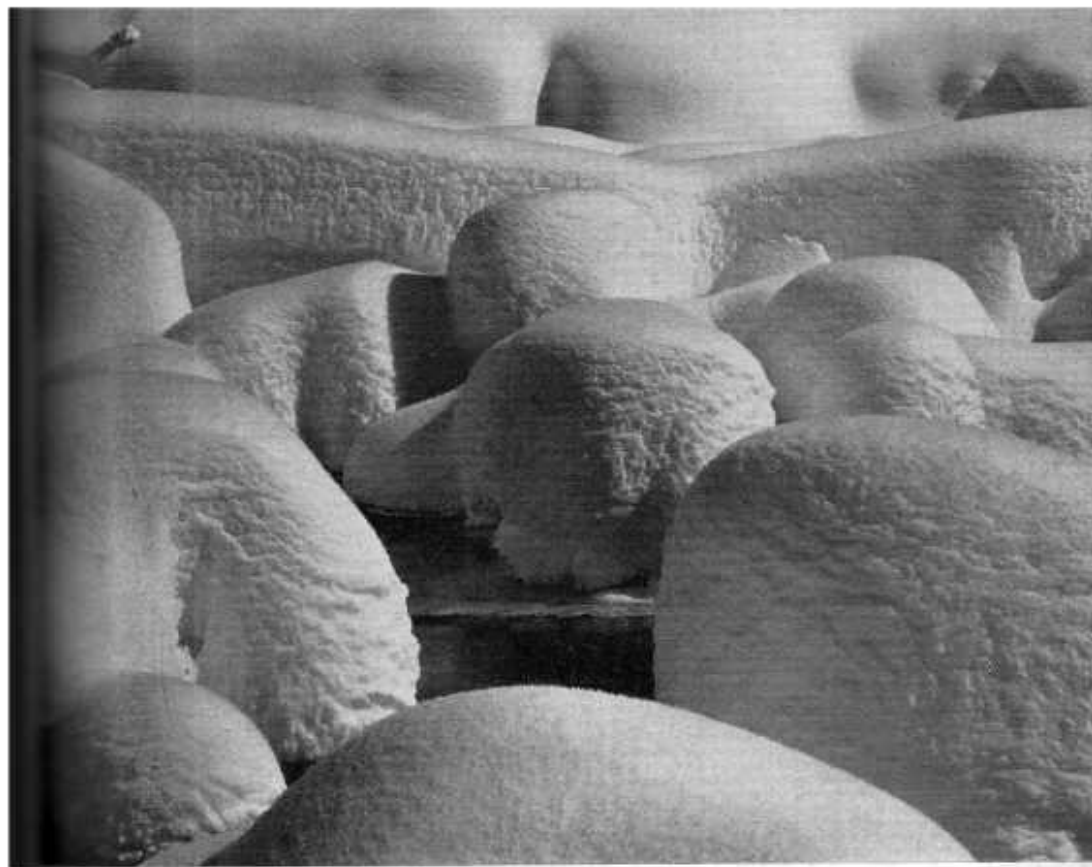


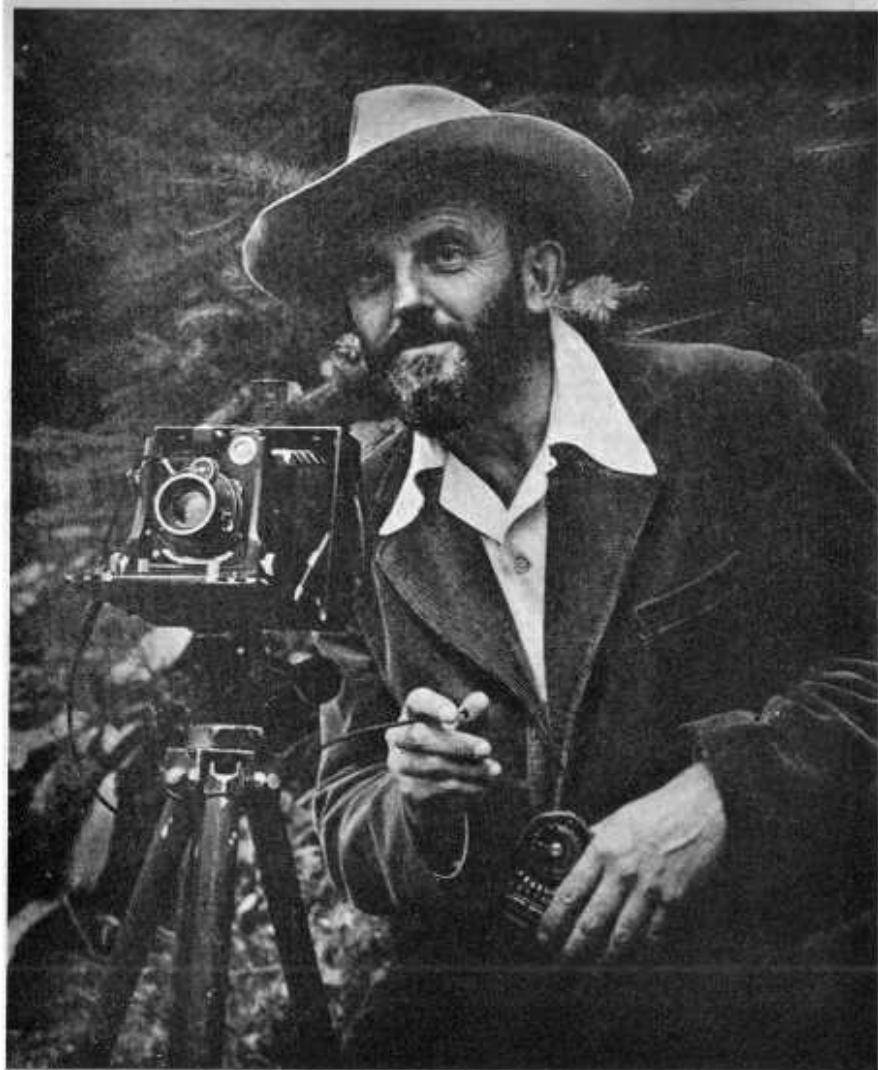
YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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JANUARY 1952



Snow Hummocks at Valley View, Yosemite
—Ansel Adams



Ansel Adams

Photo by F. Malcolm Greeny

Cover Photo: Snow Hummocks at Valley View. By Ansel Adams from "My Camera in Yosemite Valley." Reproduction by kind permission of Virginia Adams and Houghton Mifflin Company.

Yosemite Nature Notes

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

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VOL. XXXI

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ANSEL ADAMS PRESENTS NEW COVER

Over a period of many years *Yosemite Nature Notes* has offered its readers not only articles on the natural and human history of Yosemite National Park, but also an aesthetic interpretation of it afforded by the work of one of the nation's outstanding photographers, Ansel Adams. Through his vital interest in bringing these deeper meanings to our readers, and in cooperation with his publishers, his series of remarkable photographs of Yosemite has generously been made available for the covers of this publication.

There have been times when the limitations of our cover have not done justice to Ansel Adams' photographs. Recognizing this, and wishing to provide all possible advantages for maximum enjoyment of these pictures, he has gone one step further. In cooperation with his friend, Milton Cavagnaro, a well-known designer of the San Francisco area, he has made a gift of the new cover format appearing for the first time on this issue. It is designed to give the widest latitude in the use of the Adams photographs, thus greatly enhancing their unique quality.

This is quite in harmony with the nature and character of this artist. Ansel Adams began his professional life as a musician. For several years he studied and taught piano in San Francisco, but soon found that photography was an essential adjunct to his twin interests of conservation and mountaineering, and finally adopted the art as his chosen form of expression. The encouragement of the late Albert Bender, San Francisco patron of arts, led to Adams' first published work in 1927—*The High Sierra*.

