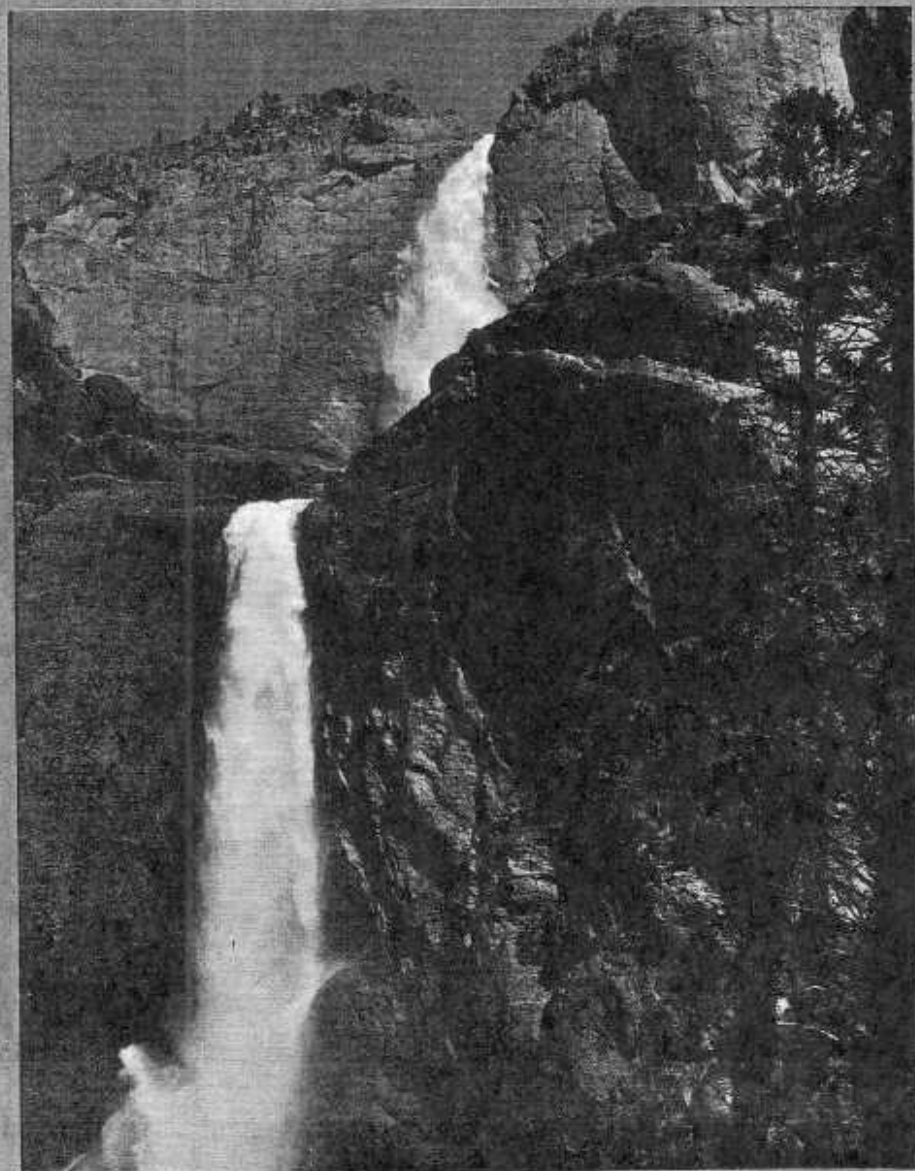


F
868.Y6
.Y52

no. 5
May
1950

Yosemite Nature Notes



YOSEMITE

By Frances Hull Topping

I watched the morning sunlight creeping down the granite
Walls of gray El Capitan;
I saw Half Dome, his crest in shadow still, stand immobile,
and mythical, and unperturbed
As some old Indian warrior turned to stone; I heard the
tumbling waterfall, its shimmering bridal veil
Cascading from its pinnacle to greet the trembling earth
waiting, as bride half shy, the coming of her lord.

