

# YOSEMITE

VOLUME FORTY ONE, NUMBER 1

OCTOBER, 1970



## Is Yosemite Exciting Enough for the 1970's?

WILLIAM R. JONES

The 1960's saw a crisis develop in park interpretation at Yosemite. The decade before, park visitation had hovered around one million, but finally the dam broke in 1961. By 1967 travel had doubled to over two million, and it is still rising.

In the beginning the National Park Service had turned to friends for help, and in 1920 the first interpretive program was started in Yosemite with the assistance of the Yosemite Natural History Association. A museum, library, training school, and exhibits and historic displays were provided, as was the magazine *Yosemite Nature Notes*. It was a time of excitement for members, for here was a way to help Americans learn the real reasons for having national parks, an idea that was then blossoming through the nation and over the world. There were few problems before 1960, and the Association even survived the years of World War II.

But then printing costs began to rise, as did clerical and other administrative expenses. Appeals were made for more members, higher dues rates, and donations, and although many responded, most were apathetic. The membership program died. And so, through the 1960's the Yosemite interpretive programs relied almost solely on federal appropriations. Budget increases were received, but they no longer went as far because wages and other costs increased even more. At the end of the

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## Walk and Talk a Bit

DANA MORGENSON

Yosemite has always been a favorable area for photographers — professional and amateur alike. The unusual combination of magnificent scenic landscapes on a grand scale, with variety of detail around them — flowers, rocks, meadows, trees and delightful groupings — provides picture material without limit. Add to this seasonal variations and there is a constant source of interest and inspiration for all who care to look.

To take advantage of this widespread fascination with capturing Yosemite's unusual beauty on film, the Yosemite Park and Curry Company has sponsored during the past three years a program of daily camera walks. From March 1 to

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Jack Gyer

## FIRE —

*A New Dimension In Park Management*

ROBERT BARBEE

Yosemite visitors and residents alike have been exposed this spring to what appear as strange "goings on." El Capitan Meadow was burned, and fires in the forests of both the Valley and near Wawona have been purposely set. This radical departure from traditional ways of managing the park represents another step in Yosemite's program to re-establish a pristine parkscape.

Before the arrival of modern man, wildfire was a frequent visitor to Yosemite. It exerted its influence throughout the park but especially in the lower elevations. Ecologists tell us today that fire caused by lightning and set by Indians occurred in most places in the vast mixed conifer forests on the average once every seven to eight years. In one intensively studied area north of Yosemite it was determined by tree ring analysis that between the years 1452 and 1912 there were 221 distinct fires that covered the area. That is one almost every two years. The frequency of these natural fires kept the fuel on the forest floor at a low level; the fires were always very light and undergrowth was kept to a minimum.

Early travelers described the forests of Yosemite as open and parklike. Wildflowers were more abundant, and many plants that were favored by wildlife were also favored by the wildfires. Unfortunately, these relationships were not completely recognized until the successful suppression of

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Billowing smoke emerging from El Capitan Meadow marks the beginning of a program of prescribed burning in Yosemite.



## Loye Holmes Miller

Impressed by a naturalist program conducted at Lake Tahoe by Dr. Loye Holmes Miller, former NPS Director Stephen Mather induced him to transfer his talents to Yosemite. Mather and Miller subsequently worked out a plan for a 1920 inauguration of an official nature guide service in the park — the first public interpretive effort of the National Park Service.

Of his experiences at Yosemite, Miller later wrote: "(Harold) Bryant and I reported for duty in the summer of 1920 but there was no such thing as a Park Naturalist. We were merely appointed as temporary rangers and assigned to special duty as naturalists for which we were best suited, though at times we were entrusted with the responsibility of 'Traffic Cops' when things became congested out in front of the old headquarters at Sentinel Village (and they did even in those days). The broad-minded Director 'Steve' Mather was a great lover of Yosemite and strove valiantly to prevent the beautiful valley from becoming the 'Coney Island' that some commercial interests were trying to make of it. He threw all his weight (inspired partially by Dr. C. M. Goethe) into a counter movement of emphasis upon the natural beauties of the park. I strongly suspect that the modest salaries of two temporary rangers came out of his own pocket.

