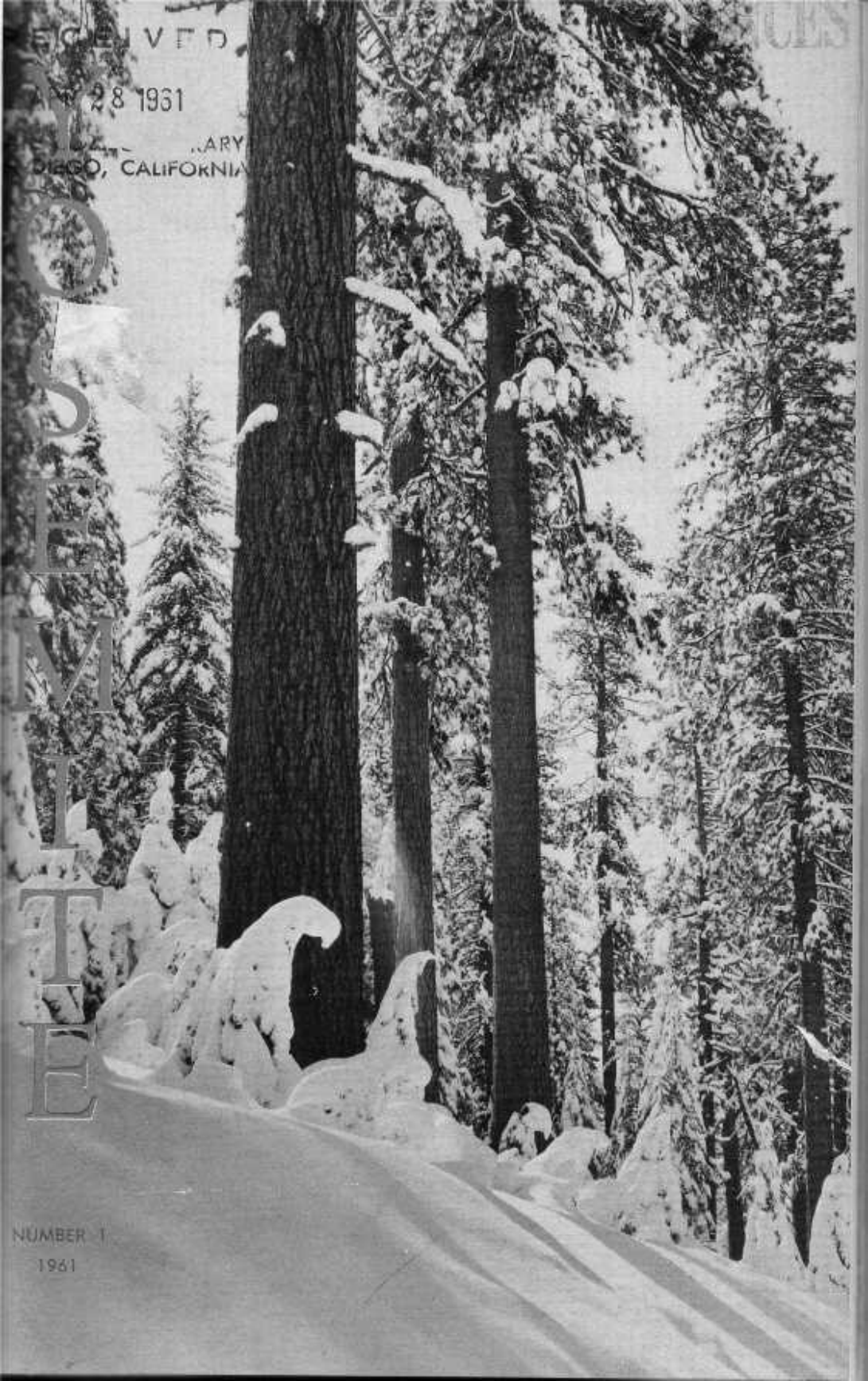


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NUMBER 1

1961

FROM 40 YEARS AGO

Yosemite Nature Notes, VOL. 1, NO. 1, JULY 10, 1922

GRAY SQUIRRELS RARELY SEEN THIS YEAR

The Gray Squirrel or Tree Squirrel, in past years very abundant in the Valley, has almost disappeared as the result of a disease which has become epidemic the State over. The sight of a Gray Squirrel is now the exception, whereas it was formerly the rule.

