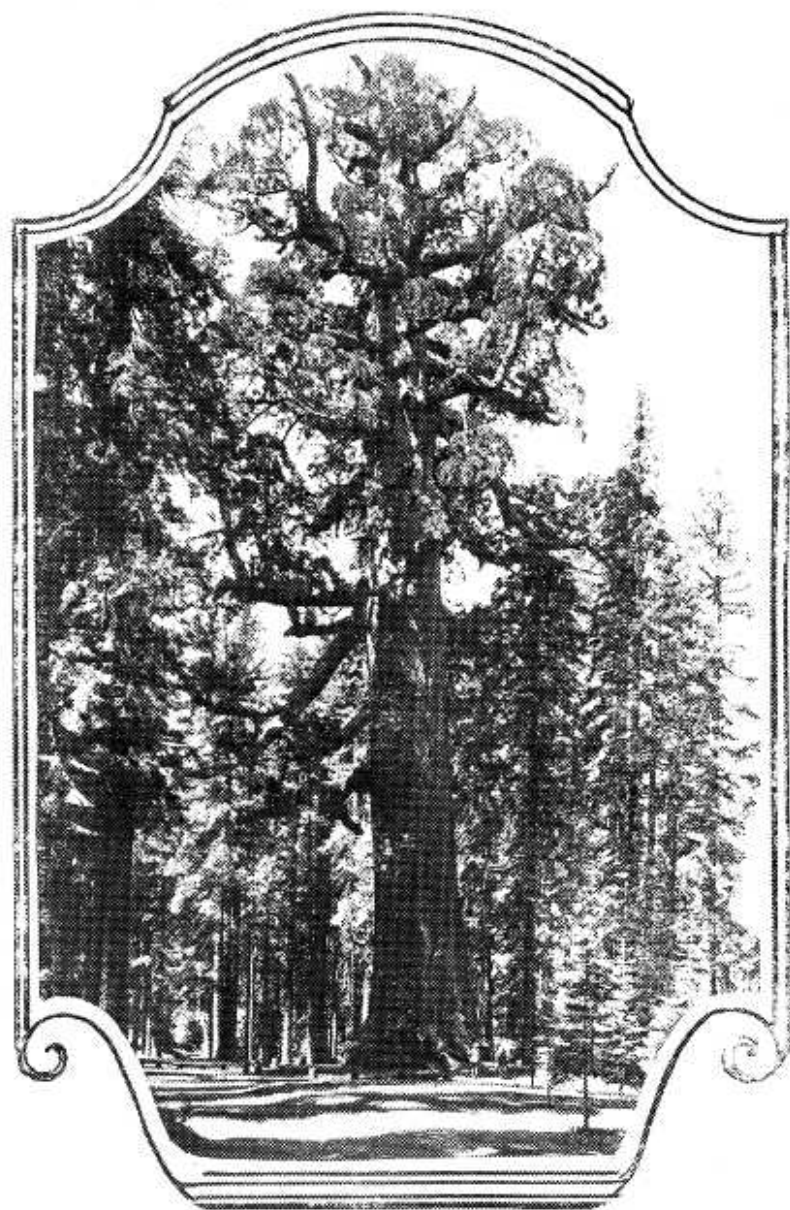


YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Yosemite Nature Notes

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THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DEPARTMENT
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OSCAR A. SEDERGREN, NEW CHIEF RANGER OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

The most recent addition to the National Park Service organization in Yosemite National Park is Oscar A. Sedergren, until recently Chief Ranger of Mount Rainier National Park, Washington, who has been assigned to duties of a similar nature in this area. He relieves John H. Wegner, recently assigned to the position of Chief Ranger of Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks, who has been directing the work of the local protection staff as Acting Chief Ranger since the death of Forest S. Townsley last August. (See Yosemite Nature Notes, September, 1943, and March, 1944.)

Sedergren's appointment to Yosemite comes as the most recent development in his many years of steady progress with the National Park Service, beginning in the summer of 1920, at which time he worked on trail maintenance in Mount Rainier National Park. For several years following this initial baptism in National Park activities he was engaged in engineering work, assisting in road surveys in both Mount Rainier and Sequoia National Parks

During the summers of 1924-26 he served as seasonal park ranger in the Mount Rainier organization, receiving his permanent appointment as park ranger in March, 1927. Much of his early experience, both as park ranger and later as district ranger, was obtained in the rugged and heavily forested west and northern sections of that area, notable for their fire hazard. In 1931, as district ranger of the White River district, his responsibilities were broadened upon the completion of the new highway by means of which that area rapidly assumed the place of one of the most popular and important sections of Mount Rainier National Park. In 1935 he was made Assistant Chief Ranger and three years later was elevated to Chief Ranger, in which capacity he planned and directed the activities of a large force of permanent and seasonal park rangers as well as a highly efficient fire detection organization.