"I know not how long it took but the pressure continued and ultimately the budget provided for 'Park Naturalists' as such and their appointment was extended to provide a year round service.

"Better still, a new office was created in Washington and Bryant was placed there in charge of Nature Education to be extended as rapidly as possible to all the parks . . ."

Dr. Loye Holmes Miller died at Davis, California last April 6, at the age of 95. He was the last survivor of the four individuals responsible for originating the NPS interpretive program. Dr. Harold Bryant died in 1968 and Dr. C. M. Goethe died in 1966. The year of 1970 marks the 50th anniversary of the work they started.

*Reprinted from NPS Interpreters' News Letter, July, 1970*

## HADLEY TO NEW POST

Lawrence C. Hadley, superintendent of Yosemite National Park since January, 1968, left for Washington, D. C. in August where he will assume the post of assistant director for Park Management.

A graduate of the University of Maine, Hadley joined the National Park Service in 1950. He previously had served as superintendent of Colonial National Historical Park, Va. and was chief of information for the NPS in Washington in 1964-65.

"Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees" — John Muir.

## Is Yosemite Exciting?

decade there were fewer interpretive personnel in Yosemite than at the start!

In the face of such obstacles, the magazine was of course dropped. Salaries formerly used to support the park museum collections — historic records, the library, study skins, herbarium, Indian artifacts, etc., were used to help the visitor instead. Writing and editorial work was curtailed and the quality of Association publications began to deteriorate until now 11 titles are out of print because they are outdated. This was the era of expediency — of temporary solutions for long-term needs. But for only so long can an educational program rely on the material already assembled; to be of significance, it must replenish its base of knowledge constantly. Expediency can not last a decade.

Then a new type of visitor came — many still came to see the park itself, but some came more to see other visitors, and more and more had had less and less contact with any place but the city. They required guidance to understand the park environment — provided at times with police action rather than education and interpretation. The visitor suffered, and the park suffered, and the interpretive program could hardly expand when so much park effort went into just helping visitors live together and avoid the unfamiliar hazards of the outdoor environment. Finally, national priorities outside Yosemite changed to the point where significant assistance from federal funding was unreasonable to expect for years to come. That is where we are now:

Wouldn't it be a tragedy if the great accomplishments of Olmsted, Muir, Roosevelt, the Sierra Club, and the generations of park rangers and naturalists were to fail now because of a lack of awareness among present visitors as to what the park is for? Who is going to carry the message to them? In 1970 one has to be a real optimist to continue working in conservation — whether paid or volunteer. Yet the environmental awareness that has recently developed among Americans may justify more optimism than ever. How can this modern enthusiasm be channeled?

The Yosemite Natural History Association offers itself as a channel. Its objective remains to support the national park idea through Yosemite's interpretive program. The Association cannot succeed in its objectives, however, if individuals join primarily to receive benefits. The Association must emphasize programs that spread its message to non-members; presumably members already empathize. Can Americans be this generous today? Is Yosemite exciting enough in the 1970's to make them so?

Remember that the last time the Association asked for help the response was inadequate. Since then the number of people expressing dissatisfaction with the interpretive program has grown. This seems an especially bad time to ask for help. And it is. That is why we are asking. Or perhaps, we should say, we are offering you the opportunity to help. After all, it's your park.

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## FIRE —

### A New Dimension In Park Management

fire had caused a drastic response from the forest environment.

Today, the environment's response to the removal of wildlife is seen as an explosion of growth in the forest understory. Instead of relatively open, aesthetically uplifting and natural forests, one is all too often confronted with dense thickets of trees that are neither natural nor uplifting. Wildlife habitat has diminished; the vigor and health of the mature trees are reduced, and some trees such as the giant sequoia and sugar pine are actually in jeopardy. Forest fuel conditions have reached such proportions that wildfires today are disastrous once they get the upper hand.