The crystal streams, exultant from the winter snows, leaping
and rushing in their onward course,
Sang a wild song, then paused to kiss the sheltered glade,
leaving it bright with dogwood, aspen, and with wild azaleas
Exquisite as orchids, and as rare, and then meandered idly
among the pines and oaks and cedars,
Amid the aged grandeur of the forest monarchs where once
the Indian women ground the acorns for their pounded bread.

Speak, ancient Monarchs! Tell to me the reason, and how
many years ago, our redskin brothers made their exodus
From this enchanted land! Grant to me the secret of your calm!
I stand, a dwarf, beneath your tow'ring height, but in my heart
a psalm,
For I have stood where Nature is supreme, and God is immanent.

Yosemite Nature Notes

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DIVISION AND
THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION, INC.

C. P. Russell, Superintendent

D. E. McHenry, Park Naturalist

H. C. Parker, Assoc. Park Naturalist

N. B. Herkenham, Acting Asst. Park Naturalist

VOL. XXIX

MAY, 1950

NO. 5

SUMMER VERTEBRATES OF MARIPOSA GROVE

An annotated check list

By Richard G. Beidleman, Ranger Naturalist 1948-1949¹

The casual visitor to Mariposa Grove² is generally so preoccupied with timber statistics and tunnel trees that seldom is a thought given to the animal forms which inhabit the area. Those who are able to spend a few hours or days within the Grove, however, soon become aware of a multitude of interesting animals which, by their varying activity, assume more appealing proportions over a period of time than do the sedentary trees.

Animals occurring in Yosemite National Park have been described in a number of publications, including Grinnell and Storer (1924), Beatty and Harwell (1938), Walker (1946) and Evans and Wallis (1949), and a comprehensive guide to Mariposa Grove was written in 1949 by McFarland; but aside from brief articles in **Yosemite Nature Notes** there has been no attempt to compile a check list of the vertebrate animals of the Grove.



Mariposa Grove Museum

¹ Contribution from the Zoology Department, Colorado A and M College, Fort Collins, Colorado.

² Elevation about 6500 feet.

This publication partially rectifies that omission by presenting an initial survey of the area's inhabitants, based upon articles in **Yosemite Nature Notes**, ranger reports in the Yosemite Museum library, and field observations by various individuals. Most of the 1948 and 1949 observations were made by this author. The compilation of data has produced a check list including seventy-nine different vertebrates—two fishes, three amphibians, four reptiles, fifty-four birds and sixteen mammals—which the visitor may encounter during a summer in Mariposa Grove, a listing which, as yet, is by no means complete.

The animals are, in general, arranged taxonomically, and a comment has been made about the dis-

tribution or abundance of each. Vertebrates included are those encountered during the summer months from the last of May through early September. The area covered by this report is approximately the same as shown on the map in McFarland's guide, from the Sentinels on the west to the edge of the park on the east and from the loop trail on the north to Rattlesnake Creek on the south.

I would like to express my appreciation to Associate Park Naturalist Harry C. Parker, District Ranger Harry Daring and Ranger Clifford Anderson³ for clarification of some mammal records. It is hoped that this listing will stimulate additions to the known vertebrate inhabitants of Mariposa Grove of Big Trees.



COLD-BLOODED VERTEBRATES

Because of limited field work and sparse records, few fishes, amphibians and reptiles are known from the Grove. The restricted first population is explainable on the grounds that, aside from small Rattlesnake Creek, there is little suitable environ-

ment. Such fish as do exist can probably trace their ancestry back to planted individuals. Reptiles and amphibians are undoubtedly more common than the record indicates, as habitats suitable for their survival are numerous.

FISH

Trout, Eastern Brook (*Salvelinus fontinalis*): Slightly more common in Rattlesnake Creek than the rainbow trout. Most individuals are small.

