

YELLOWSTONE NATURE NOTES

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LEAVES FROM OUR DIARIES

June 12: The unusual sight of beaver (*Castor canadensis*) on Yellowstone Lake was enjoyed by many rangers and ranger naturalists when three beaver were seen swimming near the pier by the Lake Fish Hatchery. The mission of the animals was undetermined but it is possible that they were circling the lake in quest of a more favorable environment than that of the east shore where some beaver have been found in the past.



Beaver seem to prefer smaller bodies of water and streams where there is an abundance of aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and willows (*Salix* sp.) but in Yellowstone Park the beaver live under widely varying conditions of environment so that it is not surprising to find them near any body of cold water.

--Jennings J. King

June 27: While splitting blocks of wood for use as fuel today, one block disclosed the channel of the wood borers in which had been trapped an adult Long Horned Woodborer (*Monochamus oregonensis*). The inch-long body of the beetle has attached to it the two-inch jointed antennae which usually lie along the back. This beetle lays eggs in the tree trunk which develop into the larvae which cut channels often three-eighths of an inch to one-half inch in diameter through the trunk.

--J.J.K.

June 29: Today while conducting the "geyser chasing" caravan from Old Faithful a bit of activity was discovered at the Black Pearl Pools in Biscuit Basin. As the party was standing on the walk at the side of the pools a huge gas bubble rose and broke with a great detonation in the lower hot pool. The unexpected "explosion" startled the visitors and suggested the possibilities of another disturbance such as that of the winter of 1935 when huge pieces of rock were thrown from this Pool to distances as great as seventy feet.

During previous and following visits to these pools no such disturbances have been noted.

--J.J.K.

August 1: For several weeks visitors who have taken the nature walk have enjoyed the unusual sight of mountain rosas (*Rosa fendleri*) blossoming amidst the branches of an Engelmann spruce tree (*Picea engelmannii*). The plant has sprung up near the trunk of the tree. In its attempt to reach the sunshine the main stem has branched very little and flowers first developed on a shoot approximately three feet above the ground near the outer branches of the tree. A second cluster of flowers blossomed one foot above this and the last showy cluster of flowers blossomed at the top of the plant slightly over six feet above the ground.

On first sight, one was given the impression that the spruce tree was harboring a showy parasite such as might be found only in the tropical or semi-tropical areas.

--J.J.K.

August 2: Large numbers of the Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus* - Wagler) appeared on the parade ground for the first time this season.

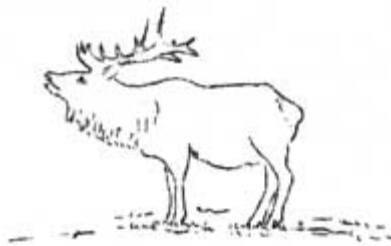
--James R. Hamilton

September 1: Enroute to Old Faithful today I saw a large six-point bull elk that had just begun to shed the velvet which hung in rags from his great antlers. Fresh blood about the head indicated that he had been rubbing his antlers against a tree but a short time before.

--F.R.Oberhansley

September 2: This evening I heard bull

elk bugling for the first time this season. One year ago I heard the first bugling as early as August 26 on Gneiss Creek and observed shedding of the velvet a few days earlier.



--F.R.O.

September 4: An unusual visitor to Yellowstone, among the birds, was seen from the Museum window at Mammoth this afternoon feeding in one of the poplars that border the sidewalk north of the building. The male, with his completely black head, neck, back, and shoulders, and his bright orange under parts, added a conspicuous spot of color to the uniform foliage of the poplar. The Baltimore oriole's (*Icterus galbula*) visit is a rare occurrence in Yellowstone which is at the extreme western edge of his range. There seemed to be no traveling companion with this handsome bird.

--J.R.H.

September 20: While driving in the vicinity of the Soda Butte Ranger Station, I had an opportunity to get the speed of a young coyote. A coyote pup ran into the road in front of the car and literally doubling himself with every jump, maintained a pace of twenty miles per hour for 300 yards before he finally turned aside into the sage.

--Sheldon F. Dart

September 27: We observed a pine squirrel (*Sciurus hudsonicus ventorum*) perform a real feat of strength tonight when he seized upon a tomato at least twice his diameter. Unable to carry it outright, the squirrel would toss his head up with the vegetable firmly grasped in his mouth, and would then jump forward. This unique method of locomotion would bring the squirrel up short and tore the tomato from his grasp with each leap. After eating over a third of his load, the little fellow was able to rush it up a nearby tree and impale it upon a projecting limb.

--W.E.Kearns