Thoroughly experienced and highly capable in matters pertaining to forest fire protection, he is well known in the Pacific Northwest

—through his activities in connection with such work, as well as for his cooperation in the development of fire training schools in that area. He has also been actively interested in matters pertaining to the winter use of national park areas through cooperation with numerous northwestern ski clubs, where he has a wide circle of friends. Not the least of his accomplishments is his ability with a fryingpan (or reasonable facsim-

ile) and the ingredients required in the development of a batch of hot-cakes—which the writer has had opportunity to enjoy on more than one occasion when accompanying Sedergren on back country patrol trips.

The entire Yosemite organization welcomes Oscar, his wife, Florence, and their daughter, Sandra, to the area and wishes them the best of success in their new home.

THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF YOSEMITE ARTISTS

By Elizabeth H. Godfrey, NPS Staff

CHARLES DORMAN ROBINSON

By birth, Charles Dorman Robinson was a New Englander. He was born at Mammouth, Me., July 17, 1847. When only a few weeks old, his parents moved to Newport, Vermont, and though their stay was comparatively brief, Robinson called himself a Vermonter.

At the age of 3, his folks took him to San Francisco, where the little boy delighted his parents with the clever sketches he made of passing ships on San Francisco Bay.

At 13, he was outstanding in art at the Union Grammar School which he attended in San Francisco—attested by his being awarded a diploma by the Mechanics Institute for "the best specimen of marine drawing in the juvenile department."

At 15 and 16, he was back on the East coast again, studying for brief periods under William Bradford, the

great marine and arctic painter, George Innes, M. F. H. De Haas, and later under S. W. Griggs, a Boston painter. Endless hours in outdoor sketching supplemented this limited background. At 19, he studied for a year under the artist Boudin to strengthen his weakness in composition and design.

When Robinson was 27, he married Miss Kate Evelyn Wright, and a year later the young artist and his wife moved to San Francisco. Thereafter they were Californians, save for the period 1899 to 1900, when Robinson went to Paris, France, to study the technique of Segantini, the French master.

In 1880, when Yosemite was in its stagecoach period, Robinson was urged by J. M. Hutchings to visit Yosemite Valley. Robinson was at once enthralled with the scenery, and engaged a studio in the valley

which he kept for the ensuing ten years. At that time snow removal on park roads was unheard of, and in order to avoid being snowbound, Robinson would plan to return to his San Francisco studio by November 10 each fall.

The period 1880 to 1890, was one of much British globe trotting. As the Canadian Pacific Railroad had not yet been completed, British sightseers traveled by Pacific Mail Steamship Company boats between the United States and the Orient, with often much time to spend between sailings. Yosemite was one of the popular attractions, and great numbers of the most influential and highest titled people of the Empire visited the park. In this manner at least ninety of Robinson's paintings were purchased and taken back to England alone, including the one which hangs in Buckingham Palace. Others went to India, Holland, and elsewhere in Europe.

Robinson constantly tramped the High Sierra and accumulated a vast amount of sketching material for his paintings. On one of these sketching expeditions to Mt. Lyell, he unfortunately slipped and sprained his ankle, and was obliged to walk ten miles before he came to a trapper's cabin. As a result of this accident, he carried a large cyst on his ankle for the rest of his life.

In appearance Robinson was of medium height, square-shouldered, muscular, with fine blue eyes that could pierce like steel when he was

aroused. Because of his conversational powers, that held others spellbound, he was accustomed to being the center of interest at many gatherings. His full head of hair did not gray until he was 80.

Robinson was a man who voiced his beliefs and convictions. One of his typical comments was, "It takes a crank to move the world, and I would rather be a crank than a nonentity." That bit of philosophy was practiced by him on several occasions, when, as a valley resident he vigorously objected to any tendency on the part of the Board of Commissioners to introduce a spirit of commercialism into park policies. In such controversies he had the support of John Muir, J. M. Hutchings, The Sierra Club, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Robert Underwood Johnson.