CROSS SECTION OF BIG TREE ATTRACTS CROWDS

The cross section of a wind felled Giant Sequoia which is on exhibition at the Museum is daily proving of great interest to visitors. The section is 9 feet in diameter. It was cut 40 feet from the base of a 14-foot tree. The age of the section is 996 years and on it have been marked rings that vividly portray the size of the tree at the time of the signing of the Magna Charta, 1215 AD.; the Battle of Hastings, 1066; the Discovery of America, 1492; the Landing of the Pilgrims, 1620; the Declaration of Independence, 1776; and the Civil War, 1860.

YOSEMITE Volume 40, Number 1, March 31, 1961

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YOSEMITE

VOL. 40

1961

NO. 1

Perhaps you have noticed recent changes in the format of *Yosemite Nature Notes*, now called YOSEMITE. A more attractive and readable publication has been our goal. With this issue another change occurs.

YOSEMITE will no longer be published on a monthly basis. Instead, 12 numbered issues will be distributed on an irregular schedule each calendar year. All subscriptions will be for the given year and will expire with issue 12. YOSEMITE is a non-profit venture without a paid staff.

We are hoping this change will allow us to keep subscription rates at the current level. (See back cover.)

Editorial policy will remain the same as it has been for the 40 years of *Yosemite Nature Notes*. Articles in YOSEMITE primarily will emphasize the natural history of Yosemite National Park and its surroundings. Of equal importance is the human story — from the life of ancient Indians and early pioneers to the present day adventures of the park visitors, rangers, and administrators.

It is our hope that YOSEMITE will be a publication that you will enjoy and profit from. Your contributions, suggestions and criticisms are always welcome.

The Editor

Bear Tree

by Vaughn Critchlow

Hiking out from Tuolumne Meadows, we found ourselves on a well-defined trail, wending toward Erratic Dome. Almost immediately we were aware of a series of indentations or hollows, regularly spaced along the trail. Planted rather deeply in the dry ground these appeared like the footprints of some extremely heavy animal. Was this a bear trail? We decided it was.

Bears seem to be trail-loving animals and seldom cut new paths through thick brush or forest understory. They tend to follow the established trails, including those made by man. Sometimes it is possible, by observing tracks on the trails, to see where bears have so conscientiously followed the paths that they traveled all of the windings and switchbacks so characteristic of man-made paths.

The bear is not just an ordinary follower either, but goes so far as to step directly in the tracks of his predecessor. That is why there were the deep indentations on the path to Erratic Dome. Each bear that had come along the trail had stepped in the footprints of the bears before him. We noted that the bear trail wound around areas where trees had fallen and avoided places where the brush or forest made passage difficult. It was as if an experienced engineer had laid the trail to take the easiest route possible.

and Trails



Bear trails are especially evident in winter when the snow is deep. Grinnell, Dixon, and Linsdale, in their book *Fur Bearing Mammals of California*, (Univ. of Calif. Press, 1937), show a picture of such a pathway. The illustration (Page 112) shows a set of tracks joining into the trail of another bear. Instead of going on his own way with his own length of strides, the newcomer fell into step and walked directly in the tracks made previously.

Further along the trail to Erratic Dome we came upon a lodgepole pine, disfigured by large scratches about seven feet from the ground. Immediately there was a great deal of speculation as to the cause and purpose of such marks. It was pointed out by our ranger-naturalist that this was a "bear tree." People familiar with the habits of these animals have long known of the existence of trees where bears gouge the bark with their claws. Such trees frequently occur near main bear trails and usually show not only claw marks but also teeth marks. Bark of aspen and incense cedar seems especially preferred for marking.

Several observations have been made of bears actually marking such trees. Usually, on arriving at the chosen location, the bear will stop, stand erect on its hind legs,

reach up as high as possible, and scratch and bite the tree. Some observers have reported seeing the bears sniff the trees thoroughly and then rub their jaws up and down on the bark. Other bears have been reported to growl and bite the trees savagely as if attacking an enemy.