Nine years later Ansel had so grown in stature that he was given a one-man show in Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, *An American Place*. Since then he has exhibited in the principal cities of the United States, and in London, Paris, Sydney, and Dublin. His work is distinguished by extreme clarity of delineation, and is entirely "straight" photography. He employs no controls or manipulation which are not inherent in the application of the medium in its simplest form. *The natural scene is his specialty, which he photographs in terms of its commonplace minutiae, the pageant of the skies, and the inner subtleties of light and substance.*

For two years he held the Guggenheim Fellowship for making photographs expressive of the national parks and monuments of the United States. This resulted in the production of his striking *My Camera in the National Parks* and *Portfolio II*, as well as other works. The publishers of *Yosemite Nature Notes* and its readers are indeed fortunate in having the experiences which the dedicated friendship of Ansel Adams affords.—D.E.M.

A SUCKER'S FEEDING PATTERN

By Allen W. Waldo, Ranger Naturalist

The fact that I saw many people fishing from Sentinel Bridge gave me the urge, when the Merced River was getting low last summer, to stop and see what sort of fish population was present. Much to my surprise I saw about eight trout on the upstream side within a relatively small area. Of these several were over 6 inches long. As it usually seems to happen, my eye was soon drawn to the largest of the group—about an 8-incher. Somehow the small ones don't hold the attention too long. This largest fish, I soon discovered, was trailing a piece of leader about 4 inches long from his mouth. Some unfortunate fisherman didn't quite make the grade. The fish, however, seemed perfectly happy and in good health. After a period of time my eye was suddenly drawn from this trout, which might have been expected to be in poor health but wasn't, to a 4-inch fish nearby which really seemed to be about "done for."

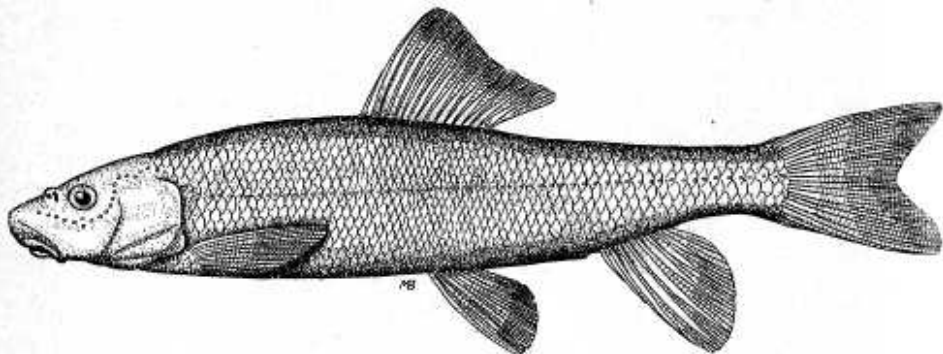
This latter fish was swimming on his side and then belly up. Soon he was righted again, but then once more rolled on his side. I noticed that he was a light color and had no spots or streaks on his body. As he

rolled over once again I got a good look at his mouth, and saw then that he was a Sacramento sucker (*Catostomus occidentalis* Ayres).

I watched to see if I could discover what was wrong with him, and soon had the answer: nothing. I found that he was simply feeding, apparently on the green algae growing on a group of submerged rocks and sticks among which he was working.

It soon became evident that he had a rather regular pattern which he followed in carrying out his foraging. He would keep his mouth closely pressed against the rounded rocks and swim circles around them, eating as he went. One might say he made a series of "equators" around the rocks in various directions. In doing this, of course, he was forced to swim successively on his side, upside down, and rightside up as he made these circuits.

Thus the sucker seems to have no inclination to avoid swimming on his side or upside down under perfectly natural conditions and for a considerable time at a stretch. Other fish known to me up to this time usually resist these positions when in good health.



Sacramento sucker—Drawn by Ranger Naturalist Martin R. Brittan from figure published by Jordan and Evermann.

