



YELLOWSTONE NATURE NOTES

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LEAVES FROM OUR DIARIES

March 9: I replenished the food on our bird tray this morning with a square piece of meat weighing about 2-1/2 pounds. As a rule the Clark Nutcrackers (*Nucifraga columbiana*) are the first customers, but this time an Arizona weasel (*Mustela arizonensis*) appeared out of nowhere. As I came close to the window he eyed me beadily and with a lightening movement seized his intended meal, which I judged to weigh six or seven times as much as the weasel.

I have often heard of this little creature's lack of fear when foraging so I opened the window and reached down as if to regain the bird's provender. This weasel in particular did not give ground. Discretion prompted me to withdraw my hand and relinquish title to the meat.

So far we have observed daily in order of superior numbers at the feeding trays the following birds -- Mt. chickadees (*Penthestes gambeli*), Clark nutcrackers, Canada jays (*Perisoreus canadensis*), and hairy woodpeckers (*Dryobates villosus*). Steller's jays (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) are rare visitors.

John Lewis

March 9: A pair of trumpeter swans (*Cygnus buccinator*) arrived at Slough Creek today and settled down on one of the two open portions of the stream.

John Bauman

March 14: Several pairs of Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) returned to the open waters of Slough Creek this morning.

J.B.

March 14: The first meadow lark (*Sturnella Neglecta*) of the season was seen sitting dejectedly upon the corral fence at the Buffalo Ranch today. Last year the first meadow lark appeared at the Ranch on March 9.

Marie Pearson

March 16: In a group of 29 elk (*Cervus canadensis*) counted along the Madison River today the old bulls were noted to have shed their antlers while the younger bulls are just beginning to lose theirs.

Arthur Jacobson

March 17: On the right bank of the Yellowstone River about two miles below the mouth of Blacktail Deer Creek, a mature coyote (*Canis latrans*) was surprised at close range, gnawing upon an old weather-beaten elk skull. About 100 yards farther down stream an elk calf was encountered lying near the trail in such a weak and emaciated condition that it was unable to regain its feet. Fresh tracks of the coyote in the new snow plainly showed that he also had seen the calf earlier that morning and that he actually detoured away from it in arriving at the old skull farther up the trail.

During the course of this snowshoe trip down the Yellowstone from March 16 to 18 inclusive, three other elk calves were observed in a weakened condition similar to the one described above; in addition an old, almost toothless, cow elk was seen in a dying condition where she had been lying for many hours beside the trail.

Frank R. Oberhansley

March 21: Two blue birds (*Sialia currucoides*) were seen at the mouth of Daly Creek today.

A.J.

March 22: Pink sided juncos (*Junco mearnsi*) appeared at Cooke station today. Five steller's jays visit the feeding trays regularly. Our pet weasel "Tippy" is still very much in evidence around the station. Two great horned owls (*Bubo virginianus*) were heard last night. The hammering of woodpeckers in the vicinity of the ranger station is heard daily. Evidently they are preparing to nest.

Peg Arnold

March 22: A goshawk (*Astur atricapallus*) was

observed as it flew off a freshly killed and partly consumed blue grouse (*Canachites Dendragopus obscurus richardsoni* ?) near Reese Creek today. On the following day the remains of the grouse consisting of the drumsticks to which some meat and feathers were still adhering were found reposing on a fence post. The goshawk had evidently returned and taking his kill to the elevated position, from where he could scan the country and timely observe any approaching danger, finished his repast.

Rudolph Grimm

March 26: A large black bear (*Euarctos americanus cinnamomum*) was seen in the Hoodoos near Mammoth Hot Springs today. He evidently had recently emerged from one of the many dens in that locality.

More than 100 bluebirds (*Sialia currucoides*) were seen on the flats near the North Entrance this p.m.

F.R.O.

March 28: Another sign of spring was observed this morning. As I was riding across a bare southern exposure near Geode Creek I observed severe newly hatched grasshoppers.

J.B.

The illustrations in this issue were prepared
by Hayden Lavesque

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