Little of concrete nature is known concerning the purpose or meaning of "bear trees". However, a few theories have been advanced. Some people feel that such trees act as a social register and that the largest bear, the one that can put his mark the highest on the trunk, warns the others to stay out of the territory. This idea seems weak because some of the marks are made during the winter when there is often quite a deep snow on the ground, so such marks in summer are hardly indicative of the true size of the bears.

Other people feel that tree scratching activities are for the purpose of stretching muscles. This theory might account for the fact that such trees are often found near mud holes and wallows used by bears.

The fact remains that there is still comparatively little known about the "whys and wherefores" of bear trees and the problem needs further work if this interesting habit of the bears is to be fully explained.

The Indian



Tabuce

"What happened to the Indians who used to dance and weave baskets and demonstrate all those Indian customs here?"

This has become one of the questions most commonly asked of the men on the naturalist staff in Yosemite. Thousands of visitors to the park recall the ceremonial dances once performed by Chief Leemee (Chris Brown) and the craft demonstrations carried on by Tabuce (Maggie Howard) and later by Lucy Telles. These Indians, quite popular with visitors, performed at the Indian circle behind the museum.

Many people were intrigued by Tabuce's bits of philosophy on varied subjects and fascinated as she weaved her baskets and prepared food at the model village. Tabuce died in 1947 at her home near Mono Lake. A short time later, Lucy Telles came to carry on in the tradition of Tabuce and did so until her death in 1955. Leemee contin-

ued his dances until the early 1950's.

Although both Maggie and Lucy tried, none of the young people wanted to learn the skills necessary to continue this work. Leemee had not been able to interest any of the young men in learning the ceremonial dances and rituals. Thus, the Indian Circle became quiet after their passing and remained so for many years.

This past summer, however, saw the revival of some of these ancient customs by a student of the Miwok culture. Mrs. Julia Parker, a young woman who is one of the 16 Indians now living in Yosemite Valley, began, about the middle of the summer, demonstrating the techniques of weaving coiled baskets. Sitting beneath the large oak tree in the Circle she showed visitors the baskets she and other Indian women had woven.

Circle

by Leonard McKenzie,
Ranger Naturalist



Leemee

Julia, a Pomo Indian born in Santa Rosa, California, moved to Yosemite in 1948, and shortly thereafter married Ralph Parker, a full-blooded Piute. Lucy Telles was Ralph's grandmother, and Julia became well acquainted with her. It was through Lucy that Julia learned the art of preparing acorn meal and other Ahwahneechee customs.

After Lucy's death it seemed that the tribal traditions would be lost. Not wishing to see this occur, Julia decided to attempt to pick up where Lucy had left off. She hoped that other young people would follow her example and learn these crafts, thus keeping alive the ways of an ancient society. Julia also hopes to alter the misconstrued picture television has painted of the Indian. One day her daughter Lucy asked her, "Mommy, are we really like those Indians on T.V.?" The question made Julia's desire to learn

and to pass on her knowledge to others even stronger.

When the opportunity came to revive the museum Indian program, Julia was most happy to participate.

Though she learned a number of crafts from Lucy, she was taught basket weaving by Carrie Bethel, a Piute woman living near Mono Lake. For baskets Julia uses a willow plant, traded across the Sierra in olden days, that grows near Bridgeport. For dyes she uses red-bud and fern root, plants the Ahwahneechees found here in the valley. She demonstrates how baskets were woven, in addition to showing several baskets from the museum and her personal collection. These include a burden basket, food basket, hickey (cradle board), seed gatherer and sifting baskets.

Julia's proficiency in Ahwahneechee culture is not confined to basket weaving. Shortly after arriving in Yosemite, she assisted Lucy in

the preparation of acorn meal and learned this art. Acorns were gathered, cracked, pounded, leached and cooked. Acorn buns were made from the coarse meal, and the finer portion was used for mush. Julia

plans to demonstrate this food preparation process next summer.

