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YELLOWSTONE'S MYSTERY SOUNDS

by Ranger Naturalist Neil Miner

The music of Yellowstone Lake has been a subject of discussion since the days of the early explorers. The sounds have been heard by hundreds of individuals and an equal number of theories have been advanced for the cause.

Early one morning last September, the late Assistant Naturalist Crowe and the writer were privileged to have a splendid audition of this phenomenon. The sound seemed to arrive unannounced from some point at no great height above the north end of the lake. It traveled rapidly in a horizontal plane out over the lake toward the south. The sound was audible for about ten seconds.

To the writer it sounded like a rapidly whirling current of air moving at great speed horizontally above the lake. It had no apparent lateral range but gave the impression of being merely a local disturbance, producing a swishing sound of varying volume with a faint trace of a whistle; somewhat akin to the sound of ducks in flight.

The morning was perfectly clear and calm and not a bird was in sight in the air, so it could not have arisen from that source.

It is the opinion of the writer that a possible explanation may lie in the fact that currents are set up in the lower atmosphere due to diurnal changes in temperature. This fact, accompanied with air movements down

from the high peaks surrounding the lake, under certain conditions, causes horizontally moving whirlpools of air, similar to those one often sees across the calm surface of the lake. The whirling air pocket traveling at terrific speed in a horizontal manner across the lake until dissipated at some point remote from the observer, might well produce the sound that has been so often heard.

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