

# YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



Volume IV

August 11, 1925

Number 12

## A PERSONAL INVITATION.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK IS YOURS! WE OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WANT TO HELP YOU TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR PARK AND TO UNDERSTAND IT IN ITS EVERY MOOD. ALL OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICE IS OFFERED TO YOU *free* BY YOUR GOVERNMENT:

### Visit the Yosemite Museum!

Here you will learn the full story of the Park --- what tools were used by the great Sculptor in carving this mighty granite-walled gorge; who lived here before the white man came; how the Days of Gold led to Yosemite's discovery; how the pioneers prepared the way for you; and how the birds and mammals and trees and flowers live together in congenial communities waiting to make your acquaintance.

Plan your trail trips on the large scale models in the Geography Room.

The Yosemite Library in the museum provides references on all phases of Yosemite history and natural history.

Popular lectures on Yosemite geology and other branches of natural history are given by nature guides at scheduled times each day.

The nature guide on duty will be more than willing to answer your questions on any subject.

### Go Afield with a Nature Guide!

Take advantage of this free service that will help you to know your Park. A competent scientist will conduct you over Yosemite trails, and from him you may learn first hand of the native flowers, trees, birds, mammals, and geological features.

See Schedule of Nature Guide Field Trips.

### Visit Glacier Point Lookout!

From there you will obtain an unexcelled view of Yosemite's High Sierra. The binocular telescope will bring Mt. Lyell to within one third of a mile from where you stand; you can recognize friends climbing trails several miles away. The Nature Guide in attendance will help you to operate it and will explain what you see.

A small library is at your command.

You will enjoy the informal nightly campfire talks given here.

### Attend the Nature Guide Campfire Talks!

In addition to the museum lectures members of the educational staff give talks as a part of the evening program at Camp Curry and Yosemite Lodge. Non-technical explanations of how Yosemite came to be; what you may expect of Yosemite bears; how the local Indians lived; what birds you see about your camps; what trout you will catch in Yosemite waters; how you may best visit the wonderland of the summit region; and scores of similar subjects are given by the National Park Service Nature Guides.

ALL OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE BY YOUR GOVERNMENT.

—TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM—

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## CLOUD'S REST WITH A NATURE GUIDE

By David D. Keck

A PARTY of eight enjoyed going with a nature guide to Cloud's Rest on the week-end of July 18-19. This was the only trip scheduled to that point for this season by the Nature Guide Service, but enough enthusiasm was created on the jaunt to warrant the giving of the trip oftener.

The first day the party followed the Mist Trail and enjoyed the refreshing coolness coming from the sprays of Vernal and Nevada Falls. Lunch was eaten at Little Yosemite hikers' camp and the afternoon was spent in exploring far up Little Yosemite valley to the upper end of Lost valley. At each end of Lost valley the Merced river rushes over high cascades that are well worth seeing. At dusk the party saw more than a dozen deer at a pool that, in drying up, had uncovered deposits of salt that the deer were licking.

The night was spent at Little Yosemite hikers' camp and all enjoyed the campfire in the evening as well as the very favorable accommodations.

The following morning turned out to be cloudy, but the occasional drizzle added to the comfort of the climb to Cloud's Rest and when the sun shone accommodatingly while we were on the summit we felt that the weather had indeed been favorable. The view from Cloud's Rest was very fine, showing the high peaks to the east to great advantage, and Merced lake and Lake Tenaya glimmered alluringly.

The birds were most interesting, slender-billed nuthatches, northern white-headed woodpeckers, fox sparrows, two species of kinglet, Clark's crow and many kinds found also in the valley were abundant. The Alpine chipmunk was a new mammal to many of the group. The flowers were not so numerous as might be supposed, but the peak gave us a little of the Alpine flora. The Alpine phlox and Sierra prim-



CLARK CROW

rose were among these.

Cloud's Rest, with its crest almost at tree line, gives an interesting variety to the naturalist who observes the flora and fauna along the way.



## TAMARAC AND COYOTE CREEKS

By D. D. McLean

On July 19, Leo Wilson and I went to Tamarack Creek, about twelve miles west from Yosemite. Primarily we went fishing, but there were many things quite as interesting as fishing.