On rare occasions Robinson would divert his talent for painting into a more practical outlet. For example, in 1882, when the Yosemite Hotel (the Old Sentinel) was being redecorated, he was engaged to supervise the work. On another occasion in 1895, he agreed to paint the floor and skylight of "the oldest artist's studio in San Francisco," at 611 Clay Street, as advance payment for lodging. When he had practically completed the skylight, he accidentally fell through it; simultaneously using a "month's lodging" to recuperate from the fall.

Robinson was not satisfied to paint small scenes of Yosemite. Over a

period of years he dreamed of painting the "Yosemite Panorama," as viewed from Inspiration Point on a magnanimous scale. In September, 1892, he realized this desire. A group of gentlemen from Stockton agreed to supply the necessary funds for the purchase of a canvas 50 ft. wide and 380 ft. long, weighing two tons, as well as for the three tons of color to be used in the painting.

The "Yosemite Panorama" proved to be a stupendous task, involving untold labor—one week being required to stretch the canvas. Mrs. Cosie Hutchings Mills—daughter of James M. Hutchings and the second white girl born in Yosemite Valley—recently told a writer that many years ago she viewed this painting in San Francisco in a building which had been erected to house a cyclorama named "The Battle of Gettysburg." Mrs. Mills recalls this work of Robinson's as having been very well executed. A recent letter from Miss Lillian M. Robinson, the artist's daughter, who now lives at San Rafael, California, contained many interesting facts regarding Robinson's life which have been incor-

porated in this sketch, and among them the statement, "The Yosemite 'cyclorama' was taken to Paris, France, in 1900 for the exposition being held at that time, but owing to many circumstances was not taken from France. It is no longer in existence."

In 1889, Robinson made the first artist's trip into the Kings River Canyon country. In 1891, he was commissioned by Robert Underwood Johnson for the Century Magazine to return there with John Muir to obtain material for a feature article for the Century Magazine, which was published that year. Robinson also wrote an illustrated pamphlet entitled the "Wawona Hotel," in which were many of his sketches of the scenery in the Mariposa Grove.

Another of Robinson's Yosemite paintings was presented to Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane at a banquet given him during a visit to San Francisco.

After a full and interesting life Robinson passed away at his home in San Rafael, California, on May 3, 1933, at the age of 86.

(Next Thumbnail Sketch, "Albert Bierstadt.")

NOTES ON YOSEMITE BIRDS

By Jackson Dan Webster

Two summers in Yosemite National Park filled two pocket notebooks of bird notes. As I read over these brief lines I can see and hear again that scolding wren, or that

speeding swift.

California Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)—One of these professional fishermen stood quietly in the shallows of Merced Lake (7150 feet) on

September 5, 1942. The locality seems unusually high and far into



the mountains for this lowland resident.

Pacific Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)—One was reiterating his buzzing call from a tall Ponderosa Pine on the north shoulder of Rancheria Mountain (6400 feet) on the evening of August 11, 1941. A few days later, August 26, I saw two nighthawks near Sentinel Bridge, in Yosemite Valley, flying over the meadow at 5:30 in the morning.

Black-eared Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*)—Two of these busybodies were alternately foraging and feeding young on July 11, 1942. The nest hole was 20 feet from the ground in a Ponderosa Pine stub at 4900 feet on the unnamed mountain just north of Arch Rock. So far as I can ascertain, this is a new breeding record for the park.

San Joaquin Wren (*Thryomanes bewicki*)—Twice I saw this species well up in the Transition Zone, on brushy south-facing slopes. On June 27, 1942, two were scolding from a

Green Manzanita thicket at 6300 feet on the Snow Creek trail out of Tenaya Canyon. On July 29, 1942, two were vociferous in a *Ceanothus* thicket at 6400 feet near Lost Valley in Tenaya Canyon.

Western House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)—I saw one on the Tenaya Lake trail (above Hidden Lake at 8300 feet) on August 5, 1942, another in a *Ceanothus* bush on top of Rancheria Mountain (9000 feet) on August 12, 1941. These instances indicate that House Wrens in Yosemite, like some Rock Wrens, perform a vertical post-nesting migration.

Common Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*)—A pair was flitting from boulder to boulder atop Rancheria Mountain (9000 feet) on August 12, 1941.

Hutton Vireo (*Vireo huttoni*)—One of these shy little vireos was singing from the top of a Golden-cupped Oak at 4300 feet beside the Coulterville road on July 11, 1942.

