DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Yosemite Nature Guide Service C. P. Russell, Park Naturalist

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. B. Lewis, Superintendent

THE TUOLUMNE MEADOWS HIKERS' CAMP

For John Muir, Tuolumne Meadows held the best of all the Sierra wonders that were as food and drink to him. Present day Nature lovers agree that the wealth of high country attractions accesssible from here call for an extended visit. The hiker visiting Yosemite's Hikers' Camps will find Tuolumne Meadows to be the center of a region unexcelled for varied beauty and grandeur.

The preceding one of this series of notes on the Hikers' Cam ps briefly described the trail between Merced Lake and Boothe Lake Camp. Leaving Boothe Lake for Tuolumne Meadows, the traveler may choose between two routes. The longer of the trails ascends the five hundred foot ridge east of Boothe Lake to Fletcher Lake, where heads the stream paralleled by the Babcock Lake Trail. A few of the rare golden trout are here attempting to hold their own against the eager fishermen who have learned of their presence. Climbing again a short distance above Fletcher Lake, one reaches the crest of the Cathedral Range, and the trail is seen skirting little Evelyn Lake and winding to obscurity over a great plateau covered with White-bark Pine. The altitude here is 10,500 feet, and the picturesque trees well show the effect of the adverse conditions under which they attempt to grow.

For about two miles the trail traverses this stunted forest near timber line and then descends by a series of zigzags to the flat floor of the glaciated Lyell Canyon. Here the trail intersects the Lyell Canyon Trail. A few miles up the canyon is the living Lyell Glacier, evidence of whose activity is seen even at this intersection of trails in the milky appearance of the stream. The abrading ice constantly adds glacier dust to the water which flows from it. Turning left at this trail junction, a very easy walk down the flat floored canyon brings one to Tuolumne Meadows. Near the point where Rafferty Creek flows into the Lyell Fork, the hiker should ford the larger stream, climb over the low divide, and then ford the Dana Fork. This brings one directly to the Tuolumne Hikers' Camp and saves several miles of walking, necessitated if a foot bridge is looked for. The other alternative in the way of trails between Boothe Lake and Tuolumne Meadows is the route down Rafferty Creek. This is a more direct trail and should be used if time is of prime consideration.

FINCHES OF THE MOUNTAIN SUMMITS

Most mountain climbers are acquainted with the unique Leucosticte or Rosy Finch, which they meet on the bare, rocky passes above timber line. Perhaps fewer climbers recognize the finch found at the edge of the timber belt in the highest of the white bark pines. The Cassin Purple Finch is the largest of the three Sierra finches with strawberry colored heads, and it is found at higher altitudes than the other two.

At the present time, little groups of the birds are to be seen at Dana Meadows and the Tioga Pass at an altitude of 10,000 feet. The male birds have bright crimson crowns, that are apparently more "squared off" than are the crowns of male California Purple Finches. The breast and rump also are pale pink. The females are dark brown above, and the under parts are dirty white with brown streaks. The Tioga Pass birds were feeding on grass seeds when observed on August 10.

DO DADDYLONGLEGS DRINK?

The season is certainly dry when the daddylonglegs are put to drinking red ink!

Every night after the lantern is lighted, I am visited by half a dozen or more of these long legged striders, who seem to be attracted by the lantern and appear to enjoy running over everything in sight.

Several nights ago, I noticed a "daddy" strolling around near my red ink well. He nearly ran into one corner of it and then, reaching up, he pulled himself up on top and straddled the inky pool with his eight slender legs. He carefully began to lower his body toward the crimson surface, pawing meanwhile at the air with his feelers. Finally he struck "Water" and brought his feelers up into his mouth, evidently "licking his chops" to see how he liked it. The result seemed satisfactory, for he lowered his body down so that it barely touched the surface and remained in this position for several minutes.

While he was thus engaged, another of the same species came along and bumped into him. Now there were two! The new arrival was bent on "jumping the claim"; so the original discoverer rather meekly withdrew to one corner of the

back and forth as though he had a napkin and was wiping his mouth. No, he didn't appear to get drunk nor did he curl up and die.