Numerous species of flowers were in blossom in the meadows on Tamarack and Coyote Creeks. Many birds were seen as we went down the canyon toward the Merced river. Hermit Warblers were seen and heard at regular intervals throughout the trip. Several families of Pygmy and Red-breasted Nuthatches made themselves very conspicuous by the insistent calling of the youngsters. Mountain Chickadees were feeding their families at the edges of several of the small meadows, and a family group of Hammond Flycatchers were working through a thicket of red firs near one of these meadows. A pair of Wright Flycatchers were seen in some chinquapin and snow brush on the other side of the canyon. The locations were typical for both species; the Hammond preferring the darker, heavier forest, and the Wright in the more open brush.

An Olive-sided Flycatcher was calling from the dead top of a large fir tree near Tamarack Flat. Numerous Solitaires were seen and several heard singing from the tops of the higher fir trees. One bird in particular was signing almost continuously from one of the tallest fir trees on a point jutting out into the canyon. The song was very deceiving in character, seeming to come from only a short distance, but when the bird was finally discovered it was found to be at least a hundred yards distant and fully one hundred and seventy feet above the ground. One White-headed Woodpecker came to drink at a small spring in a grove of aspens at one of the meadows and was followed by a Hermit Thrush. Several Goshawks kept just ahead of us as we went down the creek. While we were standing at the great bluff

looking down into the Merced river canyon a Black-throated Gray Warbler, came flitting up over the edge and perched in a small stunted fir on the brink.

A tiny Winter Wren was seen near the bank of the stream in a tangle of brush and old logs. He had a Toimie Warbler for company which showed much disgust at our presence so near his abode. Numerous Western Tanager were seen at nearly all points, both along the road and near the stream. Of course, the ever present Sierra Junco was there and the same could be said of the Audubon Warbler.

At Tamarack Flat we saw a princely male California Evening Grosbeak near the corral. Golden-crowned Kinglets were more often heard than seen in the thickets of fir along the road near Coyote Creek.

Golden mantled Ground Squirrels were chasing about over the logs and debris all through the forest. Two Long eared Chipmunks were seen near the road, one at a very close range, so close, in fact, that we could notice its long ears and the large white patch immediately back of them.

Although we saw no deer, there is apparently a goodly population, from the numerous tracks and freshly used trails to and from the creek. At several points along the stream I saw tracks which I took to be Mountain Beaver.

While tearing logs to pieces in search of things of interest, we found some Yosemite Land Snails, some large Scorpions, and in an old stump we found one white-footed mouse.

Four different kinds of trout were taken—Eastern Brook, Rainbow, Loch Leven and Cutthroats.

The trip was very interesting, and certainly a success. The nature-lover who wishes to combine fishing with natural history observations can do well in visiting Tamarack Creek.

# A FIELD WITH THE NATURE GUIDES

## TAME DEER RETURNS TO CAMP NINETEEN

Last year a tame doe appeared at Camp 19. She fed from camp-tables and showed no fear when a half dozen children crowded around to feed her. (Motion pictures of "Mabel" are being shown visitors in Yosemite this year.) Later in the year she led two fawns into camp. One of these fawns soon became tame and followed the mother, but the other one usually waited at a safe distance while the mother and sister were fed. A number of deer were placed in the elk paddock this spring, and apparently "Mabel" and her two fawns spent several weeks in captivity. Within a day or two after these deer were freed, "Mabel" appeared in her old haunts, with her two fawns now grown to yearlings. She beds down in the same place, makes her usual rounds begging for food, and, as last year, but one of the fawns is brave enough to feed from the hand. Although not officially marked, this is undoubtedly the same doe that frequented the camp last year, if habits and mannerisms count. The tamer of the two yearlings has a bad habit of striking with the front foot when she does not like conditions, so that children have to be warned to keep from being hurt.

Had one not already been convinced that animals have regular habits, the habits of this deer would emphasize the point. A deer is not to be looked for in summer in one canyon and a day later in a canyon ten miles away. Rather is it to be expected that the same deer makes the round of a certain territory fairly regularly except when migrating. Experience with a tamed deer, which winters at Cascade, about seven miles down the Merced canyon, supports this same view.

Food preferences may be of interest. "Mabel" is particularly fond of raisin bread, cake, potatoes, melons and fruit. When one man, hoping to entice her, purchased a half sack of rolled oats, he soon found he had made a mistake, for she refused this grain. Between meals at camp she browses on deer brush, black oak and thimble berry.

