THE SEARCH FOR NATURAL HISTORY AREAS IN MINNESOTA

Report of the Committee on the Preservation of Natural Conditions

By

A. N. Wilcox, Chairman
W. J. Breckenridge
R. L. Donovan

T. B. Magath
H. E. Stork
Gustav Swanson

At its annual meeting in 1937 the Minnesota Academy of Science went on record as favoring definite action toward the preservation of suitable natural areas in a virgin or unmodified condition and the encouragement of coordinated scientific studies thereon, as a result of which the president appointed a Committee on the Preservation of Natural Conditions. During the first year the committee has endeavored to prepare a broad ground work which would make possible a recognition of the needs and desires of the Academy, an understanding of the principles to be followed, and would permit an intelligent approach through the best possible information to the specific problems involved.

In the first place, the committee has confined its attention to the preservation of natural areas for scientific purposes as contrasted with recreational uses, aesthetic purposes, or broader conservational purposes. The possibilities of long-time, coordinated, biological observations leading to ecological studies of the indigenous fauna and flora, particularly with respect to the important forest and prairie biotas in Minnesota, have led to special consideration being given to areas which are suitable for such studies. These areas should be relatively large in order to provide a sufficient variety of species and of environmental conditions, to assure the maintenance of adequate colonies and populations, to permit biological adjustment to changing environmental conditions and to prevent undesirable invasions. It has also seemed desirable to consider areas which for such reasons as the posses-
The desirability of a state park status has also been considered. Although the question of the probable utility of preservation, the state Department of Conservation and the University of Minnesota have been working together on the establishment of the State Park concept. The following are the main considerations leading to the concept:

1. A State Park is a typical portion of the state's original domain and is preserved as an area of public use, taking advantage of the natural conditions in the face of the increasing demand for recreational facilities. It is being used as a guide by the Division of Public Parks and is identified as the state's original domain for concentrated use, whereby a small portion of the park may be provided for study and educational purposes.

2. The concept of a State Park has been formed, and the following definition has been adopted for scientific study by responsible agencies. This concept is that of the Lake Superior region, but it is expressed in the form of our desires and aims, and has grown from the recognition of the importance of procuring and preserving the natural beauty and usefulness of this area. It would probably give as much assurance as possible of the scientific study by responsible agencies.

3. The committee has been working out a year plan to preserve and maintain the natural conditions in the face of the increasing demand for recreational facilities. It is being used as a guide by the Division of Public Parks and is identified as the state's original domain for concentrated use, whereby a small portion of the park may be provided for study and educational purposes.

4. Ownership by the university and ownership of the land by the park has been expressed in the form of our desires and aims, and has grown from the recognition of the importance of procuring and preserving the natural beauty and usefulness of this area. It would probably give as much assurance as possible of the scientific study by responsible agencies.

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The committee has carefully considered the question of the mode of preservation, and has presented the following considerations:

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\[ \text{This area, comprising approximately 30 acres, is of special interest.} \]

Cedar Creek Bog

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\[ \text{With the last several years about 10 feet of the land} \]

\[ \text{The reserve Woods in and around the region of the Bog.} \]

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extremely interesting forms, several of which occur here in isolated outposts far removed from the principal range of their species. The bluff is situated near the town of Dakota just south of Winona in the heart of that rugged picturesque region which is probably unsurpassed for scenic beauty in the state.

The present owner is greatly interested in the preservation of this tract. He is reported to have purchased it to prevent quarrying and is now prohibiting as well the cutting of timber and grazing. The area is considered safe as long as it remains in his possession.

Other Areas

In view of the difficulty anticipated in locating a large tract of unbroken prairie, it has been gratifying to have several areas suggested as such. Two tracts which were located by a member of the Committee were found to comprise, respectively, one and four square miles of unplowed and ungrazed prairie which had been utilized only for hay. These lie in Traverse county along the great route of bird migration.

It has been possible so far for the Committee to visit only a few of the most promising of the areas suggested by members of the Academy and others. It is hoped that most of the suggestions can be carefully investigated during the coming summer. In the exhibit which has been prepared by the Committee all the areas which have been suggested are indicated on a map of the state and those which have been investigated as well are represented by photographs and by a summary of their important features.

In conclusion, the Committee recommends that the Academy should proceed with the establishment of a study area in Itasca State Park, that in view of the emergency existing with respect to the Nerstrand Woods and Cedar Creek Bog and of their eminent desirability it should aggressively encourage and promote the preservation of these areas, and that the search for and investigation of other areas should be continued.