

Wilderness Reserves.*

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

(Concluded from page 111.)

AFTER we had finished this horseback trip, we went on sleds and skids to the upper Geyser Basin and the Falls of the Yellowstone. Although it was the third week in April, the snow was still several feet deep, and only thoroughly trained snow horses could have taken the sleighs along, while around the Yellowstone Falls it was possible to move only on snowshoes. There was very little life in those woods. We saw an occasional squirrel, rabbit or marten; and in the open meadows around the hot waters there were geese and ducks, and now and then a coyote. Around camp Clark's crows and Stellar's jays, and occasionally magpies came to pick at the refuse; and of course they were accompanied by the whiskey jacks with their usual astounding familiarity. At Norris Geyser Basin there was a perfect chorus of bird music from robins, purple finches, juncos, and mountain bluebirds. In the woods there were mountain chickadees and nuthatches of various kinds, together with an occasional woodpecker. In the northern country we had come across a very few blue grouse and ruffed grouse, both as tame as possible. We had seen a pigmy owl no larger than a robin sitting on top of a pine in broad daylight, and uttering at short intervals a queer un-owl-like cry.

The birds that interested us most were the solitaires, and especially the dippers or water-ousels. We were fortunate enough to hear the solitaires sing not only when perched on trees, but on the wing, soaring over a great cañon. The dippers are, to my mind, well nigh the most attractive of all our birds. They stay through the winter in the Yellowstone because the waters are in many places open. We heard them singing cheerfully, their ringing melody having a certain suggestion of the winter wren's. Usually they sang while perched on some rock on the edge or in the middle of the stream; but sometimes on the wing. In the open places the western meadowlarks were also uttering their singular beautiful songs. No bird escaped John Burroughs' eye; no bird note escaped his ear.

On the last day of my stay it was arranged that I should ride down from Mammoth Hot Springs to the town of Gardiner, just outside the Park limits, and there make an address at the laying of the corner stone of the arch by which the main road is to enter the Park. Some three thousand people had gathered to attend the ceremonies. A little over a mile from Gardiner we came down out of the hills to the flat plain; from the hills we could see the crowd gathered around the arch waiting for me to come. We put spurs to our horses and cantered rapidly toward the appointed place, and on the way we passed within forty yards of a score of black-tails, which merely moved to one side and looked at us, and within a hundred yards of half a dozen antelope. To any lover of nature it could not help being a delightful thing to see the wild and timid creatures of the wilderness rendered so tame; and their tameness in the immediate neighborhood of Gardiner, on the very edge of the Park, spoke volumes for the patriotic good sense of the citizens of Montana. Major Pitcher informed me that both the Montana and Wyoming people were co-operating with him in zealous fashion to preserve the game and put a stop to poaching. For their attitude in this regard they deserve the cordial thanks of all Americans interested in these great popular playgrounds, where bits of the old wilderness scenery and the old wilderness life are to be kept unspoiled for the benefit of our children's children. Eastern people, and especially eastern sportsmen, need to keep steadily in mind the fact that the westerners who live in the neighborhood of the forest preserves are the men who in the last resort will determine whether or not these preserves are to be permanent. They cannot in the long run be kept as forest and game reservations unless the settlers roundabout believe in them and heartily support them; and the rights of these settlers must be carefully safeguarded, and they must be shown that the movement is really in their interest. The eastern sportsman who fails to recognize these facts can do little but harm by advocacy of forest reserves.

It was in the interior of the Park, at the hotels beside the lake, the falls, and the various geyser basins, that we would have seen the bears had the season been late enough; but unfortunately the bears were still for the most part hibernating. We saw two or three tracks, and found one place where a bear had been feeding on a dead elk, but the animals themselves had not yet begun to come about the hotels. Nor were the hotels open. No visitors had previously entered the Park in the winter or early spring—the scouts and other employes being the only ones who occasionally traverse it. I was sorry not to see the bears, for the effect of protection upon bear life in the Yellowstone has been one of the phenomena of natural history. Not only have they grown to realize that they are safe, but, being natural scavengers and foul feeders, they have come to recognize the garbage heaps of the hotels as their special sources of food supply. Throughout the summer months they come to all the hotels in numbers, usually appearing in the late afternoon or evening, and they have become as indifferent to the presence of men as the deer themselves—some of them very

much more indifferent. They have now taken their place among the recognized sights of the Park, and the tourists are nearly as much interested in them as in the geysers.