It will be interesting to see if our tame deer gives birth to fawns again this year and what she will do with her yearlings when there are babies to care for.—H. C. Bryant.

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## WILD DEVOTION

A nature class coming off Sentinel Dome saw a pretty show of devotion in a wild mother. As the class entered a sandy area three young Sierra grouse, about the size of half grown chickens, flew away with a whirr of wings and a spreading of white webbed tails. These little ones had no sooner disappeared than four more followed them. The class then saw what had

before escaped them, the mother grouse, not five feet away, crouched motionless. She was well camouflaged. Her color was the color of the sand and the plants among which she squatted. Motionless she remained as five other babies took to the air. Not until all of the brood had escaped did the mother grouse move. Then, when the twelve were out of sight, cautiously she rose, and clucking, walked after the brood.—Erlid Michael.

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WOKAS

Suggesting lazy, languid days and darting dragon flies is the Indian pond lily, *Nymphaea polysepalum*. The broad, floating leaves almost hiding the interesting yellow blossoms speak of warm waters and summer days. As though to show that sepals can be quite as effective in attracting the desired insects, the sepals of this lily are the most conspicuous. They vary in number but overlap in such a manner as to form a beautifully rounded cup; yellow gold within, green gold without. In the center of this cup is found a broad and flattened stigma under which, almost concealed, lie the many stamen-like petals and the true stamens with dark anthers.

As summer becomes autumn these flowers are gradually transformed to urn-shaped seed capsules, held more erect on stiffened stalks. The seeds are eaten with relish by the Klamath Indians, who have given them, as well as the plant which bears them, the name "Wokas." They roast the seeds to eat as we might pop-corn, or use them in the manufacture of flour for bread or porridge. Thus they delight the stomach as well as the eye.

The stems are porous, being made up of air spaces surrounded by tissue. This construction is of double value, for in addition to conducting air to the roots they allow the leaves to float easily on the surface of the water. As the leaves get older the water may recede, leaving them projecting above the surface.—R. D. Harwood.

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## TUOLUMNE MEADOWS BRANCH MUSEUM

The splendid response accorded the Nature Guide work in Yosemite valley has prompted the Service to extend the work to favorable points beyond the "Rim." At Glacier Point is the new look out and its powerful binocular telescope. A naturalist stationed there in July aided more than 8000 visitors to a better appreciation of the wonders spread before them in that unequaled panorama.

A further venture has been made in stationing a nature guide in Tuolumne Meadows. Through the co-operation of the Sierra Club this added member of the educational staff is salaried and presented with the picturesque Parson's Memorial Lodge as museum quarters. A flower show, exhibits of trees, geological collections and Indian

artifacts, are labeled and displayed enable the visitor to start on the right track in becoming acquainted with the place. Each afternoon the Nature Guide entertains guests there. He conducts parties afield every morning, so giving his guests opportunity to learn first hand of the living wonders that inhabit the Hudsonian and Alpine zones of the region. As these privileges become better known to Yosemite enthusiasts the Tuolumne Meadows nature guide will be busy indeed.—C. P. Russell.

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**A FAWN GOES SWIMMING**

Sunday, July 19, was a warm day in Yosemite valley; warm but not hot as weather is in some other sections of the State. Loafing in the shade by the river bank I saw a spotted fawn, long-legged and gawky, move leisurely out from the willow thicket across the river. Deliberately he moved to the river margin, and then wading slowly until foot-free he began a swim that took him fifty feet across a quiet bit of backwater. From all indications the action was promoted by nothing more than a desire to cool off.

Six days later mother and this same fawn were seen to ford the river. The water was about a foot deep and the current was swift; the old doe walked slowly and the fawn hugging close to its mother on the down river side was enabled to hold its footing. Both made the crossing without the least show of anxiety.—Ernst Michael.

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**A RATTLESNAKE'S MEAL**

Although it is generally known that rattlesnakes feed on rodents, it is not often that one is afforded a chance to see what may be considered a worthwhile meal by this snake. A report that a rattler had been killed with some large mass of food in the stomach was followed up and a dissection made with the result that still greater respect is had for the snake's ability to consume sizable mammals. The rattlesnake was little more than two feet long, although it possessed nine rattles. In diameter of body it was about one inch, except where distention showed a large mammal had formed a recent meal. From the stomach was taken a large wood rat fully two and a half inches in diameter and nine inches in body length exclusive of tail. A look at the head and constricted neck of the snake made one wonder how so large an animal could have been swallowed. Only to one who has seen a snake distend the bones of the jaws and head in enveloping its prey does a feat like this seem possible. The firmly knitted jaws of a mammal would not allow of swallowing a mass of food larger around than the size of mouth and neck. Part of the flesh of the rat's head had been digested away, but otherwise the mammal was intact.