The following night no adventurers climbed the wall to sample my ink, and I thought it best not to record the incident - it does sound rather stretche but the next night brought the whole tribe back again. No less than five daddy-longlegs climbed up on top and with their total forty legs all tangled up tried to drink all at once. One leg would move slightly and that would stimulate the other thirty-nine to action. Three of the five finally managed to monopolize the well, while the other two tried vainly to break in. Whether the ink principle is harmful, neutral, or beneficial is still a mystery.-Wm. M. Harlow, Ran

EXCEPTIONAL AUGUST BIRD RECORDS

The month of August in the Yosemite Valley is usually a poor bird mont in regard to the number of species noted. This year, however, just the opposite is the case. Every two-hour morning walk during the first twelve days of the month brought to our attention at least thirty different species of birds. Twice during these morning walks over forty species were noted. Forty different speci of birds in a two-hour walk is as many as one could expect to see in the very height of the bird season. Different morning walks brought different species to the list, and by August 12 as many as sixty-three had been recorded. Sixty-three is a remarkable number, when it is considered that fifty-five was the best previous record for the full month of August. A study of the birds listed would at once convince the bird student that the long stretch of dry weather was in most part responsible for the exceptional number of birds this month.

THE FLORA OF YOSEMITE AND CAPE COD

(continued)

SEDUM. Plants may also meet dry situations by storing water in fleshy leaves. Cape Cod representative of this genus is Sedum acre, the Mossy Stonecrop. The Yosemite counterpart is Sedum obtusatum. Both species spread moss-like on the ground with thick leaves and yellow blossoms. The Sierra form is common on roc

ARTEMISIA or Wormwood is a most bitter, aromatic plant. The typical western representative is Artemisia tridentata or Sagebrush, and the prevailing Beach Wormwood on Cape Cod is commonly known as Dusty Miller (Artemisia stelleriana). The dense gray wool which covers these plants assists in retaining moisture and enables them to grow in exceedingly dry situations. The Dusty Miller is often used as a border plant in Cape Cod gardens and, although introduced from Asia, has taken naturally to sand beaches. These perennials are dominant wherever th grow and attract more attention by their whitened foliage than they do by their less showy yellowish flowers. Bitter concoctions were made from these plants by the settlers.

ROBINIA PSEUDO-ACACIA. The Common Locust or False Acacia was named for John Robin and his son Vespasian, who first cultivated the Locust tree in Europe. T colonist loved the tree for its fragrant white flowers and its value as an orn mental tree. This may be the reason that it was carried to Yosemite and also Cape Cod. We find it growing in both places wherever the early homesteaders l cated and since those times it has established itself in waste places. It pro to be durable as a fence post. One old farmer said that it would last a hundr years. He knew that it would as he had tried it several times. The coast pe found it useful in ship building.

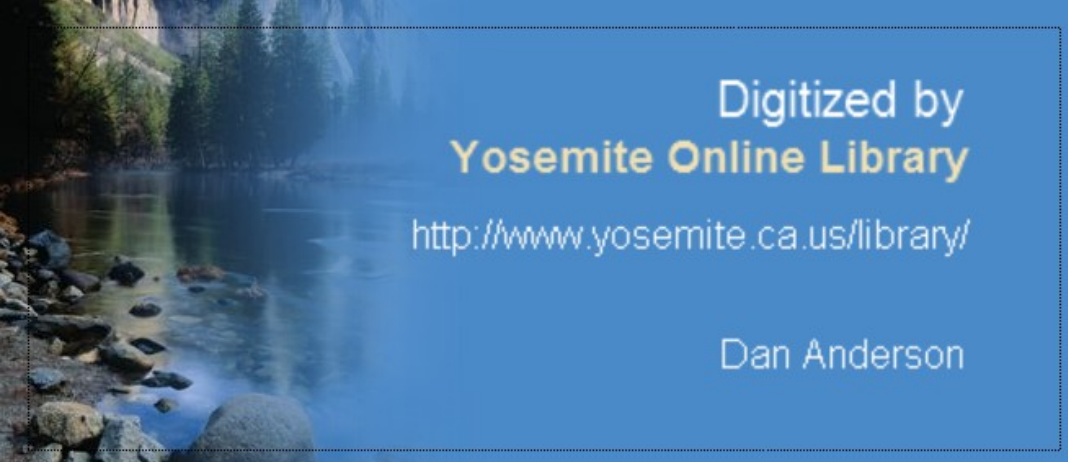
ULMUS AMERICANA. If we think of the Common Locust as a homestead tree, we can think of the Elm as a street tree. The American Elm was introduced as a village shade tree both in Yosemite and on Cape Cod. Its wide-spreading branches make it particularly suitable for this purpose, and it seems to thrive in its new home. Why the tree did not find these localities of its own accord is rather puzzling. Possibly these glaciated areas were so remote that the tree had not had time to get there. Such trees as the hickories, beeches, birches, and the chestnut (Castanea dentata) are not native to the Yosemite or Cape Cod, and with the exception of the Gray Birch on Cape Cod have not found their way to these regions. Is it because they will not grow there or because they have not been introduced? It is certainly not because they are shy of the mountains or of the lowlands nor is it because they are not of general distribution.