Trout, Rainbow (*Salmo gairdneri*): A very few in Rattlesnake Creek, mostly small ones.

AMPHIBIANS

Newt, Sierra (*Triturus sierrae*): Fairly common in moist areas, in or under rotting wood. A number were found in moist meadows northwest of the campground in 1949.

Salamander, Sierra Nevada (*Ensatina sierrae*): In similar areas but not as common as Sierra newt, at least in 1949.

Tree-toad, Pacific (*Hyla regilla*): Only one specimen was found in 1949, under the porch of the ranger naturalist cabin; undoubtedly this amphibian is more common than the record suggests.

³ Now stationed at Muir Woods National Monument, California.

REPTILES

- Lizard, Blue-bellied** (*Sceloporus* spp.): This represents the most common type of lizard in the area but no examination was made to determine which species occur.
- Lizard, Sierra Alligator** (*Gerrhonotus coeruleus palmeri*): Often found under wood or rocks in dry areas.
- Snake, Pacific Rubber** (*Charina bottae bottae*): This is probably the area's most common snake, having been recorded on several occasions, especially in the Upper Grove. In 1948 a visitor mistook one crawling up the General Sheridan tree for an eel.
- Rattlesnake, Pacific** (*Crotalus viridis oreganus*): Occasionally seen around rocky Wawona Point. The name "Rattlesnake Creek" may have some significance, but this author has seen no rattlers in its vicinity.

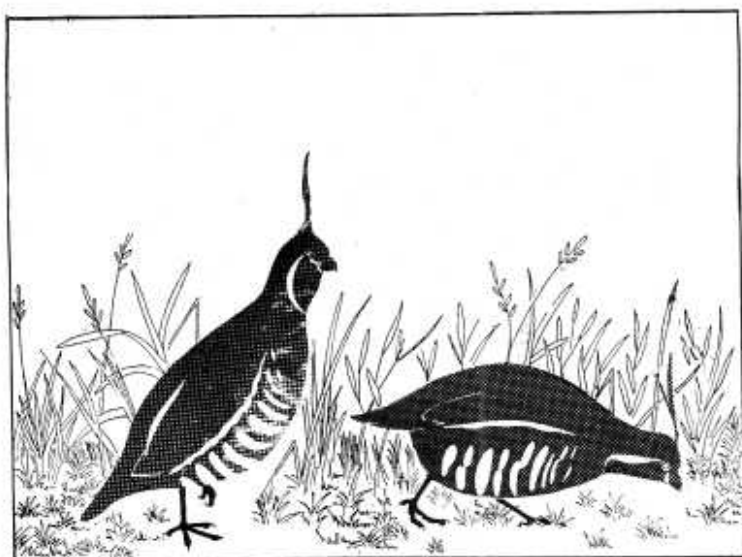


WARM-BLOODED VERTEBRATES

BIRDS

Included in this list are only those birds which have been encountered in the Grove during the summer months. Although not always indicated, many of these probably nest within the limits of the area. Methodical population studies in the various habitats of Mariposa Grove would undoubtedly provide additional information on the species of birds present and their distribution.