THE SPOTTED SANDPIPER

By William L. Neely, Ranger Naturalist

I wandered in the high country for two days, encountered no one of my species, explored moraines and unnamed lakes and the area above timberline on the granite slopes and crests haunted still by the ghosts of ancient glaciers whose rumblings have scarcely died. Thus I was then in a fit mood to meet the incarnated essence of solitude. His sharp "peet-weet" sounded across the meadow above the lake and echoed all the loneliness of the area.

The spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) appears fairly regularly on bird census lists; he is known the country over wherever there is enough water for him to live up to the name of shore-bird, even though the shore may be a puddle by a well in the desert, a glacial lake in the Sierra, a coral lagoon in the West Indies, or a broad beach in New York or California. He is one of the first to be listed in a bird student's notebook. Yet despite his popularity and frequency he still preserves his seclusion, even avoiding crowding with his own species. Aloof, wary, and untamed—instead of enlivening and populating an area, his presence but increases its loneliness. He is an eternal wanderer and we envy his freedom—winters spent by the sea and summers in the mountains—not just the precious freedom of two weeks' vacation once a year, but a schedule with a broad margin involving whole seasons.

And wherever he goes he takes his wildness with him. If crowds come to the beach he flutters off and teeters on a floating mass of kelp or a spray-lashed rock, and when people come to the mountains he swings away to a sand bar along the stream or disappears in the meanders of the

alpine meadow creeks.

I reached one of these meadows above an alpine lake and trod on the property of the sandpiper. He signaled to others and flew off in his typical curved flight, with wings stiffly fluttering, to circle back onto a point of turf. In the mud his tracks showed his morning's explorations, and with them the smaller prints of his or her progeny. Where the young ones were I didn't know, but realized that it was useless to search through the grasses where they hid motionless. I rested by the lake and eventually the birds returned to their business, hidden in the sedges along the winding stream, their privacy regained.

At Tuolumne Meadows one evening just before sunset I came across a family of them by the river. The frantic mother coaxed the children away but could not find cover for them. When I picked one up the parent's cautionary call aroused obedience, so that in my hand the inch-thick feathery little creature remained motionless, even when set down again on the sand.

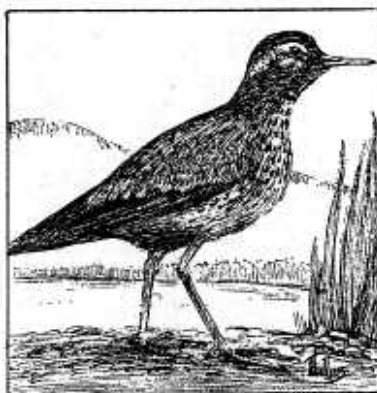
Desolation Valley above Lake Tahoe deserves its name. The wind blows fiercely over the rock and across the island-dotted lake, and lashes the water on the edge. Here among storm-cast debris of logs and water-soaked branches caught in the rocks near shore was my very first glimpse of the sandpiper in his summer habitat. He stood on a pollen-stained log in the water some distance from shore and teetered and bobbed nervously, exhibiting every sign of impatience at my intrusion upon his solitude.

Why do shore-birds teeter and bob up and down so? Various sandpipers

do it, also the wandering tattler, the willet, the yellow-legs, and the plovers seem to bob their necks up and down. The dipper or water ouzel also bobs, yet he is quite unrelated. Has it something to do with the watery environment? When a dipper emerges from the stream he alights on a rock and bobs vigorously before flying off, or upon alighting from a flight will do so, and the spotted sandpiper does the same. Is it a way of balancing with a short tail? Like the dipper, the spotted sandpiper is able to dive into the water and swim submerged with his wings, to emerge elsewhere, bob and teeter, and take off again. Perhaps this motion is to draw attention to the parent when young birds are to be protected. But on the other hand little ones just out of the egg, round and fluffy as they are, will teeter in imitation of their parents. Thus we touch upon one of those mysteries. In solving one problem we uncover ten more, and Nature instead of being more fully understood becomes infinitely more complex.

