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YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Yosemite Nature Guide Service

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This is one of a series of bulletins issued from time to time for the information of those interested in the natural history and scientific features of the park and the educational opportunities the park affords for the study of these subjects.

Utilization of these bulletins by those receiving them to the end that the information contained therein might be as extensively distributed as possible will be appreciated.

W. D. Lewis, Superintendent

THE MERCED LAKE CAMP

Of the five new HIKERS' CAMPS recently opened, Merced Lake stands high in its offering to the nature lover and the national park enthusiast. It can be reached in one day from Yosemite Valley, or if the hiker prefers, he may break the trip by stopping over night at the previously described Little Yosemite Camp.

At Little Yosemite Camp a trail ascends the north wall of the valley and intersects the Merced Lake Trail some 500 feet above the level of the valley floor. The Half Dome and Clouds Rest Trails branch off to the left. About two miles above this last junction, the Sunrise Trail to Tuolumne Meadows branches to the left. Beyond this point the Merced Lake Trail passes through most interesting open granite country. Western Junipers and knarled Jeffrey Pines growing sparsely on the glaciated slopes add much to the beauty of the unique landscapes. Impressive views of the Little Yosemite far below and the

serrations of the Clark range to the south tempt one to linger at the many vantage points. Marmots are numerous and amuse with their serious corpulence, as they peer curiously from safe retreats or sprawl comfortably upon glaciated boulders. Slender-billed Nuthatches busy themselves in the junipers, and Green-tailed Towhees pour their rippling songs from every clump of chaparral that succeeds in growing among the shining rocks. Descending from this region of unbroken views, the trail parallels the river, which here roars through a succession of rapids and cascades. Not far above is beautiful Merced Lake, occupying the deep granite basin carved out by ice. At the upper end is a most elaborate camp, which circumstances have made available to hikers at the ridiculously low prices advertised.

The attentive hosts here spare no effort in giving service, and it is safe to say no other high mountain resort in the world has similar accommodations to offer at Hikers' Camps' prices. Hot shower baths are welcomed by the elated traveler, and the beds provided are as comfortable as could be expected in the best of hotels. Hikers should not use the Merced Lake Lodge as a basis in judging the camps. The advantage of such accommodations is there and will be accepted gratefully by all who visit the place. It was not planned that Hikers' Camps should afford such luxuries.

Fishing is excellent in the lake and in Washburn Lake, a few miles above, as well as in the river between the two lakes. Eastern Brook, Loch Leven, German Brown, and Rainbow Trout are plentiful, and at the present time limit catches are being taken with great regularity.

The altitude of this camp is 7200 feet. From this base the ascent of Florence Mountain and Mount Clark or its lofty neighbors may be made. Within a day's walk are Yosemite Valley, Tenaya Lake Camp via Forsyth Trail, Tuolumne Camp via Tuolumne Pass, and Yiell Base Camp via Tuolumne Pass or Vogelsang Pass. A very short day westward is Little Yosemite Camp.

Nature guides make regular trips to the High Country Camps. Full information may be had at the Yosemite Museum.

AN EASTERN NATURE GUIDE IN THE YOSEMITE

Mark Twain says that the best place to collect weather for an exhibition is in New England. Weather is the most talked about subject. If we are introduced to a stranger, ten to one we start right in on weather gossip. The weather is never just right. No one apparently admits that a rainy day is a good day for all concerned. Naturers rightly maintain that we are all concerned. When this weather steeped naturer gets to Yosemite, he finds himself greeting everyone, not this morning but at all times, with "This is a fine day". Then he feels sort of like a prevaricator for he realizes that every day is sunny along the San Joaquin Valley. The announcement is unnecessary. Strangest of all, he soon discovers that Westerners are weather wise too and talk about it like real Cape Codders. Just at present it is too dry. The rainfall, or the lack of it, is of course unusual. I wonder if they and their New England ancestors brought the habit along in their covered wagons? So here is another week of Yosemite sunlight with which to reflect and write.

The fineness of the weather has a decided effect on the plant life. Between the moist banks of the Merced and the dry talus slopes there is an army of interesting flowers. A few are the same as in the East. Yarrow and sorrel have traveled here from their European homes. I saw one plant of our daisy or whiteweed near Camp Curry this week and wonder if it is a late arrival. At least the meadows are not dotted with it, as we know daisies back home. Then there are some plants which are the same but different. Queen Anne's Lace grows on a much smaller scale and has no central purple floweret. The natives are worrying about the disappearance of the Evening Primrose. It once grew in abundance, but the deer have developed a liking for it and nip off the flowers, thereby preventing seed formation. It is considered a pest east of the Appalachians. There are Columbines, White Violets, and Fire Weeds in blossom now; the Azaleas are just passing, all being a little later than our Atlantic flowers, probably because of the higher altitude. And then come the real gems of the Yosemite, the flowers that are different. The famous blood-red Snow Plant, the White Mariposa Lily, the Indian Paint Brush, the tinted Pussy's Paws, the handsome Sierra Primrose, and we might go on ad infinitum naming these remarkable flowers, upon which a stranger, in his mute ignorance, can only stand and gaze. It is here that the visitor can call upon the Nature Guide Service, which is furnished free by the Government. It is with deep appreciation that we welcome the nature guide who comes to our assistance to teach us the wonders of the Yosemite Trailside.

