetchy Valley. The Ten Lakes area was accessible by means of a trail originating on the Tioga Road near White Wolf, and from Hetch Hetchy Valley trails radiated to Till Till Mountain, Miguel Meadow, Lake Eleanor, Vernon Lake and up Moraine Ridge to a point near what is today known as the "Golden Stairs," overlooking the lower portion of Jack Main Canyon. A route approximating the present Forsythe trail from Little Yosemite around the southern shoulder of Clouds Rest to Tenaya Lake had been established, and from Tenaya Lake the point now known as Glen Aulin could be reached by the McGee Lake trail. The routes taken by these early trails were essentially the same as those of the present day and points mentioned will be familiar to all who enjoy roaming about the Yosemite back country.

(Concluded in next month's issue.)



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