

## HISTORY AND RESULTS OF NATURE GUIDING IN INDIANA STATE PARKS

SIDNEY R. ESTEN, Department of Conservation

HISTORY OF NATURE GUIDING IN INDIANA. Nature trails and nature guiding in their various forms over the country began in 1920 when nature trails were made in eastern state parks and nature guiding was started in the national parks of the west. The development in Indiana has not been sudden but rather slow and gradual. The movement was begun in Indiana in 1923 when through a cooperative arrangement between the Indiana Nature Study Club and the Conservation Department Miss Luci Pitschler spent three weeks of the spring at McCormick's Creek State Park. Her work the first year was concerned chiefly with children—helping them in their play, organizing games, and telling them about flowers. A few walks with the children were taken through the park and interesting birds, trees and flowers were explained to them. In the spring of 1924 and again in 1925 Miss Pitschler spent three weeks at the same park doing the same type of work. The work was not only successful with the children but gradually the adults became interested and many hikes were taken with them also. During the summer of 1926 Miss Pitschler spent three months at McCormick's Creek and continued the nature hikes with children and adults.

In the early spring of 1927 the interest in the work shown by Mr. Charles Sauers, head of the Division of Lands and Waters, resulted in a conference with Mr. Sauers, Miss Pitschler, and Mr. Sidney R. Esten in attendance, and at this meeting the first plans for organized nature work in the state parks were discussed. Later, Mr. Raymond Torrey of New York who had organized several silent nature trails in the east, stopped in Indianapolis and held a conference on nature work with Miss Pitschler and Mr. Esten. Silent trails were explained and experiences in other parts of the country with nature work were discussed. As a result of these meetings, nature trails were combined with nature guiding and the nature guide service in Indiana parks was organized. In June of that year Mr. Sauers sent Miss Pitschler to Clifty Falls, Mr. Brant Steele to McCormick's Creek, and Mr. and Mrs. Esten with two guides—Mr. Frederick Test and Mr. Otto Behrens—to Turkey Run. All were instructed to experiment with various kinds of signs and to try various methods of developing and increasing the work of the nature service. During the summer at Turkey Run not only general nature hikes were conducted but also early morning bird hikes were taken, an information bureau was organized, a nature museum was started, several silent trails and the test trail were developed and nature lectures were given.

In 1928 nature guiding was discontinued at McCormick's Creek. Miss Pitschler resigned from the service. Mr. Rexford F. Daubenmire was employed as nature guide at Clifty Falls and Mr. and Mrs. Esten with Mr. Test and Mr. Behrens remained at Turkey Run. In 1929 Mr. Esten was named chief nature guide in charge of the nature work in all the state parks. Mr. and Mrs. William Willer were sent to Clifty Falls, Mr. Stewart Springer was employed as a part time guide at McCormick's Creek, and Mr. and Mrs. Esten with Mr. Test and Mr. Daubenmire were at Turkey Run. Nature guiding was reorganized at the three parks along lines developed the previous years at Turkey Run. Nature lectures were introduced at Clifty Falls for the first time and moving pictures of nature subjects were introduced at Turkey Run.

THE OBJECT OF NATURE GUIDING IN INDIANA STATE PARKS. The state parks of Indiana abound in magnificent forms of natural beauty. Here these forms are protected, here they will remain to be seen by thousands of our future citizens when other areas are barren of many of them. People come to the state parks for the following reasons: (1) for recreation and quiet rest; (2) to study nature as it exists in the parks; and (3) because of curiosity. The majority come for the last reason. The service has little difficulty with the second group for these people are already interested in nature study, but the difficulty is in trying to interest the other two groups in the real beauty of nature. The object of the nature service is three-fold: (1) to interest as many people as possible in the natural beauties that exist in the state parks—"The Heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." "Nature is the work of God, not man." (2) To teach people to know the various plants and animals by habits and names for "friendship and appreciation for nature come only with knowledge." "Seek and ye shall find." "Go forth under the open sky and listen to nature's teachings." (3) To cultivate sympathy, understanding and appreciation of nature. Lessons of general conservation are brought out, the need of outdoor recreation is emphasized, the value of solitude and the right use of leisure time discussed. Colleges have an opportunity to bring the study of life to only a few, but in the parks many thousands of people of all ages come under the influence of the nature guiding program. "People are made and nations are perpetuated through the right use of leisure time." "For we learn to know ourselves first of all in the mirror of the world." "Conservation means the wise use of nature's wonders." "Nature works not in miracles but in slow natural development of her wondrous beautiful forms."

RESULTS OF NATURE GUIDING AT MCCORMICK'S CREEK STATE PARK. From 1923 to 1929, inclusive, with the exception of 1928, nature guiding at McCormick's Creek under the direction of Miss Pitschler, Mr. Steele and Mr. Springer consisted mainly of nature and bird hikes. Two hundred hikes were taken with about two thousand people. The reason for discontinuing the service there for the future is the fact that the park is not large enough and the number of people attending not sufficient to warrant the maintenance of the service.