In addition to giving evidence as to the food of the rattlesnake, the episode convincingly proved that wood rats are to be found in Tenaya Gorge.—H. C. Bryant.

**GOLDEN TROUT CAUGHT NEAR MERCED LAKE**

The golden trout, most beautiful of all trouts, formerly found only in the headwaters of the Kern river, has been planted 150 miles to the northward and is now being taken by anglers in Yosemite National Park. Fishermen at Merced lake, by climbing the Fletcher creek trail, have been able to return with some of these famous fish taken from Fletcher creek or from Fletcher lakes. One will have to go far to see scenery more grand or find more beautiful fish than may be found along the trail mentioned.

The streams have gone down rapidly the past few weeks and fly-fishing is now excellent in the high country. More persons have been successful in making good catches of Loch Leven trout on the valley floor than in any preceding year.—H. C. Bryant.

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**THE FLIGHT OF TERMITES**

Winged forms of the termite, *Termopsis nevadensis*, were seen at Glacier Point on the evening of June 20. They appeared to be swarming from the stump of a sawed Jeffrey pine.

This swarming is in reality a nuptial flight as it represents the formation, or possible formation, of new colonies. These mature males and females leave the old colony and fly about seeking a decayed portion of some tree in which to start their tunneling activities. However, they fall such easy prey to birds that very few of them survive this brief winged existence.

The wings are such large, awkward appendages that it is remarkable that they can fly at all. As soon as the female selects a colony site the wings of both male and female are deliberately broken off as though to safeguard against a future escape from duty.—R. D. Harwood.

Travel to Yosemite National Park has reached a peak never before attained this early in the season. High water in the falls and unusually good road conditions have made the park a Mecca for motor tourists this year.

More than 75 per cent of the visitors to the park this season are coming in their own automobiles. In one road and out the other is the route chosen by the majority of the motorists. This gives them the chance to see the Mariposa Big Trees near Wawona, Glacier Point, the valley and its wonders, and the Tuolumne Big Trees and Hetch Hetchy going out. This order of things is reversed for those who come in the Big Oak Flat road and go out via Wawona.

Warm weather during the past fortnight has been melting the snows in the high country back of Yosemite Valley very rapidly. From Glacier Point, range after range of snow-capped peaks is visible, but early explorers along the trails leading into the back country report the snows disappearing from trails and roads.

## THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION ITS PURPOSES

1. To gather and disseminate information on the wild-life of the Sierras.
2. To develop and enlarge the Yosemite Museum (in co-operation with the National Park Service) and to establish subsidiary units, such as the Glacier Point lookout and branches of similar nature.
3. To promote the educational work of the Yosemite Nature Guide Service.
4. To publish (in co-operation with the U. S. National Park Service) "Yosemite Nature Notes".
5. To study living conditions, past and present, of the Indians of the Yosemite region.
6. To maintain in Yosemite Valley a library of historical, scientific, and popular interest.
7. To further scientific investigation along lines of greatest popular interest and to publish, from time to time, bulletins of non-technical nature.
8. To strictly limit the activities of the association to purposes which shall be scientific and educational, in order that the organization shall not be operated for profit.

### MAY WE SEND YOU EACH ISSUE OF YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES?

Your check for \$2.00 sent to the Park Naturalist, Yosemite National Park, will help to pay the cost of its publication for one year and make you a member of the Yosemite Natural History Association for the same period.

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### FROM THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON OUT-DOOR RECREATION

Called by PRESIDENT COOLIDGE

"THAT THE CONFERENCE ENDORSE NATURE STUDY IN SCHOOLS AND THE EXTENSION OF THE NATURE STUDY IDEA TO EVERY AMERICAN SCHOOL AND FAMILY; . . . . THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MUSEUMS OF NATURAL HISTORY IN NATIONAL PARKS WILL INCREASE THE EDUCATIONAL RECREATIONAL VALUE OF THE PARKS".—Resolution of the Conference.



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Dan Anderson