



YELLOWSTONE NATURE NOTES

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LEAVES FROM OUR DIARIES

March 31: Bears are supposed to choose their first food with nice precision upon emerging from the hibernating den. Having passed the entire winter without eating the stomach and intestines become shrunken with disuse. A variety of vegetable matter, therefore, seems requisite for resumption of the digestive processes before the main business of eating gets fully under way.

Contrary to this idea, Dr. Fallis and I surprised a large, black male bear near Orange Spring Mound feasting upon the carcass of a bull elk that had recently died. As we approached, the bear moved sluggishly back into the timber. He had gorged himself to the point of apparent discomfort, judging not only from his actions and distended condition, but also from the fact that he had eaten the vital organs and an entire hind quarter of the elk. "May good digestion wait on appetite."

Frank R. Oberhansley

April 24: This day I counted twenty-three newly born buffalo calves in a herd of one hundred sixty cows in Lamar Valley. (Note: Up to the present time eighty-eight calves have been counted in Lamar Valley herd and an estimate of one hundred calves is given by Assistant Chief Ranger Barrows.)

F.O.

April 24: We were afforded a real treat today when we saw two sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*) feeding in the meadows of Elk Park, and as we drove on to Gibbon

Meadows, eight of these majestic birds were seen near the margins of the Gibbon river. We watched them until darkness curtailed the scene. Their ceremonious mating antics were accompanied by shrill, bugle-like calls. Knowing that these birds are very rare and in fact, nearly extinct, except in such areas as Yellowstone, we were humbly grateful for such an unusual opportunity.

W. E. Kearns

May 16: At 2:10 p.m. on May 16, 1938, Mr. Jack E. Haynes, Mr. E. B. Ballard and myself noted a solitary elk cow on a small island in the Madison River, a mile or two below Madison Junction. On the downstream tip of the island a pair of Canada geese (*Branta canadensis canadensis*) were apparently building a nest. As we watched, the elk moved down the island toward the geese. As the elk approached within a few feet the geese rose into the air and diving at it launched a first-class attack on the elk. As far as we could see, the geese were striking at the elk with both beaks and bodies. The elk, displaying much discomfiture, dashed into the river, plunged perhaps 50 feet down the stream and then, turning, dashed toward the right bank. The geese continued their attack until the elk, on the dead run and shaking her head, reached the fringe of the timber. The geese then returned to the point at which they were first observed.

Edmund B. Rogers

May 20: On May 20, 1938, about 3:35 p.m., Mr. Jack E. Haynes, Mr. Joe Joffe and myself observed an immature moose grazing in an open meadow a hundred yards to the west of the highway, a short distance south of the Mud Volcano. When first seen, the animal was moving along slowly in a standing position. In a few moments it got down on its front "knees" and continued to graze, moving a considerable distance in this position. (Mr. Haynes took a moving picture of it.)

E.B.R.

May 27: While talking over the telephone this afternoon about 5:00 p.m., I noticed that we had visitors in our yard. Two huge grizzlies (*Ursus horribilus imperator*) were investigating the Weather Checking Station at a distance of about 40 feet from the Ranger Station. Apparently satisfied with their examination, the huge beasts moved down toward the road. When they reached the footpath leading from the ranger station to the checking station, they stopped suddenly and cautiously sniffed the trail over which I had passed but a few minutes before. My fresh

tracks seemed objectionable to them, and they turned back up hill, woofing and slapping at each other in a carefree mood. After a short period of scuffling, they disappeared in the timber above the station.

E. L. Arnold

June 1: Two young Camp-robbers (*Perisoreus canadensis*) were brought into the feeding station near our cabin by their parents, and have remained in the vicinity. They will come up on the back porch to eat and are very tame. One of them was suffering from either an injury or weakness when the two young birds arrived, but no trace now remains of any infirmity and they both are thriving on Ranger Station fare. The first young Clark's Nutcrackers (*Nucifraga columbiana*) did not appear in our neighborhood until June 14, and were nearly adult size when first seen. No nests were found this year although two families nested nearby last spring.

Marguerite L. Arnold

June 1: Several weeks ago, Olin Van Buskirk stopped me to ask the name of a bird which he had seen in the Lamar River Valley. His description follows: "A bird about the size of a robin and with a breast like a robin; yet more like a sport-model blackbird; streamlined like a woodpecker; and flew like a kingfisher." Puzzled at first by such a composite and inclusive description, I finally suspicioned that Mr. Van Buskirk had seen a Lewis Woodpecker (*Asyndesmus lewisi*). A visit to the area confirmed my guess, and I found that a pair of these birds were nesting in the vicinity. They did fly much like kingfishers and upon several occasions I observed them feeding along the margin of the river in much the same manner as the flycatchers.

W.E.K.

June 10: Since May 17, a Red Tail Hawk's (*Buteo borealis*) nest, situated near the crest of a sheer cliff, has been under observation. Sometime during the last two days one of the three eggs hatched and the young hawk has already consumed an entire ground squirrel (?). As I stood perched upon the edge of the sheer wall watching the young bird five feet below, the mother bird dived like a bullet and zoomed over my head not three feet away. The suddenness of the charge was so unexpected that I came near losing my balance. It is proposed to gather the castings from this nest throughout the season in order to learn more of the feed habits of these birds in this section of Yellowstone.

F.R.O.

June 20: Two grey mantled ground squirrels (*Callospermophilus lateralis cinerascens*) meet the auto caravan each day at the Natural Bridge. They come out from under a pile of brush and oat nuts and candy from the hands of the ranger naturalist and tourists. Those little animals have made a regular appearance so far this season and are enjoyed by the crowd going on the trip.

Each morning on the nature walk a young bull moose is observed at the mouth of the outlet of Yellowstone River adjacent to the campground. He has made several trips into the campground and provides much amusement for the travelers.

Buffalo (*Bison bison*) and large herds of elk are observed each evening on the old east entrance road just above Squaw Lake. Many tourists have been able to see these animals each evening.

Lowell G. Biddulph

June 22: The Western Tanagers (*Piranga ludoviciana*) are more numerous at Canyon this year than in past years. The other evening when going in to the Grizzly Grounds, I saw a male feeding in a tree over the trail. Hundreds of people passed immediately beneath the tree, but few saw this brightly colored bird as he dined on insects a scant three and a half feet above the path.

F. Anderson

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