

## Whales and Bees

ADVENTURES IN MAN'S FIRST PLASTIC. THE ROMANCE OF NATURAL WAXES. By Nelson S. Knaggs. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corp. 1947. 318 pp. Index. \$6.75.

Reviewed by  
BRIG. GEN. DONALD ARMSTRONG

NATURE, Mr. Knaggs tells us, provides waxes from the most heterogeneous sources. The whale and the bee, the palm tree and certain insects, even mineral deposits give us these materials whose uses are yet more varied than their origins. It is not surprising therefore that Mr. Knaggs roams through the widest range of time and space in telling the story of man's first plastic through the ages.

The Egyptians used wax as an essential material for embalming their dead. Artists for many centuries have used the "lost wax" process for casting their bronzes. Wax fills many industrial and domestic needs, some essential for war production so that waxes are now included among the strategic materials.

This is no ordinary book about the history, geography, and technology of wax. Mr. Knaggs has made his book a vastly entertaining description of travel in exotic places, and of the fauna and flora which serve man's wants for this essential substance. His opening chapter describes the search for wax-bearing palms in the Amazon region. Rarely has the jungle, its few simple inhabitants, and the lonely immensity of the great river been more effectively pictured. The author's travels in search of natural waxes took him to other places equally difficult to reach and therefore little known. Whether he is writing about his journeys or about the lives of whale, bee, or insect, or telling the secrets of the mummies of Egypt, or of casting by the "lost wax" method, Mr. Knaggs shows unusual skill in making his narrative enjoyable and quite comprehensible to the unscientific reader.

Possibly the title will not tempt many readers and this is too bad, for the book is unusually entertaining. It might well serve as a model of successful accomplishment in popularizing a technical subject. Those who like stories of travel and adventure and who don't mind picking up by the way accurate information on archeology, biology, history, and techniques of art and industry will find this unique book a delightful surprise.

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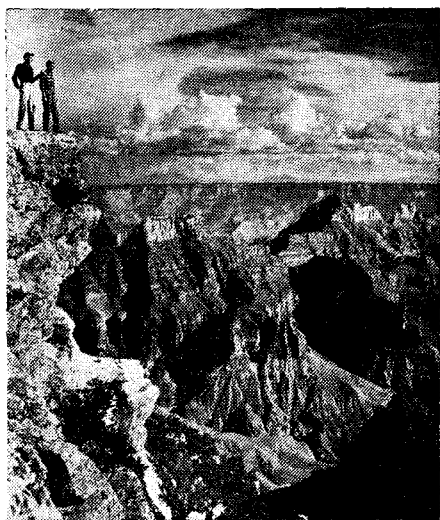
# BOOKED *for* TRAVEL

## UP IN UNCLE'S PARK

**B**ACK in 1892 a legislator arose in Congress and argued hotly that in developing the National Parks, domestic travel, particularly to the West, could be placed on a competitive basis with Europe. In 1914 when travel abroad was actually closed, trips inside the U. S. became popular, and the government was required to develop its own tourist facilities. The National Park service has since been so well developed that visitors to the parks, monuments, and historical sites during this past July totaled nearly 5,000,000 persons. A year-end count of 24,000,000 is expected—it will be a new record.

Yellowstone, the first National Park, was the subject of many rumors of the early 1800's before it was officially discovered. A well-known trader and hunter named James Bridger first toured parts of Yellowstone in 1830. From then on, until his death in 1881, the trader tried to publish stories of the unbelievable sights he had witnessed. Astute editors forwarded him what stood for rejection slips then, and his unpublished stories in the scriveners' set became known as "Jim Bridger's lies."

Today Yellowstone's famous geysers, its bubbling paint pots, its canyons, and its hot springs, are famous all over the world. Among the hundreds of thousands who visited the park this year was Tom Dewey, and advices out of the West indicate that he attracted a pilgrimage of the local leaders that lasted for over a week, and that generally speaking he got more attention than the bears.



—Union Pacific Railroad.

In one park 3,000,000 bats and no insects.

Yellowstone is already closed to rail travelers, but will remain open for limited touring by motorists until October 15. Many other National Parks in milder climate stay open all year. Yosemite, 150 miles east of San Francisco, was recently returned by the Navy after its use as a rest camp during the war and is open again in all seasons. Typical of the big parks, which Stephen Mather, first National Park Service director, called "the lodestones of the West," Yosemite has no government-sponsored accommodations, relies on private enterprises for all its tourist services. Some of its lodges and camps close in September, but the Ahwahnee remains open all year. It holds 200 people, is located 400 feet above sea level on the north side of Yosemite Valley. Rates run about \$13 a day per person, American plan, and there is a ten per cent discount on stays of seven days and longer. Green fees are fifty cents a day, tennis at fifty cents per court per hour. Yosemite Lodge, a colony of redwood cabins with central buildings, has a September-to-May season at about \$4 per person per day without food.

Although most of the nature parks are in the wide open West, and most of the historical sites in the East, the most-visited area is the Great Smokies National Park, which sits astride the Tennessee and North Carolina border. There is a park in Maine and one in Virginia, one in Alaska and another in Hawaii, twenty-seven in all. Collectively they offer perhaps the greatest and weirdest assemblage of protected wild life in the world, from the eyeless fish of Kentucky to the bats of New Mexico. The fish live in the depths of Echo River which flows underground in Mammoth Cave National Park. Having had no need for eyes for hundreds of centuries, the fish lost the power of sight, and now have no traces of eye-sockets. About the bats, they live in the Carlsbad Caverns National Park, and every nightfall a few million of them sally forth on what has become known popularly as an all-night bat. The outward flight lasts for three hours, and in one foray 3,000,000 of them can eat eleven and one-half tons of insects. The bats roll home the following dawn, and hang by their legs with their heads down for the rest of the day. Looks like the expression of a mass guilt complex, they say.

HORACE SUTTON.



—Northern Pacific Railway.

... In another, thousands of visitors and politicians.

## Fillip to Tourists

YOUR WESTERN NATIONAL PARKS. By Dorr Yeager. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1947. 288 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HAROLD L. ICKES

**D**ORR YEAGER, who has been with the National Park Service for twenty years, many of them in the parks themselves, has, in this book, written an informative and interesting guide to the notable National Parks and National Monuments that lie, almost without exception, west of the Mississippi River, but within the continental domain of the United States. Probably twenty or more million people may be expected to visit these parks and monuments this year and every year.

It is obvious that Mr. Yeager loves our National Parks. He speaks of them kindly and gently, with a lover's enthusiasm. It is because of this that his book makes one want to get up and go to see the wonders that he describes. He includes, as every author of a good guide book does, interesting bits of history, occasional anecdotes, and suggestions as to what to see and what to wear.

Mr. Yeager has written with the authority that his years in the Park Service warrant. With one exception, there are no errors, and that one occurs when he is describing, not the wonders of nature, but of men. Even this is due probably to the fact that the book was written before events had changed the situation. In his introductory chapter, "A Word About the Parks," he writes,

Thus far the National Park Service has been fairly successful in combating efforts on the part of special interests to invade the na-