- Pelican, White** (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*): Very rare, of course. A large flock was observed flying over Wawona Point on June 19, 1941.
- Vulture, Turkey** (*Cathartes aura*): An uncommon visitor at this elevation. Two were reported west of the Big Trees Ranger Station in 1933 and one was seen over the campground in 1949.
- Goshawk, Western** (*Astur atricapillus striatulus*): One was collected in 1930 and on several occasions in 1949 one was seen flying over the Grove.
- Hawk, Sharp-shinned** (*Accipiter velox*): One was observed in 1942.
- Hawk, Cooper's** (*Accipiter cooperi*): A possible individual was observed near Rattlesnake Creek south of the campground in 1949.
- Hawk, Western Red-tailed** (*Buteo borealis calurus*): Seen occasionally over the Grove. Tail feathers were found on the loop trail north of the campground in 1949.
- Hawk, Eastern Sparrow** (*Falco sparverius sparverius*): Several small falcons, undoubtedly sparrow hawks, were observed in 1948 and 1949.
- Grouse, Sierra** (*Dendragapus fuliginosus sierrae*): Fairly common but seldom seen. Yellow droppings are often found at the base of roost trees.
- Quail, Plumed** (*Oreortyx picta picta*): Although not often observed, the numerous distinctive calls of this bird suggest that it is fairly common. In 1949 three were seen crossing the road above the Grizzly Giant.
- Pigeon, Band-tailed** (*Columba fasciata fasciata*): An uncommon visitor at this elevation. One was observed in a treetop west of the campground on August 15, 1949, and several were seen in flight over the Biledo Meadows trail at the southeast edge of the Grove on August 25, 1949.
- Owl, Pacific Horned** (*Bubo virginianus pacificus*): One was observed in 1940. Probably more common than the single record suggests.
- Owl, California Pigmy** (*Glaucidium gnoma californicum*): Commonly occurs at lower elevations than the Grove but one was heard on several occasions in August of 1949 near the campground.



Plumed Quail

Swift, White-throated (*Aeronautes saxatalis saxatalis*): These can often be seen performing over Wawona Point. In 1949 they were also seen on one occasion over the campground.

Hummingbird, Calliope (*Stellula calliope*): Occasionally seen at flowers in the moist meadows of the area. More common at Biledo Meadows to the east.

Flicker, Red-shafted (*Colaptes cafer collaris*): A fairly common nesting resident.

Woodpecker, Western Pileated (*Ceophloeus pileatus plicatus*): Occasionally encountered in the Grove. In 1949 one was seen at the edge of the campground and one along the trail from the museum to the Grizzly Giant.

Sapsucker, Southern Red-breasted (*Sphyrapicus varius daggetti*): Occasionally encountered. There is a 1939 nesting record.

Sapsucker, Williamson's (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus thyroideus*): A female was observed on Wawona Point in 1948.

Woodpecker, Modoc (*Dryobates villosus orius*): Fairly common in the Grove.

Woodpecker, Northern White-headed (*Dryobates albolarvatus albolarvatus*): A common nesting resident of the area. Two nests with young near the museum were destroyed by thoughtless visitors in 1949.

Flycatcher, Wright's (*Empidonax wrighti*): In past years this bird has been both observed and collected in the Grove.

Flycatcher, Western (*Empidonax difficilis difficilis*): Recorded as a nesting bird in the area in 1943.

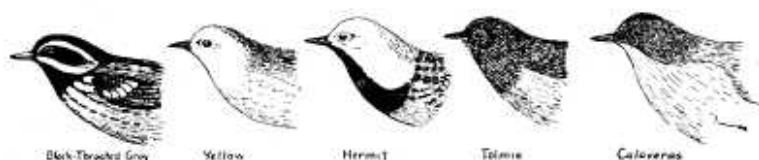
Pewee, Western Wood (*Myiarchus richardsoni richardsoni*): A common nesting resident throughout the area.

Flycatcher, Olive-sided (*Nuttallornis mesoleucas*): In 1941 the song of this bird was reported as frequently heard in the Grove.

Swallow, Violet-green (*Tachycineta thalassina lepida*): Occasionally observed flying in flocks over the Grove but much more common at Biledo Meadows to the east.

Jay, Blue-fronted (*Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis*): A common nesting resident.