When summer crowds leave the beaches along California and vacation times are over and people return to their offices and machines, the shore becomes again a lonely, damp, and windswept place. Only gulls, sanderlings, and curlews, fresh from the north country, patrol

the beaches or cluster and huddle in sheltered coves facing into the breeze. Here I will find again the spotted sandpiper, as wild as ever and as aloof, choosing a perch on an exposed rock away from other birds, or stalking shore flies around the low-tide pools, and flying off at my approach in his low skimming flight, scarcely moving his wings, to arc out over the water and settle down again, teetering on some distant rock. I am ever in pursuit of the sandpiper—our paths are ever crossing, and his wild free ways infect me with a restlessness. Perhaps we are by nature also migrants, suppressed by routine duties and obligations, and that lonely call from the alpine meadow or seashore stimulates some deeply buried instinct to wander and roam in the wildest of places.



ONCE UPON A TIME

By **Clare H. Wolfson, Cathay, California**¹

Once upon a time, so stories go, there was a little girl in the foothills who had a dream that she was going to see the great Yosemite Valley some day, and though she lived only

about 4 days' journey from that wonderful spot, it seemed a long, long way in the days of horse power only. But beautiful, beautiful dreams do sometimes come true, and so it hap-

¹ Mrs. Wolfson, then Miss Clare Marie Hodges, was employed in Yosemite National Park during the summer of 1918 as the first woman ranger in the United States. She is the "little girl" of this story.—Ed.

ned that one burning July day² four riders and two pack horses turned their faces toward the Sierran high places—and the most eager of them all, as I remember, was the child on the small gray horse.

Two days of foothill riding, crickets chirping in the dry grass, sweaty horses, stifling dust kicked up by plodding hoofs—but no complaint ever escaped anyone's lips; for Adventure, keen and alluring, rode ahead, ever pointing to the purple mountains.

The third day we passed through Wawona with its clean white hotel buildings, its tall pines and cool shadows, its green dewy meadows. The jaded horses lifted their heads and alerted their ears. Greenness in July was something that foothill stock had never heard about!

We stopped to rest awhile and let the thirsty animals drink of the cold river water—that river which has since become like a familiar friend to at least one of that party of years ago.

Eight or ten miles along a steep and narrow trail brought us to Empire Meadows, where lush meadow grass and fish in the streams were abundant. Like weary pilgrims, we gratefully made camp. A few days later brought the first thrill for which we had spent so many hours in the saddle: the view of Yosemite Valley, awesome and grand, breathlessly beheld from Glacier Point—the thrill that always returns even after all the years that have rolled by since then.

We tightened our saddle cinches, tested the knots on the packs, and prepared for the steep descent. The ladies sat erect on their sidesaddles with their long skirts modestly draped over their knees and reaching to the stirrup; the youngster in

sailor blouse and short full skirt (no jeans or slacks for "little ladies" then), not at all bothered over the fact that she was riding astride and on a boy's saddle, and that her black-cotton-stockinged legs were in full view from the knees down to the stout-laced, ankle-high shoes thrust so resolutely into the short stirrups. The ladies discreetly reined their horses toward the innermost side of the rocky trail, but the child to their horror delighted in leaning from her saddle over the edge of space which dropped off precipitously, a thousand feet or so, to the valley below.

That night camp was made in El Capitan Meadow, and the weary horses were hobbled or staked out to graze. Time has never erased the majesty of that mighty towering monument of granite as seen at that time through the eyes of a child, nor the feel of the long cool grass, nor the ripple of sunlight on the water, the softly waving leaves of tall trees, the quiet shadows that stretched across the valley in late afternoon, the comfort of warm blankets spread out on the ground at night — no luxury of sleeping bags and air mattresses then!

Even the horses reveled in it: they grew sleek and refreshed and cut a caper or two when being brought in during the cool of the morning, their legs wet from the dewy pasturage. The dangling of a loose rope touching Gray Eagle's legs one morning caused the upset of the bareback rider into the softness of the long grass. She still remembers, and when she is riding horseback even today through that same meadow her memory recalls the exact spot.

