Yosemite

Yosemite National Park
California

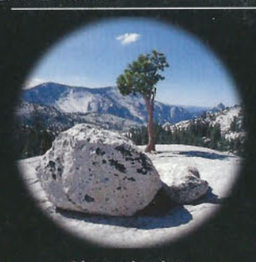
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yosemite's natural beauty can be found in things big and small, from towering granite cliffs and giant sequoias to diminutive wildflowers. Varied conditions in four geographic areas—HIGH SIERRA, GRANITE CLIFFS, SEQUOIA GROVES, and VALLEY—make such diversity possible. Explore Yosemite's many facets, take in its many moods, and enjoy its views, sounds, and smells.

It is by far the grandest
of all the special temples of Nature
I was ever permitted to enter.

—JOHN MUIR

Half Dome *(right)*
Yosemite Valley
© STAN JORSTAD

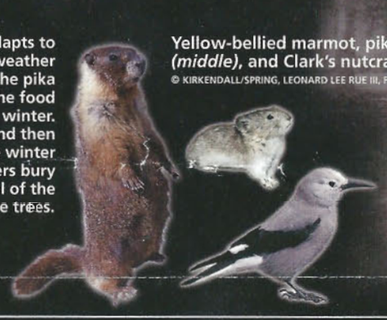


Olmsted Point
glacial erratic boulder
© FRANK BALTHIS

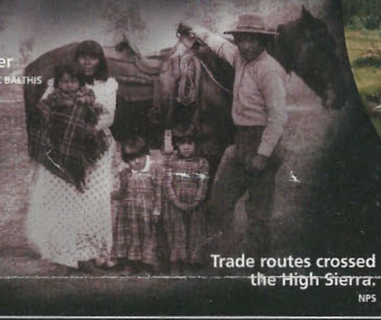
Lembert Dome
roche moutonnée
© LAURENCE PARENT

Cathedral Peak
nunatak
© LONDIE G. PADELSKY

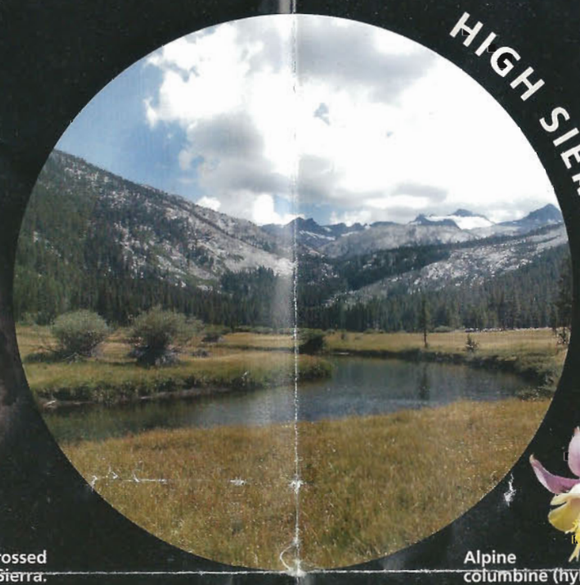
Life in the High Sierra adapts to the dramatic seasonal weather patterns. All summer the pika works furiously to cache food to eat throughout the winter. Marmots store fat, and then hibernate beneath the winter snow. Clark's nutcrackers bury seeds, assuring survival of the birds as well as the trees.



Yellow-bellied marmot, pika *(middle)*, and Clark's nutcracker
© KIRKENDALL/SPRING, LEONARD LEE RUE III, FRANK BALTHIS



Trade routes crossed the High Sierra.
NPS



HIGH SIERRA
© BOB RONEY

HIGH SIERRA Smooth granite domes, craggy peaks, and spacious meadows embody the character of the High Sierra. Hundreds of miles of hiking trails offer adventure, solitude, and inspiration for those wishing to explore this glacially carved landscape and experience ever-changing mountain ecosystems.

Glaciers sculpted this landscape, plucking, scraping, and polishing as they moved down canyons. Their power shaped Lembert Dome *(far left)*, a roche moutonnée—French for "sheep rock." Cathedral Peak's *(far left)* knobby top, known as a nunatak, stood above the glaciers, escaping their force. As the climate warmed, glaciers melted, leaving huge "erratic" boulders stranded and sometimes precariously perched.

As the climate continues to change, life at high elevations is notably affected. Intolerant of heat, pikas *(far left)* are adapted to the high country's cool temperatures. They live in rock piles where they find shelter from predators and the heat of the summer sun. As the climate rapidly warms, the pika's habitat is shifting upward in elevation. Where will the pikas go when they run out of mountain?

