

YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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MOUNTAIN QUAIL

Yosemite Nature Notes

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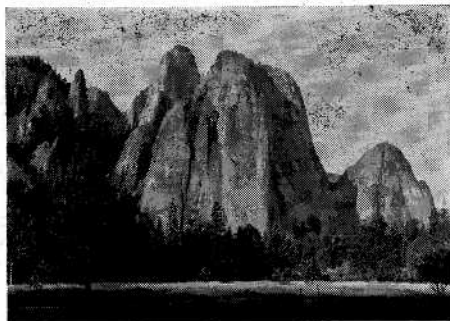
DOGWOOD

By Elizabeth H. Godfrey

Half Dome in the sun is its true self
Without embellishment of cloud or hue;
The oaks unfolded leaves are fresh and green,
The waterfalls and grass are born anew.

Beside the swelling river and the rushing creek
The dogwood bloom is rarest sight in May—
A fairy's dream, inadequately named;
'Tis angel's lace, or sylvan applique!

And in the fall it is the striking note
Of all of Autumn's gold or scarlet flame;
To think that someone called it "dogwood!"
Yet, don't we love it by that somber name?



INTRODUCED TREES IN YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

Visitors to Yosemite National Park will note a number of interesting trees which were planted in the early days before this area became a national park (1) and which, although they are not native to the area, have been allowed to remain because of their association with the early history of the region. In this category fall the American elm, the black locust, and sugar maple, found in a number of places on the Valley floor, as well as several kinds of fruit trees.

The latter are, perhaps, the most conspicuous and best known of these introduced trees. With few exceptions they are apple trees and, insofar as the Valley is concerned, are contained primarily in three orchards (2). One of these is included within the parking area near Camp Curry, a second will be noted in the

meadow just east of the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. stables, and a third is in the vicinity of the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. utility area near the road between Yosemite Lodge and Government Center.

The first two orchards were planted by James C. Lamon, the first settler in Yosemite Valley. He arrived here in June 1859, located a pre-emption claim of 160 acres in the fall of that year and built a small cabin of logs near the present Yosemite Park and Curry Co. stables. His two orchards were planted soon after. Today they are composed almost entirely of apple trees, although one pear tree can be found in the orchard near the stables. Apparently, in the early days they contained plum and peach trees as well (3). The orchard near the Company utility area was planted by James Mason Hutchings who had

(1) The Yosemite Valley area and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, originally known as the Yosemite Grant, was originally entrusted to the State of California by the Federal Government in 1864. Yosemite National Park, including an area surrounding Yosemite Valley, was established on October 1, 1890. In 1906 the two areas comprising the original Yosemite Grant were re-ceded to the Federal Government by the State and incorporated into Yosemite National Park.

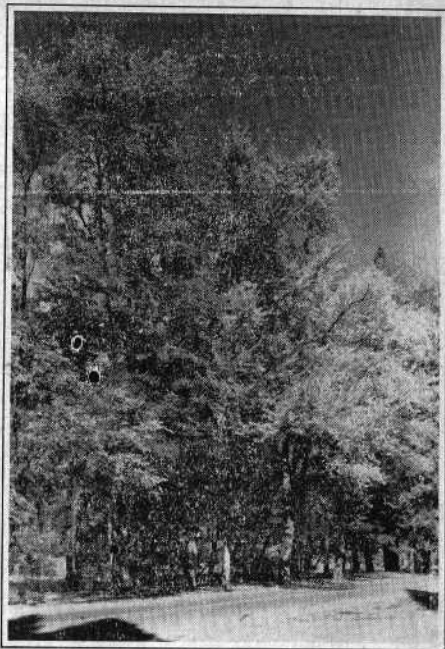
(2) Apple trees will also be noted in the Wawona area. According to Mr. Ed Gordon, old time Wawona resident, the apple orchard in that section was planted during the early days by George Conway. In addition to the orchard a few apple trees will be found in the rear of the Wawona Hotel, as well as in the vicinity of the spring west of the meadow. These were planted by the Washburn Brothers about 60 years ago.