WIND BLOWN TREES. One example in the Yosemite is the Jeffrey Pine (Pinus ponderosa var. jeffreyi Vasey) on top of Sentinel Dome. It grows at a higher and bleaker altitude than the true Western Yellow Pine. The typical Cape Cod evergreen, and only pine, is the Pitch Pine (Pinus rigida). It also is able to grow in dry, exposed areas and responds to the wind by growing to the leeward and at other times forms deep carpets. Both of these pines are three needled with the scales of the cones bearing a short prickle. It is the same force at work that distorts them. The prevailing wind blows up the San Joaquin, and a southwester prevails from the Atlantic. Near timber line in Yosemite the Sierra Juniper (Juniperus occidentalis) becomes much gnarled and stubby. The only Juniper on Cape Cod is the Red Cedar (Juniperus virginiana), which occurs occasionally near old dwellings and was probably introduced to the lower part of the Cape. Unlike its western namesake, it does not venture into exposed situations but simulates it by never growing into a forest, instead remaining alone and independent. (It does form thickets in other parts of Massachusetts and New England, especially in old, abandoned pastures).

POPULUS TREMULOIDES. The Quaking Aspen is one of the first broad-leaved trees to march out into the open meadows of the Yosemite rim. Its trim greenish-white bark and leaves, which tremble in the slightest breeze are sure to attract attention. The tree is not found in the Valley yet grows in light, open areas on Cape Cod. Is the fact that so many Cape Cod plants are found in the High Sierras and not in the Valley where the elevation is about 4000 feet due to the latitude? Is It is doubtful if such an explanation is sufficient, as this species ranges from Hudson Bay to Mexico. The two other poplars of Cape Cod grow around old houses and were brought in by the settlers, the Silver-leaved Poplar (Populus alba) being introduced for its shade and the Balm of Gilead (Populus balsamifera) for the medicinal qualities of its sticky buds. The Silver Poplar is the most wide-spread of the Cape Poplars and has spread widely by its roots about old house lots. The Black Cottonwood (Populus trichocarpa) is the most conspicuous poplar along the rivers in the Yosemite and neighboring valleys. It has a slight varnish on its buds, which reminds one of the fragrance of the Balm of Gilead. Black Cottonwood thickets are quite similar to the Silver Poplar groves of the Cape, except that the latter grow in dry situations.

ALDER. The common Alder of Cape Cod is Alnus rugosa or the Smooth Alder. The Yosemite relative is Alnus rhombifolia or the White Alder. The interesting surprise to a New Englander is to find an Alder which is a tree 30-80 feet high, for to him all alders are shrubs. However, in the yards of Dr. Fred Canady and Captain Howe at Wellfleet on Cape Cod there are Alder Trees. These trees are not native but came ashore in the wreck of the British ship Franklin about 1870.

OTHER PLANTS common to both localities are Brome Grass, which grows in exceedingly dry situations; the Eagle Fern or Brachen (Ateris aquilina) being commonest in both places; certain Bur-reeds (Sparganium) and Pond weeds (Potamogeton) of undetermined species. Fire Weed (Epilobium angustifolium); and Shadbush.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