Alpine
columbine (hybrid)
© ADAM R. PAUL

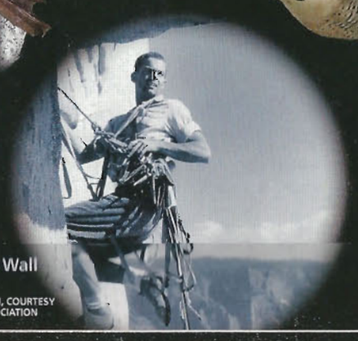
GRANITE CLIFFS The massive cliffs of Yosemite and Hetch Hetchy valleys challenge the body and mind, especially the inquisitive nature of human beings. When an 1868 Yosemite guidebook declared, "the summit of Half Dome will never be trodden by human foot," it was taken as a challenge. George Anderson reached the top in 1875. Countless others followed. One by one, adventurous men and women made other first ascents on sheer granite walls in Yosemite, changing the sport of climbing forever. The challenge of these cliffs continues to beckon climbers from around the world.

The very existence of great cliffs like Half Dome and El Capitan has inspired questions about how they came to be. American Indians tell of a woman and her husband who argued and fought. The displeased spirits changed them into stone, Half Dome and North Dome, forever to face each other across the Valley. How these cliffs were formed has challenged geologists for over 100 years. They think the granite of Yosemite's walls solidified over five miles underground. As the overlying rock eroded away, the granites rose to their current exposed level. Nature's dynamic forces continue sculpting this exposed rock.

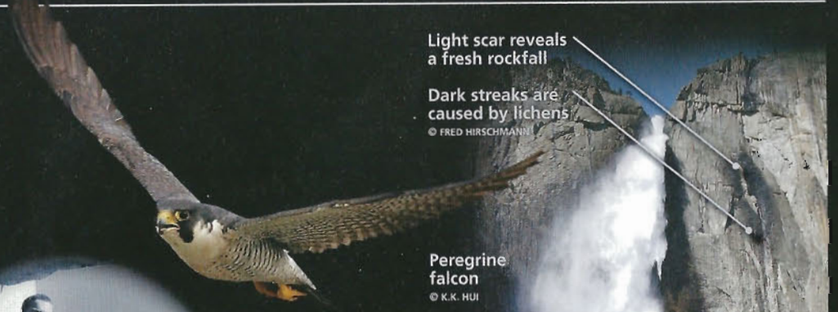
Black swift
© BILL SCHMOKER

GRANITE CLIFFS
© LAURENCE PARENT

Spotted bat
© DICK WILKINS



On the Salathe Wall
of El Capitan
© TOM FROST COLLECTION, COURTESY YOSEMITE CLIMBING ASSOCIATION



Light scar reveals
a fresh rockfall

Dark streaks are
caused by lichens
© FRED HIRSCHMANN

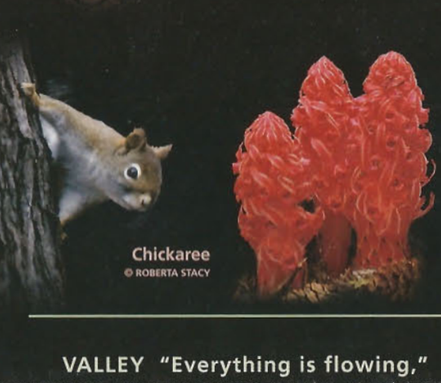
Peregrine
falcon
© K.K. HUI

Rockfall continually changes Yosemite's great cliffs at a rate difficult to chart in the comparative brevity of human lifetimes. Water, ice, plants, and gravity have worked on these granite walls for millions of years and continue to shape them today.

Sequoia
cones
© JOHN ELK III

Pacific dogwood
© JOHN ELK III

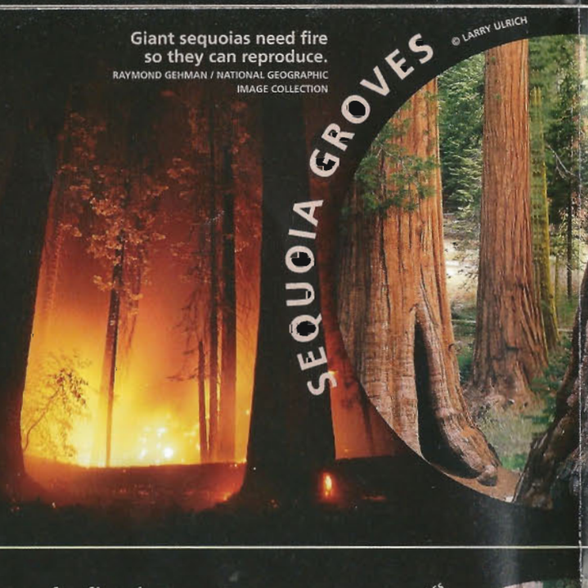
Changes brought about by fire don't benefit just the sequoia. Pacific dogwoods *(above)* need the filtered sunlight that can reach into a sequoia grove if periodic fire keeps its understory open.