Julia's work has proven popular with Yosemite visitors and has aided greatly in telling the story of Yosemite's Indians.



Julia Parker, Weaving Baskets in the Indian Circle.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

by
Olga Reifschneider

Have you ever found yourself among a group of people yet feeling lonesome? If you have, the reason for the lonesomeness is not that you are alone, but that you are not acquainted with your neighbors.

Similarly, if you become acquainted with trees and animals in the great out-of-doors by learning their names and some of their characteristics you will never feel loneliness when you are in their realm. Soon you will find them just as companionable as the friend whom you know by name and whom you have learned to enjoy as a comrade and pal.

Let us pretend that you are starting your first walk on the trail alone. As a novice, a great and overpowering sensation may overtake you. You may hear many unfamiliar sounds, you may smell unusual odors, and you most certainly will see many new forms and figures. How to meet all these challenges becomes the first thought.

Perhaps nearest to you is a large straight tree. Why not get acquainted and make a friend? Look at it closely and you can see that the bark is dark reddish-brown and deeply furrowed; as the eye travels upward, you note that the limbs



and twigs have a thick and blunt appearance. Where the light is full on the needles they are a bluish color and densely clustered. You will also note — if you really wish to know this new acquaintance — that the needles of the tree, many of which are on the ground, grow in groups of three and range in length from five to a little over nine inches.

If you step up close to the trunk and smell the bark, you discover a tantalizing odor like vanilla or pineapple, whichever you choose to

make it. About you on the ground you see the cones produced by this tree. They are symmetrical, purplish, and from five to twelve inches long. Throw one up and catch it; there are no sharp barbs to prick your hand. You will know your new friend is none other than a Jeffrey pine.

Let us say your name is Jack Smith. Jack marks you as a particular individual of the Smith family and you can now understand that Jeffrey is a particular member of the large Pine family.

My guess is that you will be looking about to see if there are others like it. You will most likely find them, for just as persons live in groups or communities, your new friend will be found living in a plant community with others of the same species.

A little research in the library will reveal that "Jeffrey" is one of the many yellow pines and is most often found at its best growing between 5000 and 6500 feet eleva-

tion. *Pinus jeffreyi*, as our friend is known to scientists, endures wide annual ranges of temperature - the lowest and highest in regions of best growth are about zero to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Mean annual rainfall in the greater part of this range varies from 20 to 60 inches with an average of about 35 inches where the best tree growth occurs.

Jeffrey pine is fairly tolerant in youth, permitting its seedlings and low trees to persist in shade and on east and south exposures. Under favorable conditions these trees may reach a ripe old age of 300 or 400 years. Our new friend is a prolific seeder.

By this time you certainly should know your new friend — Jeffrey pine — and you will want to know more about the other plants and creatures which are neighbors in the community of God. They will thus become your companions on walks and hikes dispelling your loneliness and adding joy to your life.



AS BEING "WE"

Give me breath of pines to linger
Beneath the sighing and the leaves
Where the calm of nature nestles
In the bosom of the trees.

Let me also, as the redwood
Praise the earth, the air and skies
Where no living thing is doubting
That the humble are the wise.

Let me there know my dominion
Only as it lives in me,
Forsaking the possessive
Think of self as being We.

Then when day is spent, and even
Lifts the curtain to the sky
To reveal the lamps of heaven,
I will know that You are nigh.

Alfred E. Brighton
Oct. 14, 1959



FAUST and MUIR

by Will Neely, Ranger Naturalist

I sit on a slope above Slate Creek near Mt. Conness eating lunch and reading parts of Goethe's *Faust*. Tuolumne has been soaking in a wet summer and today yet another storm seemed to be coming up. A huge mass of black clouds are building up over the Sierra escarpment. Still reading, the rain begins to fall in torrents upon an already drenched landscape accompanied by a thunder drama that makes the granite peaks rattle. What more fitting scene for the reading of the tragedy of Faust! Some of the quotations made are selected by lightning flashes, punctuated by thunderclaps, and abridged by rainfall.