NATURE GUIDES GIVE HIGH COUNTRY TRIP

Last Saturday an enthusiastic crowd of twenty-two returned to the Yosemite Valley from a six-day round of the hikers' camps under the leadership of a nature guide. Perhaps some will remember best the campfires with the accompanying jollity, music, and nature talks. Others were most impressed with glacial cirques, mountain passes, high mountain meadows, and like geological features. Others, preferring living things, will long remember first hand acquaintance with the stunted White-barked Pines of timber line and the variegated flowers of the meadows; still others, the study of four members of the squirrel family; the famous coney, "hay maker of the talus"; and the coyote through the medium of footprints and howl. Bird lovers were thrilled by studies of the Clarke Crow, Rosy Finch, that resident of the wind-swept mountain peaks, and Crossbill with its bright colors and strangely crossed bill. These experiences added to a baby fawn "photographed in arms" and a baby Spotted Sandpiper "held in hand" indicates that nature studies were emphasized and that all returned with an added fund of nature lore, which will give added pleasure to every future trip afield. Similar high country trips making the round of the hikers' camps with a nature guide (at a maximum expense of twenty dollars) will be made every two weeks under the auspices of the Yosemite Nature Guide Service. The dates set are July 21-26, August 4-9, August 18-23.

A NEW NESTING RECORD FOR CLOUDS REST

A party under the leadership of one of the nature guides visited Clouds Rest on the third of July. The party reached the summit during the morning about eleven o'clock. The sun was warm, and snowy masses of cumulus drifting across the blue sky cast dark shadows upon massive mountains. The great crest of the Sierra forms a mighty circle about Clouds Rest. Mt. Conness, The Cathedral Peaks, Mt. Dana, Lyell, McClure, Clark, and Mt. Hoffman are some of the lofty peaks that lift themselves above the great jumble of mountains.

After gazing for a time at the lofty crest of the Sierra, the party sought the ledges upon the west face of the peak, finding there a lunching place in partial shade. The rare Sierra Primrose (*Primula suffrutescens*) covered many of these rock shelves and perfumed the air with clusters of rose-violet flowers. The Clark Crows (*nuoi fraga columbiana*) soon discovered our retreat. The handsome fellows were very willing to share our lunch. One big daddy stuffed all the bread that fell to him down the throat of a child as large as he. This young crow knew how to pick up crumbs but seemed unable to swallow them without his daddy's aid. When his parent was absent, he gathered up the crumbs, stuffing them into a crevice in the cliff. Upon returning, the father crow, as by previous arrangement, went straight to the cache in the cliff and flew away with the prize, closely followed by the youngster.

We were delighted to observe a flock of Sierra Rosy Finches (*Leucosticte tephrocotis dawsoni*) flying over head. Soon two of these charming sparrows, whose bright color seemed a reflection of the color of the Primrose flowers, came close to us, filled their bills with crumbs, and flying over the peak dived into a crack on the eastern face. The birds made as many as ten trips from us to the crack, and as eager young bird voices came from the crack into which the birds had dived, we felt sure that the *Leucosticte* were feeding young birds. This is the first record, so far as we know, of *Leucosticte* nesting on Clouds Rest. These birds are usually found on the higher peaks near the glaciers or fields of summer snow.

A two day trip to Clouds Rest is planned by the Nature Guide Service for July 18 and 19. The party is to leave Happy Isles at 7:30 AM of July 18. Little Yosemite will be reached early in the day and this interesting valley explored. The night will be spent at the Hikers' Camp, and an early start will be made the following morning for Clouds Rest, the return to the valley to be made that afternoon.

Make reservations for this trip at the Yosemite Museum on or before July 17.

TELLING YOSEMITE'S STORY

No. 8 - What Glaciers Did to Sierra Mountain Tops.

The preceding chapter in Yosemite's Story took us up the gigantic stairway made by the Merced Glacier, and we are now in a position to consider the effect of ice on the crests that gave the glacier birth.

Having passed the long series of glacier-made and unnamed lakes along the course of the Lyell Fork of the Merced, we stand in the great amphitheatre or CIRQUE on the south side of Mt. Lyell's 13,000 foot summit. Here, where the head of the great ice mass came in contact with the rock of the mountain top, it bit into the rock mass and ate out this huge elliptical hole. Blocks of solid rock were seized upon, frozen onto by the moving glacier, and ripped bodily from the mountain they had formed a part of for ages. This ravenous appetite for rock was unabated during all the time that the arctic climate permitted the glacier to live. On the north side of the same mountain a similar plucking out of rocks was accomplished by the head of the Tuolumne Glacier. Working steadily toward each other, the tendency of the opposed glaciers was to reduce the divide to a knife edge and at last to eliminate entirely the

intervening rock partition. It is apparent that such cirque cutting would in time destroy entire mountains and so do away with the very conditions upon which the life of glaciers depends. In the Sierras the glacial epoch did not cover a great enough time to actually reduce the elevation of the range, but hundreds of splendid examples of cirques are to be seen.

Hikers traveling on the Merced Lake Trail are impressed by the cavernous excavations they witness upon the tops of Mt. Clark and other members of the Clark Range. These cirques were cut by tributary glaciers which added their forces to the enormous river of ice which occupied the Merced Canyon. The climber who traverses the Tuolumne Pass via the Fletcher Creek Trail passes very close to the spectacular Vogelsang Peak and its deeply carved cirques. The glaciers that headed here, too, were tributaries to the Merced.

On the north side of Mt. Lyell there is to be seen a cirque yet occupied by a living glacier, the ghost of the once mighty ice tongue that played a part in excavating the Hetch Hetchy. The Yosemite enthusiast who would experience the thrill of climbing upon a typical alpine glacier may here witness the actual sapping and plucking that cuts glacial cirques. In this case, the ultimate resting place of the transported rock is not far from its place of origin. Along the face of the shrinking Lyell Glacier a typical terminal moraine is in the building.



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