We followed between the wagon tracks on the dusty stage road to "headquarters" to register at a small brown cabin under a large tree.

There on the porch sat a benign, white-haired man with snowy beard, who greeted us in friendly fashion and chatted as we signed our names (it seemed to the child almost as important as signing the Declaration of Independence, and, expecting to be

asked the names of the horses too, she was ready to give that information!) And thus we met Galen Clark, discoverer of the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, and first State guardian of Yosemite Valley—another picture to be cherished in adult years.

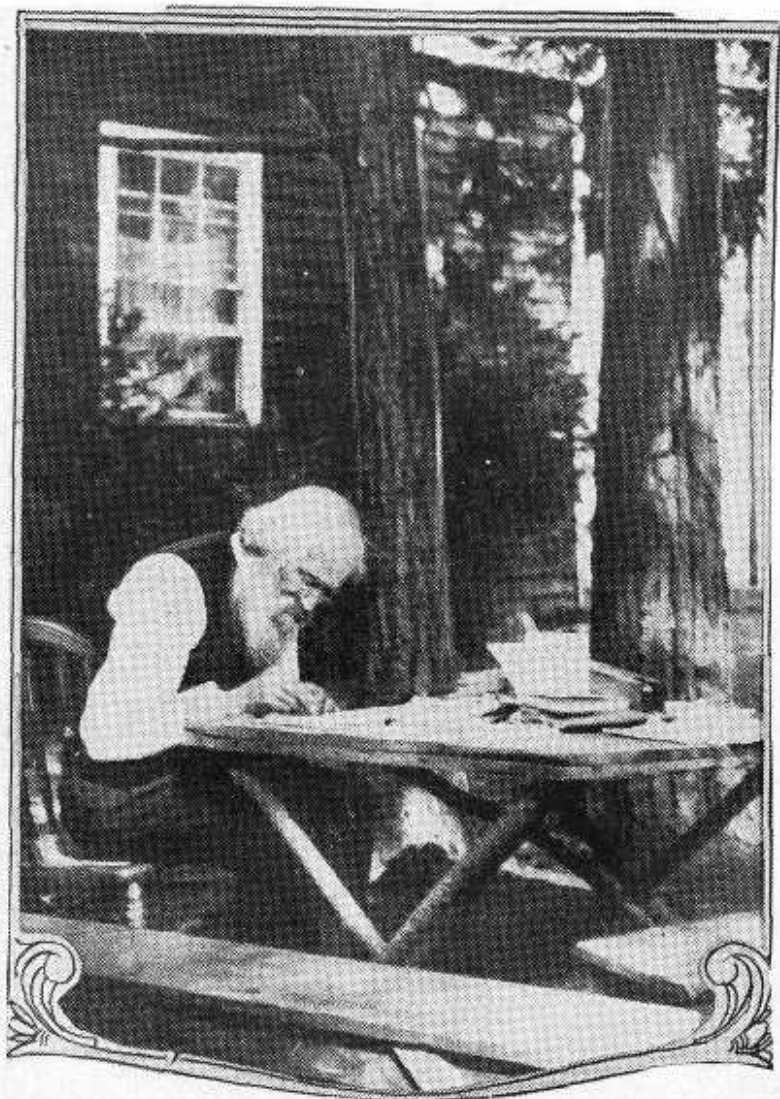


Photo by Maud Winman

Galen Clark—"Guardian of Yosemite"

Some years slipped by. A later trip, 10 years or so after, revealed changes. Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove, granted to California in 1864 as a state park, had been ceded to the United States in 1905 and were now part of the larger Yosemite National Park. Since its creation in 1890 the national park, under the Department of War, was until 1913 in the care of troops of cavalry from the Presidio of San Francisco. A long trip for weary men and horses, over the Coast Ranges, across the wide hot San Joaquin Valley, and into the Sierran foothills: but reaching their post, they patrolled the Yosemite carefully and well. Riding along the stage roads or wherever one went on the valley floor, a detail was not far behind, one or two well-mounted cavalrymen following each sightseeing party, whether to restrict the over-venturous, or to render aid if necessary, or to guard the precious scenery from wanton destroyers—we were never just sure.