Bewildered by the full extravagance of a Sierran storm, alone and wet on a mountain slope, I behold the fury of lightning and flood. We

are told to conserve the natural resources and the scenery, and yet there is before my eyes the sight of nature in destruction, undoing and eroding, shattering and splitting. Where is conservation and preservation?

As in *Faust*:

*As at my feet abysses cloven
Rest upon abysses deep below;
As thousand severed streams are woven
To foamy floods that plunging go . . .
. . . Around me sounds a savage roaring,
As rocks and forest heaved and swayed,
Yet plunges, bounteous in its pouring,
The wealth of waters down the glade . . .*

Here is wild nature seen as a destructive force, yet perhaps it is

but another aspect of the creative cycle. The ancient Hindus depicted Brahma, the manifestation of Nature, as having many faces, chiefly Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and Siva the destroyer, inseparable from each other, working in harmony, from destruction coming growth.

Over Mt. Conness the clouds collide tumultuously, over the meadows the rain falls torrentiously, and watching from here I can guess that down there campers are scurrying for shelter, channeling the flood around their tents, securing their provisions. The ranger force is clearing the roads and culverts and fighting fires in lightning-struck trees, while I sit here musing on action and non-action, Faust against Mephistopheles; and while below the storm brings action, I try to stay out of the circle of destruction, prevention and construction and ponder with Mephistopheles:

What good for us this endlessly creating?

What is created then annihilating?

*'And now it's past!' Why reads a page
so twisted?*

*'Tis just the same as if it ne'er existed,
Yet goes in circles as if it had, however;
I'd rather choose, instead, the Void forever.*

It is Mephistopheles who says all is vanity and advises non-action. It is Faust, with the Promethean spirit, who says man must act. Boys build dams in streams, roll rocks down hills and love to disturb the quiet surface of a pond by throwing stones. It is a western trait to have to do something to the scene. Only the Indian could pass through our mountains and leave no trace. But all the rest who followed had to change, subdue, build, destroy and always leave their mark upon the scene, whether as childish initials cut in trees, human names tagged to mountain tops, canyons dammed or forests levelled.

Could Faust be bounded by a National Park, or by its restrictions and regulations? How could the Promethean ideal be tamed to preservation or conservation and compromise with nature? The essence of *Faust* is that man must act, must turn nature to his own use, dike the sea, drain the marsh, tame the flood.

Then to me the figure of Muir comes upon the scene. Goethe was an Olympian spirit and saw nature from between classic marble columns. Muir is the Sierran spirit and sees nature from between sparkling glacial boulders. Before Muir's time the mountain regions were dread places of darkness and craggy terror, of gloom and loneliness. Ruskin talks this way. Scheuchzer, in 1711, invented a theory of glacier motion, but he also catalogued, in scientific manner, the dragons of the Alps. In those days when they did extoll the beauties of nature, it was not of the timberline but rather of the foothills, the gentle nature of forests and sylvan glades, of Watteau vistas and Renoir picnics.

Not so Muir. Our thinking about mountains has changed in the last eighty years and Muir was the prophet. In the awesome heights he found no terror and gloom, nor monsters and dragons. The Sierra meant light and sustenance and ecstatic fire. The Range of Light is full of joy and noble harmony. He didn't think that all life was hitched to everything else in the universe, and his action was to explore and translate. He would have agreed with Peter Seraphicus in *Faust*:

*"Upward rise to higher borders!
Ever grow insensibly,
As, by pure, eternal orders,
God's high Presence strengthens ye!
Such the Spirits' sustentation,
With the freest ether blending . . ."*

And he says so in his own words:
*"Climb the mountains and get their good
tidings.
Nature's space will flow unto you
As sunshine flows into trees.
The winds will blow their own freshness
into you
and the storms their energy,
While cares will drop off like autumn
leaves."*

There is no problem of action or non-action with Muir. You immerse yourself in nature, whether acting or observing. You obey nature's laws, yet you dare, as did Muir, to be Promethean. Prometheus stole fire from the gods to give to man. But with Muir that fire is to enlighten and cheer and not to scorch and burn.