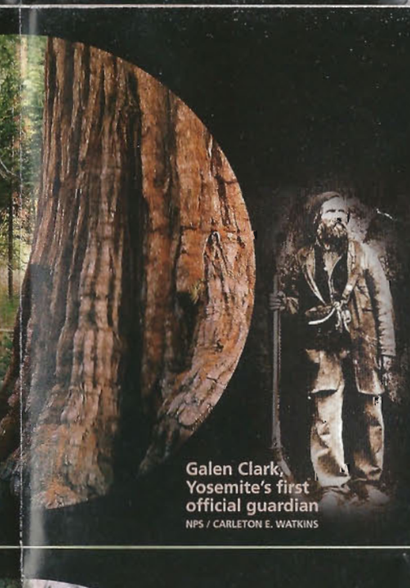
Chickaree
© ROBERTA STACY

The snow plant *(left)* gets water and nutrients from fungi, which are connected to tree roots.
© LARRY ULRICH

Giant sequoias need fire so they can reproduce.
RAYMOND GEHMAN / NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION



SEQUOIA GROVES
© LARRY ULRICH



Galen Clark,
Yosemite's first
official guardian
NPS / CARLETON E. WATKINS

SEQUOIA GROVES Giant sequoias dwarf even the largest pine and fir trees that live among them. They are descendants of an ancient line of trees and can live for over two thousand years. Their trunks can reach over 25 feet thick! As symbols of longevity and strength, the giant sequoias played a major role in the creation of what is now Yosemite National Park. Throughout the National Park System, thousands of rangers wear uniform belts and hatbands embossed with images of the cones and foliage of these significant trees.

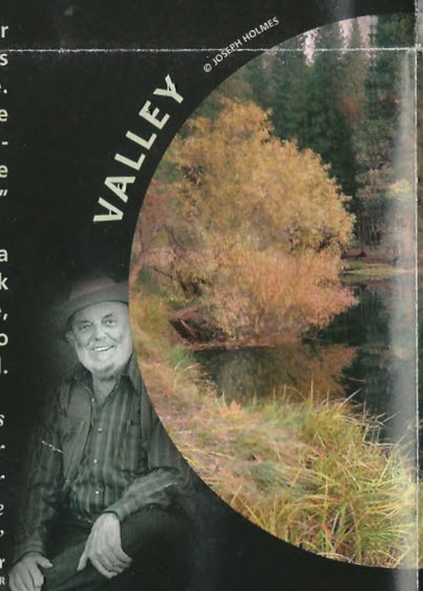
President Lincoln signed the bill that set aside the Mariposa Grove, along with scenic Yosemite Valley, in 1864. In the years following this action, a fire started in the grove, and we began a 100-year history of protecting these beloved trees from fire. While our intentions were good, we were contributing to the loss of what we cared about so much. Through research and experimentation we discovered that fire actually promotes reproduction of these giant trees. It clears away the competing firs and cedars and exposes bare mineral soil for the tiny seeds to take root.

VALLEY "Everything is flowing," John Muir has written, "going somewhere, animals and so-called lifeless rocks as well as water." Most of the year, the Merced River flows peacefully through Yosemite Valley. Shrubs and deciduous trees enrich the riverbanks with green ribbons of life. Moist meadows give way to black oak trees that provide nutritious acorns to deer, bears, and woodpeckers, as they did for early Indian people. A flooding Merced, however, seems to shout "change" and reconfigures the handiwork of both nature and humans.

Spend time in Yosemite Valley and you will experience change. Whether it's the subtle daily changes in the flow of rivers and waterfalls, or the explosive makeover of a flood or 100-ton rockfall, nature undergoes constant transformation here. Water has played an important role in the geologic processes responsible for the stunning appearance of this "incomparable valley."

Yosemite Valley, with the Mariposa Grove, inspired the national park idea. The cliffs, waterfalls, wildlife, and beauty of this place continue to inspire people around the world.