The most natural way to correct this situation and re-establish the pristine appearing forests is to work with the vital process that has been removed—in this case, fire. Fire is now being reintroduced using what fire scientists call a "prescription." This simply means putting fire back into the forest system on our terms. In each prescribed fire small trees are being purposely killed, and large amounts of accumulated potential fuel consumed. Correcting the situation will not be done easily. It will take time and patience. El Capitan Meadow responded almost immediately, but the forests will take longer. The dead trees must cure for four to five years, and then another fire will be set to "clean up" the forests. After that a long-range burning cycle will be put into effect.

We stand today at a new threshold in the management of park resources—one that is ecological in nature. Prescribed burning is a vital part of this effort to "manage for naturalness."



Wayne B. Cone

## Cone Appointed Park Superintendent

Newly appointed as superintendent of Yosemite, Wayne B. Cone is a graduate of Colorado State University and joined the National Park Service in 1958 as a ranger at Shadow Mountain National Recreation Area, Colorado. Other duty stations include Rocky Mountain National Park, Colo.; Badlands National Monument, S.D.; Dinosaur National Monument, Colo. and Carlsbad Caverns National Park, N.M.

He was supervisor of the Albright Training Center at Grand Canyon National Park, Ariz., for four years and served as superintendent at Redwood National Park since last February.

Cone's family includes his wife, Ollie, and two sons Reed, 10 and Jay, 7.



Yosemite Park & Curry Co.

## PARK AUTO ROUTES CHANGED

Retrouting of automobile traffic this summer was the initial step in a National Park Service program to restore the characteristics and qualities to Yosemite Valley which have made it esteemed as a sanctuary of natural beauty and serenity. Almost immediately, a noticeable beneficial effect was achieved. Most visitors expressed their approval verbally and in letters, and the reaction was generally favorable.

The primary circulatory road system in the valley was converted to a pattern of one-way travel to reduce the stress of traffic and allow greater appreciation of passing scenery. Roads in the far easterly portion of the valley (to Happy Isles and Mirror Lake) were closed to private automobiles. In this area, free busing service is being provided by the Yosemite Park and Curry Co.

At ceremony marking innovations in public use of Yosemite Valley are, from left, former superintendent Lawrence C. Hadley; NPS Director George S. Hartzog, Jr.; Robert L. Katz, board chairman, Hilar Oehlmann, honorary chairman and Stuart G. Cross, president of the Yosemite Park and Curry Co.

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## Walk and Talk a Bit

December 1, groups varying in number from a half dozen to more than fifty persons walk along the lesser-known byways of the park with a guide who points out unusual angles, rarely-seen floral displays, and "different" lighting effects which can transform an ordinary Yosemite shot into one which is unique and satisfying. Along the way, they often pause to notice some facet of Yosemite's great outdoor museum—a flower, a bird, some bit of evidence of the park's geological history. The group is made aware of some of that subtle charm which calls visitors back to Yosemite with a devotion inspired by few other places on earth.

Often, their most memorable pictures are those imprinted on the mind rather than on film, for many non-photographers take these trips. Most of the walks are about two miles in length and last two or three hours, although two each week during the summer season are all-day affairs.



# YOSEMITE

Bulletin of the  
Yosemite Natural History Association



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A non-profit, educational association dedicated to the interpretation of the natural and human story of Yosemite National Park, in cooperation with the National Park Service. Contributions and donations are tax deductible.



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William R. Jones, Staff Park Naturalist for Yosemite National Park and Director of Yosemite Natural History Association, has spent most of his 11 years with the National Park Service on the Yosemite naturalist staff after starting as a park ranger in Olympic National Park.

Dana Morgenson's combination of 26 year's residence in the park with a sensitivity to people and beauty makes him eminently qualified for his position of Director of Guest Activities for the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. His long experience as a photographer enables him to make his camera walks a rewarding event for park visitors.

A membership in the Yosemite Natural History Association is one of the most lasting and beneficial gifts your friends or family could receive. Fill in the application form, or send us a list of names and addresses, and we will mail a gift certificate in your name.

## Yosemite Natural History Association

P.O. Box 545, Yosemite National Park, California 95389

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate kind of membership

Individual \$5

Family \$10

Student (under 18) \$2.50

Sustaining \$20

Life \$100

A scenic view of a river flowing through a forested valley, with a rocky shoreline in the foreground. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

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Dan Anderson