A TUG OF WAR

by David H. Essel, Ranger Naturalist

The tiny, one inch long wasp was lugging her burden, a wolf spider, over the gravel. Paralyzed by the wasp sting, the prey was limp and offered no resistance to her efforts. Soon an egg would be laid in the spider, to hatch, eat its "nest" and grow into a new adult wasp. Or was this to be? — a small ½ inch long black ant decided no — "This is meat on the table for my tribe" and grabbing hold of a leg of the spider, pulled in the opposite direction. The net result of the tug of war was that wasp, helpless spider, and determined ant, proceeded all on the same course.

Did the wasp know she had a passenger hanging on to her youngster's meal? You bet she did! Several times she stopped to try and sting the ant, arching her abdomen and pointing her stinger at the ant—but the ant wasn't staying still. What to do?

Well, Mrs. Wasp took up her burden again and encountering a weathered pine cone she hauled spider and ant over and over the pine cone until the spider was lodged on the cone, then again an attempt to sting the ant. Still no

success. Again her burden is taken up and away they go. Over 25 feet has been covered so far.

Another attempt to sting the ant. No success—apparently, but as the wasp takes her burden up once more the ant hangs on a little longer, then seems to decide — "Well maybe this isn't my day" — and lets go, to head back in the direction from which he had been dragged. The wasp marches triumphantly on, finally to lodge her helpless victim upon a pine cone, — then she flies off.

I wait 5 minutes for her to return, then, marking the spot, I continue on to Harden Lake. Five hours later I return — no spider. What happened to it? Did it revive and crawl away? Probably not. Did the wasp return and hide her hard won booty in a secure place for her future offspring's benefit? Maybe. Did an ant or bird discover the spider and make off with it? Possibly.

From time to time I think of this drama played out on the forest floor amongst the pine needles and twigs looming high above the participants. I wonder, what did finally happen to the spider? I'll never know.

1960 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IN YOSEMITE

by W. J. and Erma Fitzpatrick

The Christmas Bird Count taken annually in and adjacent to Yosemite National Park, was conducted for 1960 on December 27. Coverage included Yosemite Valley west to El Portal and the rim of the Valley south to Tempo Dome and north to Big Meadow. Elevations ranged from 2,000 feet at El Portal to 8,200 feet at Tempo Dome, making the count here the greatest in altitudinal range in the United States. Contrary to most former Christmas counts, weather conditions were generally unfavorable. Very strong east winds prevailed in Yosemite Valley and at the higher elevations, while the El Portal area was obscured for most of the day by fog. Favorable weather was encountered only at the Big Meadow-Foresta area, in which section most of the interesting observations were obtained.

Twelve observers, working in four parties, recorded 52 species and 1,282 individuals. The count was considerably below the eleven year average both in numbers of species and individuals, this being due largely to the unfavorable weather conditions. Outstanding observations were 119 Clark's nutcrackers and 14 red crossbills at Big Meadow, which lies far to the west, and much lower than the elevations at which these birds are usually seen in Yosemite National Park. These species probably descended to the relatively sheltered Big Meadow area to escape the strong winds.

Participants were: Del Armstrong, Katherine Coakley, M. B. Evans, Erma Fitzpatrick, W. J. Fitzpatrick, Carl Haglund, Isabel Haglund, Dorothy Johnson, James Johnson, Vergena Koller, P. R. F. Marshall, and Mary Curry Treslinder.

Numbers of each species seen were: Great Blue Heron, 2; Sharp shinned Hawk, 1; Red-Tailed Hawk, 4; Golden Eagle, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 2; California Quail, 8; Mountain Quail, 4; Pygmy Owl, 5; Anna's Hummingbird, 3; Belted Kingfisher, 2; Red-shafted Flicker, 23; Acorn Woodpecker, 22; Yellowbellied Sapsucker, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Nuttall's Woodpecker, 5; Whiteheaded Woodpecker, 7; Black Phoebe, 3; Stellar's Jay, 109; Scrub Jay, 27; Clark's Nutcracker, 119; Mountain Chickadee, 43; Plain Titmouse, 20; Common Bushtit, 25; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 22; Brown Creeper, 6; Wrentit, 3; Dipper, 6; Winter Wren, 2; Canyon Wren, 3; Robin, 34; Varied Thrush, 15; Hermit Thrush, 7; Western Bluebird, 27; Townsend's Solitaire, 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 35; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 22; Hutton's Vireo, 1; Audubon's Warbler, 1; House Sparrow, 16; Red Crossbill, 14; Cassin's Finch, 28; House Finch, 6; Pine Siskin, 97; Lesser Goldfinch, 6; Rufous-sided Towhee, 35; Lark Sparrow, 100; Slate-colored Junco, 3; Oregon Junco, 300; Golden-crowned Sparrow, 25; Song Sparrow, 1.