Lawrence Goldfinch (*Spinus lawrencei*)—July 11, 1942, almost on the border of Yosemite National Park (on the crest, 5000 feet, north of Arch Rock) I saw a flock of about thirty goldfinches feeding in the weeds at the margin of the burned area. Most of the birds were Green-backed Goldfinches (*Spinus psaltria*), with black and white wing bars, but two had the broad yellow wing bars and other markings of the Lawrence Goldfinch.



TEAMWORK BY COYOTES

By William Stevenson, Powerhouse Operator

The wily coyote is capable of many tricks in securing its prey, as was made evident on several occasions last February.

One morning my attention was called by my wife to the frantic efforts of a deer to escape from two coyotes that had crowded it into a very precarious situation in the Merced River. In this location the waters of the Merced formed a deep hole. Seeking escape, the deer had attempted to cross the river but had been outflanked and chased into the aforementioned pool where it was forced to swim back and forth in the

icy water. One of the pursuing coyotes remained upon the higher bank guarding one avenue of escape. The second sauntered from one side of the pool to the other as the swimming deer reversed direction. Thus, regardless of its efforts the deer was constantly faced with one or another of its tormentors. Each time the coyote upon the lower bank would step into the water just far enough to cause the deer to swim in another direction at which time it sauntered to the other side of the pool to again face the swimming animal. The coyote on the higher ground merely took it easy, anticipating a frenzied dash by the deer at which time, tired by swimming, it could be easily overtaken.



Although we drove the coyotes away and thus permitted the deer to escape, its release from its enemies was but temporary. Within a short time the same deer had again been jockeyed into the same untenable position in the Merced. This time, however, when we went to its aid it fled in another direction and succeeded in making its escape.

That this same strategy on the part of the coyotes was not unusual was brought out on a similar occasion some time later. In this latter instance a deer, fleeing down river with a coyote at its heels, attempted to cross the river but the coyote, apparently using a pre-determined course of action, slipped through the timber to confront its prey and eventually crowd it into the deep pool of the river where it would have had difficulty extricating itself had we not come to its aid.

A FRUSTRATED BOBCAT

By William Stevenson, Powerhouse Operator

Bobcats are not an uncommon sight to residents of the Cascades area whose work is concerned with the operation of the nearby powerhouse. This is attested to by the fact of the names of Wildcat Creek and Wildcat Falls, which are found in the vicinity. These animals have been noted on many occasions and sometimes they have been bold enough to approach close to our homes, as was the case on the morning of Feb-

ruary 10, 1944.

Sometime during the previous night we were startled by a series of loud "squawks" in the back yard which seemed to come from the direction of the garbage incinerator, but in the darkness it was not possible to ascertain its nature. However, the next morning Mrs. Stevenson noticed a large bobcat lying beside the incinerator, apparently asleep. Hearing again the strange noise of the previous night she decided to investigate, first enlisting the aid of Mr. and Mrs. Art Freeman, our neighbors. The three cautiously approached to within a short distance of the big cat which was still intent upon something in the incinerator. Finally it arose, hopped to the top of the incinerator and tried to pry the lid off but was prevented from doing so by its own weight. Then, as the three people continued to advance slowly, the cat gave ground, finally running a short distance away to a vantage point provided by a small shed. Interest in contents of an incinerator being highly irregular for this predator, an investigation of the reason seemed to be indicated and the incinerator was tipped upon its side, thus releasing the lid, and at the same time, a ring-tailed cat. The ring-tailed cat had apparently got in the night before. As the latter charged from its combined prison and refuge toward the nearby timber it suddenly gave a startled cry which was exactly like the sound which had disturbed my wife and I the night before.

Still interested in the whereabouts of the bobcat my wife and our neighbors soon located him peering from the door of the shed to which he had fled upon their approach. However,

undoubtedly disconsolate at the loss of his breakfast he soon retreated, dashing from the shed and over the nearby rocks into the surrounding forest.



BOBCATS AT ARCH ROCK

By Odin S. Johnson, Park Ranger

I got a real pleasure the other day (Feb. 15, 1944) when a medium sized bobcat came strolling by the Arch Rock Entrance Station. It no doubt would have continued its leisurely pace down the highway, but for an approaching car. Instead it merely turned off the road and into the brush without quickening its gait. It acted like a domesticated cat, or like the bear and deer of the

Valley that have become accustomed to automobiles. Visitors and residents have reported seeing bobcats crossing the road in this vicinity on numerous occasions in recent weeks. One was seen sunning himself on a rock beside the highway. The frequency with which these animals have been seen recently may be due to the fact that automobile traffic to the park has shown a material decrease.



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Dan Anderson