"Yosemite Valley, to me, is always a sunrise, a glitter of green and golden wonder in a vast edifice of stone and space."
Ansel Adams, photographer
© JIM ALINDER



VALLEY
© JOSEPH HOLMES

When you see the relatively lazy summer Merced River, it can be difficult to imagine how the same river, even in flood stage, could bring such dramatic change throughout the Valley—rearranging boulders, roads, and campgrounds.

Black bear
© BENJAMIN R. MILLER
CLOSERLOOK PHOTOGRAPHY

Lupine
NPS

Acorn
woodpecker
© E.J. PEIKER

Black oak acorn
NPS / RAY SANTOS

Mule deer
© LONDIE G. PADELSKY

Wild Yosemite

Congress has designated over three million acres of the Sierra Nevada for protection in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This includes 95 percent of Yosemite National Park, as well as the Emigrant Wilderness in Stanislaus National Forest, the Hoover Wilderness in Toiyabe-Humboldt and Inyo national forests, and the Ansel Adams Wilderness in Sierra and Inyo national forests. Wilderness is meant to protect forever the land's natural conditions, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and scientific, educational, and historical values as well as watersheds, air quality, and wildlife habitat. In wilderness, people can sense being a part of the whole community of life on Earth. Preserving wilderness shows restraint and humility and benefits generations that will follow us. To learn more visit www.wilderness.net.

Rivers and waterfalls are beautiful but treacherous, especially in spring and early summer high water. Be alert for undercut banks and slippery rocks. Fast currents and cold water are a deadly combination. Don't swim above waterfalls or in swift water. Keep children in sight.

This is bear country. Keep bears wild by keeping your food from them, day and *night. Keep food within arm's reach, or in a* food locker, bear-resistant canister, or hard-sided hotel room. No food in cars after dark. Speeding cars hit about 15 bears each year! You may not see a bear, but you can protect bears by following food storage regulations and driving slowly.

Keep wildlife wild. Respect animals at a distance. Never feed or approach them. Animals that get human food may lose their fear of people and become dangerous. Some animals may seem tame but are wild and unpredictable. Approaching wildlife or allowing them to get your food may result in a fine (up to $5,000).

Mountain lions live here. Do not let children run ahead or lag behind alone on trails. If you see a lion, do not run or crouch down. Instead shout, wave, and throw stones. Pick up children so that they look larger. Attacks are rare, but if you are attacked, fight back.

Smoke and fire, like wind and waterfalls, are parts of this park's natural environment. Mornings can be smoky and unhealthy near where fires are burning. Please ask about and avoid fire areas if you have asthma or other medical sensitivities to smoke.

Please respect this park's 9,000 years of human history. It is illegal to damage, deface, or remove any cultural or historic artifacts from federal lands. Metal detecting is not allowed.

Visiting Yosemite Wilderness on Foot

Free wilderness permits are required year-round for all overnight trips into Yosemite Wilderness.

W Wilderness permit station; get free wilderness permit here *(summer only)*

John Muir Trail and/or Pacific Crest Trail

Trail

Natural areas present hazards. You are responsible for your safety. Be prepared for rapidly changing weather conditions. Do not use this map for hiking. USGS topographic maps or detailed trail maps are available at visitor centers.

Visiting Yosemite National Park by Road

Some roads may be closed or have detours or delays. Visit www.nps.gov/yose or phone 209-372-0200 for updated information.

Paved road
Unpaved road
Ranger station
Horseback riding
Gas station
Campground
Food service and lodging
High Sierra Camp *(by reservation only)*
Picnic area
Other public campground

Yosemite Basics

You can drive your car in Yosemite, but *we urge you to use the free shuttle buses in some areas.* See *Yosemite Guide* for shuttle schedules and maps plus important information on safety and accessibility, a programs and activities calendar, visitor center and museum hours, bookstores, galleries, other facilities and services, and general park information. For advance trip planning see "More Information" below.

Reservations are not required for you to enter Yosemite, but you need them for lodging and most campgrounds. Entrance fees are charged. Snow closes some areas to cars from about November through May.

Emergencies: Call 911.

More Information
Yosemite National Park, PO Box 577
Yosemite National Park, CA 95389-0577
209-372-0200 or TTY 209-372-4726
www.nps.gov/yose

Green flags on the maps show the information stations and visitor centers. Beige parking icons show visitor parking for using the shuttle bus system.

Campground reservations: Visit the website recreation.gov or call 877-444-6777.

Yosemite National Park is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

GPO:2013—378-769/30077 Reprint 2012
Printed on recycled paper.