TEN YEARS OF YOSEMITE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1950 - 1960

Species	Number seen in one year		Years Seen
	Largest	Smallest	
Pied-billed Grebe	1	1	1
Great Blue Heron	2	1	6
Common Merganser	3	1	4
Osprey	1	1	4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	1	6
Copper's Hawk	3	1	6
Red-tailed Hawk	19	2	11
Golden Eagle	5	1	10
Hooded Eagle	1	1	1
Swainson's Falcon	2	1	2
Screech Owl	6	1	11
California Quail	8	1	5
Mountain Quail	15	1	6
Band-tailed Pigeon	414	169	6
Night Owl	5	1	9
Spotted Sandpiper	1	1	1
Burned Dove	52	3	6
Great Horned Owl	1	1	1
White-throated Swift	58	6	3
Ruby Hummingbird	3	1	4
Golden Kingfisher	7	1	11
Yellow-shafted Flicker	1	1	1
Red-shafted Flicker	25	10	11
Red-breasted Woodpecker	5	1	5
Acorn Woodpecker	68	13	11
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3	1	9
Williamson's Sapsucker	1	1	1
Hairy Woodpecker	14	2	10
Downy Woodpecker	5	1	11
Hutton's Woodpecker	7	1	11
White-head Woodpecker	8	2	10
Black Phoebe	15	1	11
Gray Phoebe	1	1	3
Veery's Jay	246	61	11
Scrub Jay	42	26	11
Clark's Nutcracker	119	119	1
Mountain Chickadee	296	34	11
Plain Titmouse	84	8	11
Common Bushtit	92	14	11
Wh.-breasted Nuthatch	19	1	8
Red-breasted Nuthatch	24	1	11
Brown Creeper	49	3	11
Wrentit	11	1	11
Gipper	20	2	11
House Wren	3	1	11

Species	Number seen in one year		Years Seen
	Largest	Smallest	
Winter Wren	6	1	7
Bewick's Wren	8	1	8
Canon Wren	22	2	11
Rock Wren	3	1	4
Mockingbird	1	1	1
California Thrasher	2	1	5
Robin	157	3	9
Varied Thrush	86	1	9
Hermit Thrush	14	2	9
Western Bluebird	189	2	8
Mountain Bluebird	15	1	3
Townsend's Solitaire	11	1	8
Gold-crowned Kinglet	483	20	11
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	111	4	11
Cedar Waxwing	20	18	2
Hutton's Vireo	3	1	7
Townsend's Warbler	1	1	1
Audubon's Warbler	24	1	10
House Sparrow	24	2	10
Redwinged Blackbird	1	1	2
Brewer's Blackbird	13	4	5
Evening Grosbeak	25	6	3
Purple Finch	125	3	10
Cassin's Finch	55	6	3
Brewster's Linnnet	274	6	11
Pine Grosbeak	6	6	1
Pine Siskin	108	1	10
Lesser Goldfinch	75	2	11
Red Crossbill	14	14	1
Rufous-sided Towhee	80	13	11
Brown Towhee	200	35	11
Lark Sparrow	300	1	10
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	3	1	5
Slate-colored Junco	4	1	10
Oregon Junco	503	36	11
Gray-headed Junco	1	1	1
White-crowned Sparrow	29	2	6
Golden-crown Sparrow	201	25	11
Fox Sparrow	11	1	9
Song Sparrow	8	1	10
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	1	1

86 Species observed during the ten year span.
Compiled by W. J. and Erma Fitzpatrick



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Dan Anderson