- Chickadee, Short-tailed** (*Penthestes gambeli abbreviatus*): A common nesting resident.
- Bush-tit, California** (*Psaltriparus minimus californicus*): One was collected from the Grove on August 14, 1930.
- Nuthatch, Red-breasted** (*Sitta canadensis*): The most common of the nuthatches.
- Nuthatch, Black-eared** (*Sitta pygmaea melanotis*): One was recorded in 1936. Probably more common than this one record indicates but hardly as common as the red-breasted nuthatch.
- Creepers, Sierra** (*Certhia familiaris zelotes*): Fairly common.
- Wren, Western House** (*Troglodytes aedon parkmani*): Occasionally seen around moist areas. On several occasions in 1949 they were observed playing among upturned sequoia roots in the meadow below the museum.
- Wren, Common Rock** (*Salpinctes obsoletus obsoletus*): Occasionally seen among the rocks at Wawona Point.
- Robin, Western** (*Turdus migratorius propinquus*): A common nesting bird of the area.
- Thrush, Sierra Hermit** (*Hylocichla guttata sequoiensis*): Fairly common. There are several nesting records.
- Solitaire, Townsend's** (*Myadestes townsendi*): Reported as a fairly common nesting resident in the Grove. In 1949 only one was seen, along the Biledo Meadows trail.
- Kinglet, Western Golden-crowned** (*Regulus satrapa olivaceus*): Fairly common in the Grove. Often seen in conifers along the upper loop trail.
- Kinglet, Western Ruby-crowned** (*Corthylus calendula cineraceus*): Reported as fairly common but less so than the golden-crowned kinglet in 1948 and 1949.
- Warbler, Calaveras** (*Vermivora ruficapilla ridgewayi*): Common, especially along the loop trail north of the campground and in the meadow below the museum in 1949.
- Warbler, California Yellow** (*Dendroica aestiva brewsteri*): Occasionally seen in moist meadow areas, though not observed by this author.
- Warbler, Audubon's** (*Dendroica auduboni auduboni*): Fairly common in same areas as Calaveras warbler.
- Warbler, Black-throated Gray** (*Dendroica nigrescens*): Common in same areas as Calaveras warbler.
- Warbler, Hermit** (*Dendroica occidentalis*): Common in some areas as Calaveras warbler.
- Warbler, Macquillivray's** (*Oporornis tolmiei*): Fairly common in same areas as Calaveras warbler.
- Warbler, Golden Pileolated** (*Wilsonia pusilla chryseola*): Fairly common in same areas as Calaveras warbler.
- Tanager, Western** (*Piranga ludoviciana*): A fairly common nesting resident.
- Grosbeak, Black-headed** (*Hedymeles melanocephalus melanocephalus*): A fairly common resident.
- Grosbeak, Western Evening** (*Hesperiphona vespertina brooksi*): One was observed near the museum in July of 1949.
- Finch, Cassin's Purple** (*Carpodacus cassini*): One was recorded in 1942 and this author saw one perched on the museum porch in July of 1949.
- Siskin, Northern Pine** (*Spinus pinus pinus*): Recorded in 1942 but is undoubtedly more common.



WARBLERS OF YOSEMITE

- Towhee, Green-tailed** (*Oberholseria chlorura*): Reported as fairly common in the past but none were seen in either 1948 or 1949.
- Towhee, Sacramento Brown** (*Pipilo fuscus carolae*): One was observed by this author in a manzanita bush along the loop trail about one mile north of the campground in 1949.
- Junco, Thurber's** (*Junco oreganus thurberi*): A common nesting resident.
- Sparrow, Yosemite Fox** (*Passerella iliaca mariposae*): Fairly common in the area, especially in the moist meadows.



MAMMALS

The total mammal population of an area is difficult to determine without extensive research trapping. The following list, therefore, can by no means be considered complete, as it is based on little field work. Undoubtedly, the bobcat should be added to the list, though this author has seen neither signs nor records of the animal (it has been observed near the South Entrance, however); there are several species of bats occurring throughout the Grove, especially above Wawona Point in the early evening, which have not been included because none could be positively identified; the mountain lion has been recorded from the Wawona area and may well range into the Grove, although there are no such records. In addition to these possible residents, there are probably several small rodents and shrews which should be included. Further field work will be necessary before a comprehensive picture of the Grove's mammal population can be obtained.