This time Tuolumne Meadows in the high Sierra was our goal. You perhaps know the strip of road over which one drives there now. Well, the trail was that much worse—or so it seemed to us then! Before leaving the valley that morning we were checked out with some formality. In a large register an orderly took down the data: Our names, number of horses, number of riders, where we were bound, and when we expected to reach our destination.

The trail on the map looked short enough to our unaccustomed eyes, and we went on record as expecting to reach Tuolumne Meadows that afternoon, but we hadn't bargained on the long, steep trail up the Tenaya zigzags. Near set of sun we found ourselves riding around the granite edge of Tenaya Lake—the

"Lake of the Shining Rocks" as the Indians had named it long before—and there near the white sandy shore of the upper end, within sound of lapping waters, we were content to make camp.

The next morning after the man of the party had gone fishing and the ladies had enjoyed a refreshing dip in the cold, clear water, and had just donned their ankle-length "divided skirts" (we all rode astride those days—thus had time moved on!), we were somewhat startled to see a young cavalryman come riding into camp—the first person other than those of our own party we had seen since checking out the day before. He touched his wide hat respectfully and inquired if we were the party expected in Tuolumne Meadows the night before. So we had not traveled unheralded, it seemed. We had been announced and our arrival was scheduled—the U. S. Army was interested in our whereabouts! We suddenly felt important. Had we had any trouble which had detained us, he solicitously wanted to know? We had not, so he touched his hat again, turned his horse, and rode off, assuring us that "the boys" would be looking for us when we reached the meadows. And they were—three young privates and their corporal at their lonely outpost where a dozen or so people were all they were likely to meet in a summer.

They visited at our campfire, joined in our songs, and listened to news from the outside world, and then when the campfire died and the stars were bright above, and the granite spires and domes stood out bold against the glittering sky, they went whistling toward their camp down the trail. They were our guides on long trail rides to the park boundary, as we accompanied them on

their patrols; sheep men were still suspected of stealing in to pasture their sheep on forbidden national park reservations, and forest fires set by lightning or other causes were sometimes discovered.

We learned the names of peaks and mountains and streams: Ritter and Conness and Hoffmann, Gibbs, Dana, Mammoth, Kuna Crest, Raftery—the names still have a lilting cadence as they run through memory, like mountain winds and sparkling streams, rippling bird songs and high bright sunshine, all mingling in one melodious symphony.

There were clear, serene mornings, with great white clouds billowing up in the afternoon, quickly darkening and bringing drenching downpours, rolling thunder that reverberated from peak to peak, and dazzling flashes of lightning. A deafening clap of thunder like a sharp explosion apparently breaking loose right over one's head, just as one has reached the crest of Mount Dana, does not make for peace of mind. This is an experience not soon to be forgotten; neither is the slow, slippery descent through the sleet, the cold boulders seeming to tingle at our touch; and below—startled, nervous horses tied to a tree, impatiently waiting. There was some uneasy wondering as to whether or not horseshoes and riding spurs might attract lightning. To be safe, better leave the spurs behind in the crevice of a rock to be recovered on some

pleasanter day! And then 2 hours or so of cold, splashing ride back to camp in drenched clothing and dripping saddles.

But always after the storm had rolled itself away came clear, calm evenings, and always songs and firelight when the day was done. Almost every year one of that party makes her way by car or horseback to the old haunts. There is one spot where she always lingers and watches the setting sun and waits until the afterglow has faded from crest and crag and spire. And again in memory she hears the rich tenor voice and clear soprano of two of that pleasant group of other years, and from out the past the words of their song seem to float back on the still evening air:

"O'er the hill the sun is setting
And the eve is drawing on;
Slowly drops the gentle twilight
For another day is gone.
Gone for aye, its race is over—
Soon the darker shades will come:
Still 'tis sweet to know at even
We are one day nearer home.