(3) See Taylor, Mrs. H. J. "Yosemite Indians and Other Sketches;" San Francisco, California, Johnck and Seeger, 136. pp. 15-26.

returned to the Valley in 1864 as a hotel owner (4). This orchard surrounded his residence, which he constructed on the north side of Yosemite Valley a few years later. Although the Hutchings residence was eliminated many years ago the orchard still remains. It consists mostly of apple trees, but a few cherry trees will also be noted.

Hutchings also planted a row of American elms along the route of the present road that crosses the meadow north of the present Sentinel Bridge. These were grown from seed supplied by Rev. Joseph Worcester of Waltham, Massachusetts (5). Of these trees only one remains. It can be found near the road intersection on the north side of the Valley opposite the Sentinel Bridge.

American elms as well as black



American elms and black locusts,
Old Village

(4) In June 1855 James Mason Hutchings, contemplating the publication of his "California Magazine," visited Yosemite Valley with several companions—among them the artist Thomas Ayres—for the purpose of gathering data and making sketches for publication. This is credited as the first "tourist" visit to the Valley since it was prompted solely by interest in its scenic values. Several earlier journeys had been made to the region but the principal interest in such cases had been that of pursuing Indians, following the Indian trouble in 1850-51, or prospecting. It was from the meager reports of these earlier expeditions that Hutchings' interest in the area was aroused.

From the time of his first visit Hutchings always had a deep affection for Yosemite. In 1864 he purchased the "Upper Hotel" (constructed by Beardsley and Hite in 1857-59), which was located on the south side of the road opposite the present Sentinel Bridge, and re-christened it "Hutchings House." It was later to become famous as Cedar Cottage, a name applied due to the fact that one of the many additions to the original structure was constructed around a large California incense cedar. See Russell, C. P. "100 Years in Yosemite;" Stanford University Press; 1931. pp. 99-125.

(5) See Hutchings, J. M. "In The Heart Of The Sierras;" Pacific Press Publishing House, Oakland, California; 1886, pp. 134-138.

locusts will also be noted in the Old Village. Trees of the latter species will also be found in the pioneer cemetery (near the Park Museum), in the vicinity of Camp Curry, and along the road near the start of the Four-Mile Trail. The black locusts in the latter place are reminders of the period in Yosemite history when that area was an important public center in the Valley (6). In addition, two sugar maples will be found in the Old Village just east of the general store (7).

These "outsiders" of the original

generation remain among the natives by sufferance. It is the policy of the National Park Service to eliminate so far as possible all exotic plants and animals which may gain a foothold in the national parks, but these relics of pioneer days in Yosemite Valley may remain until Nature deals the inevitable death blow. They will not be replaced except by their scattered progeny which may escape the watchful eye of the forester. In time, even the scattered progeny will succumb to Nature's controls.

(6) In 1856 Walworth and Hite undertook the construction of the first building designed to serve the needs of early visitors to Yosemite Valley. It occupied a site at the base of Sentinel Rock near the start of the present Four-Mile Trail to Glacier Point. Completed in 1857, it thus became the first hotel in this area. In 1869 this original structure was dismantled by A. G. Black who utilized the site in the construction of a new hotel. In the same year G. F. Leidig constructed another hotel nearby. Originally, the Yosemite Chapel, built in 1879, occupied a place in this area, and the office of the Guardian of the Yosemite Grant was located here for a time. In 1888 all these buildings were razed, with the exception of the Chapel which was moved to its present site in the Old Village.

(7) These trees mark the site of the photographic studio operated by Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Boyesen, located at that point for many years. From information received from Mrs. Ellen St. Clair, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Boysen, these trees were planted in 1902, '03, or '04 from stock received from Vermont.

NOTE: A paper in the museum library, "Exotic Trees of Yosemite Valley," by Nelson K. Ordway (1932), sheds additional light on the origin of introduced trees here.