Photo by R. G. Beideman

Long-eared Chipmunk

- Bear, Black** (*Euarctos americanus*): Several bears are to be found in the Grove at almost any time. They typically raid the garbage cans in the late afternoon or evening.
- Raccoon** (*Procyon lotor*): A frequent nocturnal visitor at Big Tree campground and probably elsewhere in the area.
- Weasel, Mountain** (*Mustela frenata*): These animals have been observed in the Grove on at least two occasions in the past and are presumably resident in small numbers.
- Fox, Gray** (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*): In 1949 one fox was observed crossing the road below Wawona Point and what appeared to be an old den was discovered about a quarter of a mile south of the museum. Observations of the gray fox in the Grove have also been made by Rangers During and Bingaman in the past, so the animal is probably resident in small numbers. It is at the upper limit of its altitudinal range in the park here.
- Coyote, Mountain** (*Canis latrans*): Although this author has not actually seen coyotes in the area, presence of tracks and scats (dung) suggests that they occur fairly commonly. District Ranger During reports them as "usually numerous in early fall."
- Marmot, Southern Sierra** (*Marmota flaviventris*): One was observed in 1939 at the Wawona Tree. Not common at the elevation of the Grove.
- Ground Squirrel, Sierra** (*Citellus beecheyi sierrae*): This species has established itself in burrows along the road above and below the Grizzly Giant and possibly elsewhere in the Grove.
- Ground Squirrel, Golden-mantled** (*Citellus lateralis*): Common throughout the area.
- Chipmunk, Long-eared** (*Eutamias quadrimaculatus*): Less common than the Tahoe Chipmunk.

Chipmunk, Tahoe (*Eutamias speciosus*): Common throughout the area.

Chickaree, Sierra (*Sciurus douglasii*): Common throughout the area.

Squirrel, California Gray (*Sciurus griseus*): Much less common than the chickaree. Only three were observed by this author in 1949. It is more common at lower elevations.

Gopher, Sierra Nevada Pocket (*Thomomys monticola*): These rodents occur in restricted numbers in some small meadows of the area, especially along the loop trail north of the campground where in 1949 their diggings were quite evident.

Mouse, Gambel White-footed (*Peromyscus maniculatus gambeli*): This is the area's most common mammal but is seldom actually seen because of its nocturnal habits. Live-trapping experiments during the summer of 1949 indicated that it would be possible to trap one or more of these mice in a single locality nightly for a considerable period of time before exhausting the population. Over a forty-five day interval the author trapped about the same number of mice in his tent cabin.

Porcupine, Yellow-haired (*Erethizon dorsatum*): Occasionally seen in the area. In 1949 a small porcupine was observed along Rattlesnake Creek south of the campground; another waddled through the hole at the base of the Haverford Tree, leaving a trail of quills behind him.

Deer, Mule (*Odocoileus hemionus*): Common throughout the area. Two newborn fawns were discovered within a hundred feet of the loop road in the Upper Grove in 1949. The deer especially congregate at the Grizzly Giant, the Fallen Monarch and around the museum in late afternoon.



Photo by Anderson

Yellow-haired Porcupine with Young

REFERENCES CITED

- Beatty, M. E. and C. A. Harwell.
1938. Birds of Yosemite. *Yosemite Nature Notes* 17(1). 36 pp., illus.
- Evans, Willis A. and O. L. Wallis.
1949. Fishes of Yosemite National Park. *Yosemite Nature Notes* 23(1), revised. 32 pp., illus.
- Grinnell, Joseph and T. I. Storer.
1924. *Animal Life in the Yosemite*. 752 pp., illus. Berkeley. University of California Press.
- McFarland, James W.
1949. A guide to the giant sequoias of Yosemite National Park. *Yosemite Nature Notes* 28(6). 51 pp., illus.
- Walker, M. V.
1946. Reptiles and amphibians of Yosemite National Park. *Yosemite Nature Notes* 25(1). 48 pp., illus.

