
John Muir

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/jmb

Recommended Citation
https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/jmb/643

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the John Muir Papers at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in John Muir: A Reading Bibliography by Kimes by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.
DID MUIR SAY THIS?

We reprint below, in its entirety, the notorious "snake interview" which first appeared in the San Francisco Examiner July 4, 1889. Muir repudiated this "villainous article" as soon as it appeared, claiming he had been bamboozled and misquoted by an "innocent-looking Examiner reporter".

THE SNAKES OF FRESNO

John Muir Says They Will Kill Hogs and Eat Rabbits.

A RATTLER LIKE A POST

Some Queer Experiences of a Geologist in the Hights of the Sierras.

John Muir, the noted geologist and naturalist who discovered the great Muir glacier in Alaska, and traveled for ten years in the Sierras, while pursuing his chosen pursuit, arrived here last night. A reporter found him his room at the Grand, note paper and pencils before him. He said he had just come down from his ranch at Martinez to get a little quiet, while completing his work on the sixteen volumes of 'Picturesque California.'

THE DEADLY FRESNO RATTLER.

'The greatest place I know for snakes is in Fresno county,' said he. 'It's hot there, and that's just what snakes like. They are out in the foothills mainly, and very thick. It is often said that a rattlesnake can't hurt a hog, but this is a mistake. They kill a great many hogs, and sheep and dogs too, in the Fresno hills, and the mountaineers there are very careful how they go about.

'It makes a good deal of difference how thick a hog's skin is. Probably a little rattlesnake, if it tackled a big swine, wouldn't have much effect on it, but take an averaged sized hog and a medium-sized snake, and the former has no show at all. The hog dies, just the same as a man would.

'While the rattlesnakes there are probably not as thick as they used to be, they are thick enough yet to make things lively.

SMALL GAME BY HUNDREDS.

'They kill cotton-tail rabbits, squirrels, birds, and such things by the score, and live on them, but the sheep and hogs they simply kill. They don't eat them. They are too big. Some of the rattlesnakes are said to be six and seven feet long, though I never saw any quite so big.

'An old resident of Fresno tells me he saw a rattlesnake strike a hog in the throat, and the latter died in fifteen or twenty minutes. If the poison gets into them it takes no time at all to kill them. There are many other kinds of snakes there, but not so many as there are rattlers.

'In the upper end of Yosemite valley there used to be, and there are yet, a great many of the latter. They are usually found in the wild, rocky spots. In the Yosemite, above Mirror lake, they were once very plentiful.
LOOKED LIKE A HITCHING-POST.

'One peculiarity of a rattlesnake is that if he sees you first he will put his head down and quietly steal away. I was once above Mirror lake with a party of ladies and gentlemen, and way off, 150 or 200 yards away, I saw something that looked like a small hitching-post. It stuck some three feet or more up. I said to myself, can this be a hitching-post in the grass? The others thought it was, but I doubted it. As we approached it went down gradually, and finally stole away in the grass. It was a big rattler and had been watching us.

THE SNAKE LINE.

'The snake line is about 8,500 feet. You don't find them in the Sierras above that. The Nevada rattler, as a rule, is a pretty good-natured fellow, unless you attack him. The Nevada snakes look wise and are cunning, and persons are naturally afraid of them. They never try to get away unless they think they are seen. They vary in color from dark to yellow, but are mostly rather dark, with dark mottles or blotches.