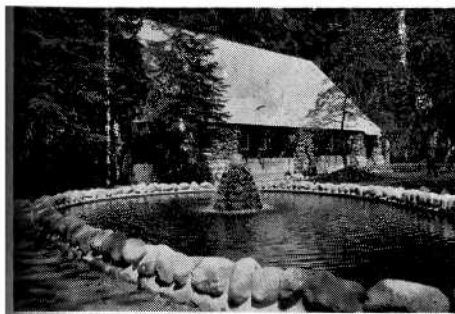


BEWITCHED

By Enid Michael

Last July 6th, while walking toward Happy Isles, a strange bird voice caught my ear. Pausing beneath an incense cedar and looking up I saw a surprising sight. A trim

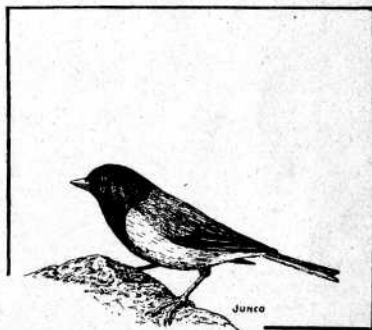
Camp 16 watching a western robin on a nest when I overheard an excited exclamation—"Can those birds be the young of the junco?" Closer observation revealed a strange sight.



State Fish Hatchery - Happy Isles

Cassin's vireo was stuffing food into the gaping bill of an uncouth appearing cowbird. The latter, a bundle of scraggly feathers, appeared to be twice the size of the Cassin's vireo. Observing me beneath the tree it stopped only momentarily to scold me for this intrusion before it returned to the task of gathering food for its foster child.

The next day about noon I was in



A junco was being followed by two tan-colored birds, each of which appeared to be about twice the junco's size. They had tan heads and their tan bodies and breasts were somewhat patterned by dark brown lines or mottlings. Their bills were yellow and their plumage trim. They could fly well and pursued the junco from pillar to post. The junco, visably worried, dashed frantically about in search of food, feeding first one and

then the other of the feathered beggars.

At length the junco alighted at a spot where some camper had been generous with doughnuts. Many birds gathered at this feast and the junco was glad to join, along with

its charges which were almost full grown cowbirds.

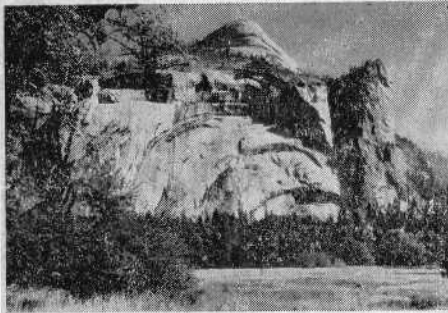
Only in recent years have cowbirds been a part of the Yosemite fauna. If memory serves me correctly they were first noted in Yosemite Valley in the spring of 1938.



A NEW BIRD RECORDED FOR YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Park Ranger M. B. Evans

On the morning of last April 13th, while driving along the road in the upper end of Yosemite Valley which



passes through the meadow just north of Camp Curry, it was my good fortune to have the opportunity of observing a large shore bird of curlew size.

Even at first glance it was apparent that its presence here was of interest for I had never observed a bird of exactly this description in this area before. Consequently I stopped

the car at once and watched it carefully from a distance of about fifty yards. It was about fifteen inches tall and of a mottled gray color with somewhat lighter underparts. Its straight bill was of grayish color and about three inches long. It was quite wary and as it walked it bobbed or jerked its head back and forth.

It soon became frightened and took wing, flying for about 100 yards before it again descended to the ground. As it flew, however, I could see that there was considerable white along the wing feather tips in the form of a distinct band, and also that there was some black on the wing tips. When I finally drove away it was still there, acting lost or unseemly, and had done no feeding.

Shortly after it was possible for me to return to the Park Museum where I checked its identity in the reference library. The bird's size, markings, and actions corresponded with de-

criptions given for the western willet which had not been previously recorded among the birds of Yosemite. Apparently it had become lost

or had been "blown in" by a storm that had visited this region at that time for it is a migratory bird which winters along the California coast.