NEW BIRD RECORD

By Harry C. Parker, Associate Park Naturalist

During the heavy snowstorm of April 8, 1950, Mr. Hilmer Oehlmann was surprised to see in his yard a bright, male yellow-headed blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) with a mixed flock of other blackbirds and cowbirds. The birds were relatively unafraid, seemingly concerned chiefly with finding food and shelter under the severe weather conditions. The feeding station was kept supplied and the birds, including the yellow-head, remained in the vicinity until the next day.

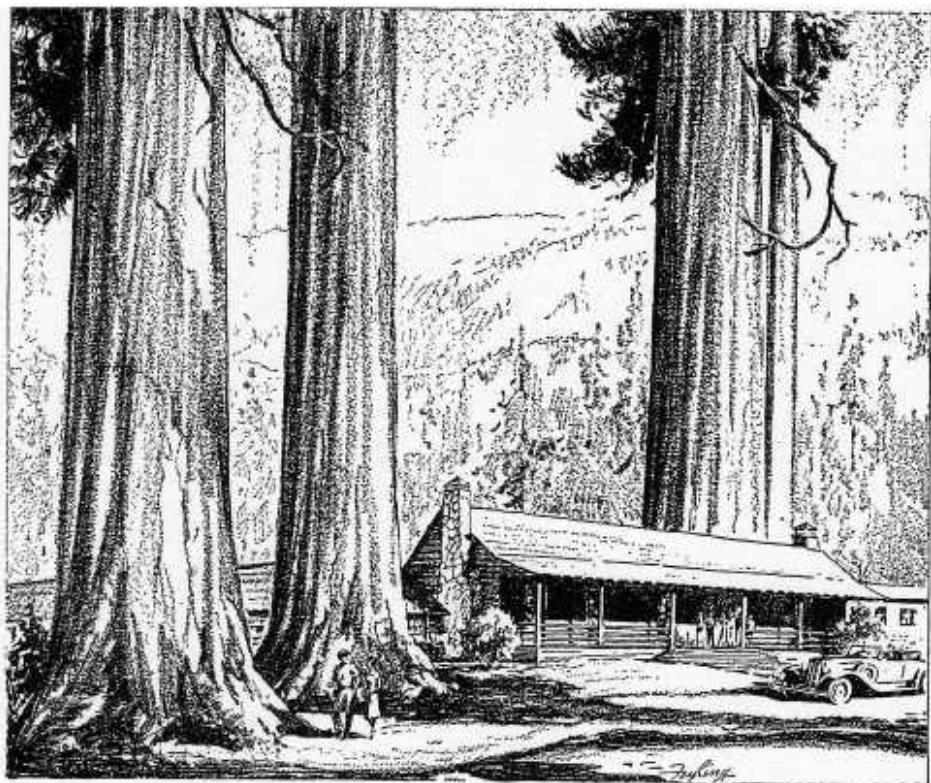
While this is not the first record for the park of this species, it is a very rare occurrence, being the fifth record that we can uncover. Grinnell and Storer in "Animal Life in the Yosemite" make this statement: "The Yellow-headed Blackbird belongs to the fields and marshes of

the lowlands, hence is not often encountered in the Yosemite section . . . In 1919 there were exhibited in the Park Superintendent's office in Yosemite Valley, a male . . . which was said to have been killed 'almost at the door of Sentinel Hotel about January, 1917.'" This specimen, prepared by the late Chief Ranger Forest Townsley, is now in the study collection of the Yosemite Museum.

The other records which we can find are: 1925, Spring, near the site of the Ahwahnee Hotel, one seen by Herbert Sonn; August 18, Bridalveil Meadow, Yosemite Valley, one young male collected by D. D. McLean and now in the Yosemite Museum collection; 1930, May 8-11, near the Administration Building, Government Center, one, first seen by Ranger Homer Hoyt.



Coyote and Gopher



BIG TREE LODGE — Mariposa Grove



Digitized by
Yosemite Online Library

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

Dan Anderson