

## **UC Merced**

### **Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology**

#### **Title**

Merriam: *Indian Names for Plants and Animals Among Californian and Other Western North American Tribes*

#### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0w38c376>

#### **Journal**

Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology, 2(1)

#### **ISSN**

0191-3557

#### **Author**

Baumhoff, Martin A

#### **Publication Date**

1980-07-01

Peer reviewed

two meters in different parts of the cave. The deposits, dry on the surface, became wetter with depth. Four levels visually defined in most of the test pits were differentiated principally by progressively greater decomposition of the organic material in the deeper, moister levels. Rodent nests and burrows were observed throughout the excavation. Cultural features included several large burned areas, one cache, and one disturbed human burial.

No C-14 dates were obtained, but four occupational periods were defined on the basis of typological cross-dating. These periods, and their diagnostic projectile point types, are as follows: 2100 (?) B.C.-1800 B.C., Pinto and Elko types; 1800 B.C.-A.D. 200, Elko types; A.D. 200-1300, Eastgate types; A.D. 1300-historic, Eastgate and Rose Spring types.

For the projectile points and biface artifacts, very detailed descriptions are offered of attributes of manufacture, damage, and preform morphology. Line drawings of selected specimens, and metric attributes of each individual item are also provided. Other lithic specimens, flakes, and debitage, receive less detailed but still adequate consideration. Nonlithic specimens were limited to a few bone awls and beads, and several fragments of cordage, basketry, and worked wood.

An appendix reports over 8000 bone specimens, some 1800 of which proved identifiable. Detailed tabulations record the species, anatomical nomenclature, and provenience of each identified bone. Observations on a fragmentary human skeleton are also recorded in a separate appendix. Other appendices briefly describe petroglyphs and other archaeological sites discovered in the vicinity of the cave. One of these, the North Fork Lithic Scatter, is to be the subject of a subsequent report.

This monograph is an important contribution to the prehistory of a heretofore little-known region. Much of the painstakingly developed descriptive detail provided in the report does not seem to have yielded commen-

surately rigorous analytical understanding, but the basic interpretation placed on Ezra's Retreat as a temporary campsite intermittently occupied over several thousand years of time is a reasonable one. The report is well-edited and well-produced, in a compact and attractive quarto format.



***Indian Names for Plants and Animals Among Californian and Other Western North American Tribes.*** C. Hart Merriam (assembled and annotated by Robert F. Heizer). Socorro, New Mexico: Ballena Press *Publications in Archaeology, Ethnology, and History* No. 14, 1979, 296 pp., 3 appendices, \$12.95 (paper).

Reviewed by MARTIN A. BAUMHOFF  
Dept. of Anthropology  
Univ. of California  
Davis, CA 95616

This is presumably the end of R. F. Heizer's getting-Merriam-in-print project. The project began in 1955 (I described this in an earlier review—see *The Journal of California Anthropology* 4:330-331) and has continued up to the volume under review. R. F. Heizer died 18 July 1979 and so far as I know did not leave any Merriamiana in addition to this volume to be published under his editorship. Some Merriam material remains to be published, but certainly the bulk of it has now seen the light of day.

The core of this volume consists of data transcribed from a series of 122 check lists. Each check list has 417 biological items as follows: nos. 1-68 Mammals, 69-228 Birds, 229-246 Reptiles and Batrachians (amphibians), 247-251 Fishes, 252-256 Mollusks, 257-278 Insects, 279-389 Trees and Shrubs, and 390-417 Miscellaneous (other plants). The lists

for mammals, birds, and for trees and shrubs seem relatively complete and are furnished with scientific names (some of the scientific names are eccentric or out of date but the usual synonymies should yield the correct species). The other lists are smaller and only have common names.

Each of the 122 check lists then gives the names in Indian languages for each of the species. This does not add up to a list for each of 122 separate groups because a few groups have two lists, one each from two consultants. One hundred twelve of the lists are from California groups, and there are seven from Nevada and one each from Arizona, Oregon, and Idaho. A few of the lists are fragmentary, but most appear to be relatively complete given that the species do not all occur in all areas. The native words are transcribed in Merriam's awkward but useable orthography.

In addition to the words there is a series of notes appended which include translations, a few ethnographic facts, and alternative names. The notes are fairly copious for some, near nonexistent for others. Overall, they are a slight but useful addition to California ethnography.

I would judge that this volume may turn out to be important philologically. The complex linguistic situation of aboriginal California has been analyzed historically but only in rather broad terms. It may be that this really comprehensive listing of native terms for plants and animals will provide material for the linguists to give us more detailed hints than they have into the question of prehistoric migrations (like Siebert and Proto-Algonkian, 1967). The important thing about these lists is that there are many names for many many species. One problem with the lists is apparent. When a list is rich and full, not fragmentary, it will be tempting to assume that where items are omitted the native names didn't exist (or at least the informant didn't know them). Whether we will be justified in that assumption

is unclear. That problem will have to be left to the philologists.

Ballena Press is to be congratulated for bringing out one more in the Merriam series.

### REFERENCES

- Baumhoff, Martin  
1977 *Review of Merriam, C. H., Ethnogeographic and Ethnosynonymic Data from Northern California Tribes; and Merriam, C. H., Ethnogeographic and Ethnosynonymic Data from Central California Tribes.* *Journal of California Anthropology* 4(2):330-331.
- Siebert, Frank T., Jr.  
1967 *The Original Home of the Proto-Algonkian People.* Ottawa: National Museum of Canada Bulletin 214: Contributions to Anthropology: Linguistics I:13-47.



*Travels in Southern California.* John Xántus.  
Translated and edited by *Theodore Schoenman* and *Helen Benedek Schoenman*. With an introduction by *Theodore Schoenman*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976, 212 pp., illustrations.

Reviewed by WILLIAM BRIGHT

Dept. of Linguistics  
Univ. of California  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

The founder and first director of the Budapest Zoo and Botanical Gardens, John (János) Xántus, was born in Hungary in 1825, came to North America in 1851, and became one of the outstanding naturalists of his day. The many specimens which he collected for the Smithsonian Institution have made his name familiar to biologists down to the present. Two books on North America were published during Xántus's lifetime, both in Hungarian;