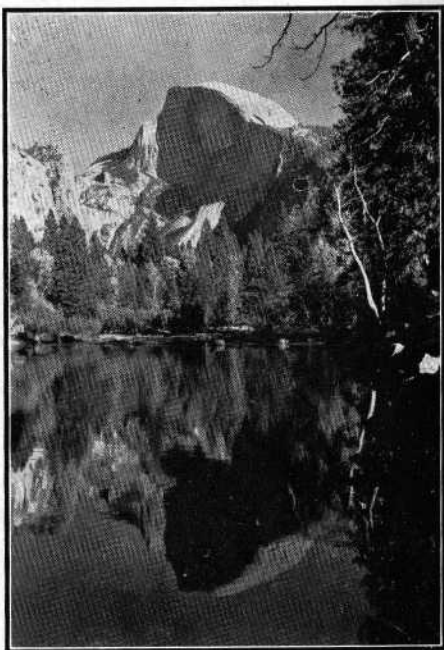


WESTERN SNOWY EGRET IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

By M. V. Walker, Associate Park Naturalist

Many Yosemite residents are quick to recognize any new form of animal or plant life that puts in an appearance here. On the morning of April 23, 1946, the Museum had just been opened when the telephone started ringing. Homer Robinson, Assistant Chief Ranger had called to report some strange, white crane-like birds in the meadow to the northwest of the Sentinel Bridge. Their pure white plumage and strange antics in securing food in the ponds (probably tree toads, *Hyla regilla*) attracted his attention. Just as this conversation was completed the phone rang again and Sherwood Spurgin of the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. called to report his observation of these strange white birds.

Park Naturalist Brockman started out immediately to investigate. Walter J. Fitzpatrick, Assistant Postmaster and student of bird life in Yosemite, was called and he also made a quick dash for the meadows and ponds. The birds were very accommodating and readily observed, and



Half Dome from Sentinel Bridge

Fitzpatrick made an effort to get some motion pictures.

The birds were easily identified as the Western Snowy Egret. This observation constitutes the first record for this species in the Yosemite Val-

ley. Two different groups of four birds each were observed so that it is likely that there were at least eight birds in the flock.

Peterson describes this Snowy Egret as follows: — "A medium sized white Heron with a black bill, black legs, and yellow feet. The American Egret is much larger and has a yellow bill and black feet, almost the reverse in color of those parts in the Snowy."

Grinnell and Miller in the recent publication "The Distribution of the Birds of California" discuss this species (*Leucophoyx thula brewsteri*) as follows:—

Status: — Present throughout the year in the southern three-fourths of the State below the 1000-foot level; elsewhere, in summer only, or vagrant. Formerly, prior to about 1880, locally common. Beginning in the '80's nearly wiped out by plume hunters. In the early 1900's thought to have become extinct within this state; but by 1908 began to be recorded again, and now (1943) fairly common in favored places. •

Geographic range: — Chiefly the lower Sacramento Valley, the San Joaquin Valley, the Colorado River Valley, and a coastwise strip from Marin County to San Diego.

Habitat: — Marshes, tide-flats,

stream courses, and borders of lakes. Nesting sites are situated in sequestered, dense tule beds.

The rather sudden appearance of such a large number of birds in an area not formerly frequented by the species may be indicative that their numbers are increasing rapidly, and that they may be expected in other favorable areas from which they have been absent for many years.



MUSEUM NOTES

The library of the Yosemite Museum has recently received the new book "Handbook of Lizards" by Hobart M. Smith. This book is published by the Comstock Publishing Co., Ithaca, New York, and is Vol. VI in their series of Handbooks of American Natural History.

This is the first handbook to be published covering every known species of lizard occurring in the United States and Canada. It is profusely illustrated and contains valuable keys and distribution maps. Everyone interested in this field of natural science will find it of great interest and value. (M.V.W.)





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Dan Anderson