RESULTS OF NATURE GUIDING AT CLIFTY FALLS STATE PARK. Three months of each year from 1927 to 1929 under the direction of Miss Pitschler, Mr. Daubenmire and Mr. and Mrs. Willer constitute the period of work at Clifty Falls. During this time 300 general nature hikes with 4,294 people in attendance were taken and 53 bird hikes with 477 people. In 1929, 27 nature lectures were given to 1,131 visitors. Silent nature trails and test trails were maintained each of the three years. On these trails linen tags were used for the labelling of the trees, flowers, shrubs and other natural objects of interest, and on the test trails linen tags with questions were used.

RESULTS OF NATURE GUIDING AT TURKEY RUN. Nature guiding has been conducted at Turkey Run from 1927 to 1929 inclusive, under the direction of the following guides: Mr. and Mrs. Esten (1927-1929), Mr. Test (1927-1929), Mr. Behrens (1927-1928), and Mr. Daubenmire (1929). During the three years 439 general nature hikes have been taken with an attendance of 6,927 visitors, 74 bird hikes with 851 people, and 134 lectures given to 8,188 people. Information has been given to 14,000 people and it has been very carefully estimated that about 120,000 made use of the information given on the various silent trails. The following silent trails were used: 1. Silent trails with trees, flowers, mosses and ferns labelled; 2. Conservation trail with lessons on conservation given on

the labels; 3. Tree trail with 125 of the largest trees labelled and the size of each given; 4. Historical trail of 55 labels containing the history of Turkey Run and placed on trees near the hotel; and 5. Test trail where questions were written on tags on natural objects.

When the silent trails were started linen tags were used but it was found that these last only a short time so experimentation has been conducted to find material that will last for a period of years. As yet this experimentation has not determined a type of tag that is satisfactory in withstanding the elements. So far the most satisfactory are the aquaproof and the sheet metal signs and the next problem is to find a kind of paint that will not peel or wear off.

The nature museum, a feature which has been established at Turkey Run only, is a part of the program which has been given much consideration for there are great possibilities in this for future development in the state parks. Some of the objects on display are pictures of the summer birds of Turkey Run, bird nests, plaster casts of the footprints of common birds and mammals, geological specimens, samples of Turkey Run woods, fossils, moths, butterflies and some miscellaneous objects.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS IN THE THREE PARKS FROM 1923 TO 1929, (INCLUSIVE).**  
The first important result of the nature service has been the study of the flora and fauna of the three parks and the collecting of data. In 1929 Mr. Springer collected valuable data relative to the reptiles, birds and plants of McCormick's Creek area. In 1928 Mr. Daubenmire made extensive studies along these lines at Clifty Falls and Mr. Willer continued the work there during 1929 and also did some work on the study of insects. From 1927 to 1929 at Turkey Run extensive work was done among the plant and animal groups, including the fungi, mosses, ferns, flowering plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Much help has been given at Turkey Run by visiting authorities from this and other states.

The summary of the nature guiding program in Indiana state parks is as follows:

- 941 general nature hikes with 13,221 people,
- 127 bird hikes with 1,328 people,
- 161 lectures with 9,319 people,
- Information given to 27,000 people,
- Estimated number of people using silent trails—200,000.

Thus, during the last seven years about 227,000 people have been helped by the service through information given directly or placed on tags on the silent trails, and 23,868 people have come more intimately in contact with nature through hikes and lectures. Altogether, about 250,000 people have in some way been benefitted by the opportunities given them by the nature guide service in the state parks of Indiana.

**FUTURE PLANS FOR NATURE GUIDING IN STATE PARKS OF INDIANA.** The history and results of nature guiding in Indiana show that something of real value has been accomplished in making the parks better appreciated by the thousands of visitors who have come to them. Much information gathered in the work has been given out over the state and various phases of nature work are being conducted in a similar way in city parks and in normal schools, scout camps and private grounds. A number of letters have been sent in answer to questions from other states as to the nature guiding being conducted here, and much help has been given toward establishing similar work in other states.

With the summary of the past and present come dreams and plans for the future, for nature guiding has a bright future not only in this state but in other states. In Indiana our aims are as follows:

1. To extend the service to other parks as soon as it is possible to do so, especially to the Dunes and Spring Mills.
2. To continue gathering material on the flora and fauna of the parks where nature work is carried on. This is not only necessary as a basis for successful nature work but is of scientific value for all time.
3. To develop a more extensive system of hikes whereby more people can be accommodated at one time.
4. To continue early morning bird hikes two or three times each week during the summer.
5. To develop an efficient information system in all parks so that the history of the parks, the geology and information concerning the flora and fauna may be given.
6. To establish and develop small but efficient museums at all parks where nature programs are conducted.
7. To plan and to develop better silent trails which will give information about the plants and animals of the parks as well as the history and geology of the region.
8. To continue the use of test trails so that the visitors may test their own knowledge of nature.
9. To continue experimenting with various materials and paints in order to secure better and more lasting signs for the silent trails.
10. To further develop the nature lecture program so that lectures can be given every night and will consist of illustrated colored lantern slide lectures and also motion pictures.

The continued success of the work depends upon getting new ideas and in development from year to year. Suggestions and coöperation on the part of members of the Indiana Academy of Science are urged and solicited in order to make Indiana's state parks more enjoyable to the thousands of visitors and to awaken people to the value and appreciation of Indiana's natural beauties.