"Worn and weary, oft the pilgrim
Hails the setting of the sun;
For the goal is one day nearer
And his journey almost done.
Thus we feel, when o'er Life's desert,
Heart and sandal-worn we roam,
As the twilight gathers o'er us
We are one day nearer home.

"Nearer home; yes, one day nearer
To our Father's house on high—
To the green fields and the fountains
Of the land beyond the sky.
For the heavens grow brighter o'er us
And the lamps hang in the dome,
And our tents are pitched still closer
For we're one day nearer home."



1951 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Walter J. and Erma Fitzpatrick

The annual Christmas bird count taken in Yosemite Valley between Mirror Lake, elevation 4,000 feet, and El Portal, elevation 2,000 feet, was conducted on December 27 under the most auspicious circumstances yet encountered on this yearly undertaking. The day was fair and unprecedentedly warm, with temperatures ranging from 40° to 72°. The entire area of the census was overlain with a mass of warm air in front of a storm which fortunately did not break until the following day. There was no wind until late afternoon, nor did the relatively small amount of snow on the ground at the upper levels appreciably hinder the census takers. As a result the 13 participants, working in 5 parties, recorded 59 species and approximately 2,078 individuals—by far the most successful Christmas bird count to date. The outstanding observations were those of a bald eagle and a gray-headed junco at El Portal.

The detailed count follows: American merganser, 3; Cooper's hawk, 1; western red-tailed hawk, 19; golden eagle, 1; southern bald eagle, 1; duck hawk, 1; eastern sparrow hawk, 1; valley quail, 8; plumed quail, 12; band-tailed pigeon, 330+; western belted kingfisher, 4; red-shafted flicker, 19; western pileated woodpecker, 1; California woodpecker, 68; southern red-breasted sapsucker, 1; Modoc woodpecker, 14; willow woodpecker, 5; Nuttall's woodpecker, 1; northern white-headed woodpecker, 3; black

phoebe, 8; blue-fronted jay, 235; long-tailed jay, 39; short-tailed chickadee, 35; plain titmouse, 31; California bush-tit, 20; slender-billed nuthatch, 4; red-breasted nuthatch, 8; Sierra creeper, 44; pallid wren-tit, 4; dipper, 8; western house wren, 1; dotted wren, 22; western mockingbird, 1; sage thrasher, 1; western robin, 9; northern varied thrush, 6; Alaska hermit thrush, 2; western bluebird, 74; mountain bluebird, 1; Townsend's solitaire, 1; western golden-crowned kinglet, 135+; western ruby-crowned kinglet, 48; Hutton's vireo, 1; Audubon's warbler, 1; English sparrow, 23; western evening grosbeak, 25; California purple finch, 22; common house finch, 117; northern pine siskin, 108+; green-backed goldfinch, 20; Sacramento towhee, 63; western lark sparrow, 200+; rufous-crowned sparrow, 2; slate-colored junco, 3; Thurber's junco, 140; gray-headed junco, 1; golden-crowned sparrow, 81; Modoc song sparrow, 1.

It is interesting to compare this year's totals with those of preceding years beginning with 1947; in that year the Christmas count project was resumed following its suspension during the war. These earlier counts were as follows: In 1947, 32 species and 414 individuals; in 1948, 42 species and 622 individuals; in 1949, 37 species and 552 individuals; and in 1950, 44 species and 1,050 individuals.



DIGEST OF THE PURPOSES OF THE
YOSEMITE
NATURAL HISTORY
ASSOCIATION

Yosemite National Park, California

INCORPORATED for the purpose of cooperating with the National Park Service by assisting the Naturalist Department of Yosemite National Park in the development of a broad public understanding of the geology, plant and animal life, history, Indians and related interests in Yosemite National Park and nearby regions. It aids in the development of the Yosemite Museum and library, fosters scientific investigations along lines of greatest popular interest, offers books on natural history applicable to this area for sale to the public, and cooperates in the publication of

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Dan Anderson