It was amusing to read the proclamations addressed to the tourists by the Park management, in which they were solemnly warned that the bears were really wild animals, and that they must on no account be either fed or teased. It is curious to think that the descendants of the great grizzlies which were the dread of the early explorers and hunters should now be semi-domesticated creatures, boldly hanging around crowded hotels for the sake of what they can pick up, and quite harmless so long as any reasonable precaution is exercised. They are much safer, for instance, than any ordinary bull or stallion, or even ram, and, in fact, there is no danger from them at all unless they are encouraged to grow too familiar or are in some way molested. Of course among the thousands of tourists there is a percentage of thoughtless and foolish people; and when such people go out in the afternoon to look at the bears feeding they occasionally bring themselves into jeopardy by some senseless act. The black bears and the cubs of the bigger bears can readily be driven up trees, and some of the tourists occasionally do this. Most of the animals never think of resenting it; but now and then one is run across which has its feelings ruffled by the performance. In the summer of 1902 the result proved disastrous to a too inquisitive tourist. He was traveling with his wife, and at one of the hotels they went out toward the garbage pile to see the bears feeding. The only bear in sight was a large she, which, as it turned out, was in a bad temper because another party of tourists a few minutes before had been chasing her cubs up a tree. The man left his wife and walked toward the bear to see how close he could get. When he was some distance off she charged him, whereupon he bolted back toward his wife. The bear overtook him, knocked him down and bit him severely. But the man's wife, without hesitation, attacked the bear with that thoroughly feminine weapon, an umbrella, and frightened her off. The man spent several weeks in the Park hospital before he recovered. Perhaps the following telegram sent by the manager of the Lake Hotel to Major Pitcher illustrates with sufficient clearness the mutual relations of the bears, the tourists, and the guardians of the public weal in the Park. The original was sent me by Major Pitcher. It runs:

"Lake. 7-27-'03. Major Pitcher, Yellowstone: As many as seventeen bears in an evening appear on my garbage dump. To-night eight or ten. Campers and people not of my hotel throw things at them to make them run away. I cannot, unless there personally, control this. Do you think you could detail a trooper to be there every evening from say six o'clock until dark and make people remain behind danger line laid out by Warden Jones? Otherwise I fear some accident. The arrest of one or two of these campers might help. My own guests do pretty well as they are told. James Barton Key. 9 A. M."

Major Pitcher issued the order as requested.

At times the bears get so bold that they take to making inroads on the kitchen. One completely terrorized a Chinese cook. It would drive him off and then feast upon whatever was left behind. When a bear begins to act in this way or to show surliness it is sometimes necessary to shoot it. Other bears are tamed until they will feed out of the hand, and will come at once if called. Not only have some of the soldiers and scouts tamed bears in this fashion, but occasionally a chambermaid or waiter girl at one of the hotels has thus developed a bear as a pet.

The accompanying photographs not only show bears very close up, with men standing by within a few yards of them, but they also show one bear being fed from the piazza by a cook, and another standing beside a particular friend, a chambermaid in one of the hotels. In these photographs it will be seen that some are grizzlies and some black bears.

This whole episode of bear life in the Yellowstone is so extraordinary that it will be well worth while for any man who has the right powers and enough time, to make a complete study of the life and history of the Yellowstone bears. Indeed, nothing better could be done by some one of our outdoor faunal naturalists than to spend at least a year in the Yellowstone, and to study the life habits of all the wild creatures therein. A man able to do this, and to write down accurately and interestingly what he had seen, would make a contribution of permanent value to our nature literature.

In May, after leaving the Yellowstone, I visited the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, and spent three days camping in the Yosemite Park with John Muir. It is hard to make comparisons among different kinds of scenery; all of them very grand and very beautiful; yet personally to me the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, strange and desolate, terrible and awful in its sublimity, stands alone and unequalled. I very earnestly wish that Congress would make it a national park, and I am sure that such course would meet the approbation of the people of Arizona. As to the Yosemite Valley, if the people of California desire it, as many of them certainly do, it also should be taken by the National Government to be kept as a national park, just as the surrounding country, including some of the groves of giant trees, is now kept.

John Muir and I, with two packers and three pack mules, spent a delightful three days in the Yosemite. The first night was clear, and we lay in the open on beds of

soft fir boughs among the giant sequoias. It was like lying in a great and solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by hand of man. Just at nightfall I heard, among other birds, thrushes which I think were Rocky Mountain hermits—the appropriate choir for such a place of worship. Next day we went by trail through the woods, seeing some deer—which were not wild—as well as mountain quail and blue grouse. In the afternoon we struck snow, and had considerable difficulty in breaking our own trails. A snow storm came on toward evening, but we kept warm and comfortable in a grove of the splendid silver firs—rightly named magnificent, near the brink of the wonderful Yosemite Valley. Next day we clambered down into it and at nightfall camped in its bottom, facing the giant cliffs over which the waterfalls thundered.

Surely our people do not understand even yet the rich heritage that is theirs. There can be nothing in the world more beautiful than the Yosemite, its groves of giant sequoias and redwoods, the Cañon of the Colorado, the Cañon of the Yellowstone, the three Teton; and the representatives of the people should see to it that they are preserved for the people forever, with their majestic beauty all unmarred.

*This is one of the chapters in the new volume of the Boone and Crockett Club Book, "American Big Game in its Haunts."