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# *Interpretive Programs*

Increase  
Outdoor  
Appreciation  
And  
Enjoyment

**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**  
Agricultural Experiment Station  
And Cooperative Extension Service  
EAST LANSING

LESLIE M. REID, Editor



**AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF PARK EXECUTIVES**  
**PARK EDUCATION PROGRAM**

WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA

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Of  
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# Interpretive Programs

## FOREWORD

**T**HE TERM “interpretive programs” has a specialized meaning in the park and recreation field. Interpretive programs include those activities that open the gateway to a greater appreciation of the wonders of nature, using the outdoors and natural materials as classroom and laboratory tools.

Interpretive programs provide interesting and enjoyable outdoor experiences. They present the mysteries and complexities of nature in terms which can be recognized and understood. As man recognizes his relationship to his natural environment, his comprehension of its scope is broadened and enlarged.

Through interpretation and familiarity come appreciation; through appreciation comes wiser use and enjoyment of our natural resources.

## INTRODUCTION

### I NTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS:

- Contribute to the inspirational value of outdoor experiences.
- Tell the story of an area and its distinctive features.
- Help the visitor understand points of greatest interest and inspiration.
- Allow park employees to meet the public under ideal conditions.
- Foster more intelligent use of the out-of-doors.

**Close contact with nature increases understanding and appreciation of our rich natural heritage.**

Courtesy: Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, Michigan.



Program tools include:

- News releases.
- Publications.
- Competent, trained personnel.
- Guided trips.
- Historical sites.
- Talks and illustrated lectures.
- Nature trails.
- Museums.
- Live exhibits.

This bulletin tells how park and recreation agencies can increase our welfare and happiness by emphasizing interpretive programs as part of their service to the public.

Although intended primarily for park and recreation administrators, the information included is valuable to all who are interested in interpretive programs:

- Public-spirited citizens.
- Privately-sponsored foundations.
- Volunteer organizations.
- Service clubs.
- Garden clubs.
- Historical societies.
- Sportsmen clubs.
- Schools.
- Nature clubs.
- Museums.

### **Good pictures help tell your story to the public.**

Courtesy: Hamilton County Park District, Ohio. Photo: Harold Stout.



**Trained leadership is the key to successful interpretive services. Here a leader unlocks the mysteries of the out-of-doors to his interested charges.**

## **PROGRAM PLANNING**

**T**HE FIRST STEP in setting up a new program is to develop a plan of action. Expert guidance in planning is the best insurance for a satisfactory, efficient program.

Program success largely depends upon the park and recreation administrator who directs it. He must:

- Be aware of community needs and interests.
- Be able to evaluate and make use of new methods. Be familiar with new out-looks presented by changing social conditions.
- Appreciate land and facility requirements for a good interpretive program.
- Be able to select personnel trained to meet the needs of the program.

The alert administrator constantly seeks ways to improve his program through:

- Contacts with professional associates.
- Personal contacts with citizens of the community.
- Affiliation with professional organizations.
- Technical reading, experimentation, and research.

Close contact with professional associates will avoid program pitfalls. *Know the problems of others and their solution—then, profit from them!*



Courtesy: Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois. Photo: Julian Urban.

## FINANCING

### Analysis of Needs

- Be sure real need exists before beginning a new program.
- Take advantage of professional consulting services in making decisions.
- Know community organizations and individuals who may be affected. Learn:
  - How they operate.
  - Their objectives and needs.
  - The value of the program to them.
  - Opportunities for mutual cooperation.
- Make use of carefully-directed personal contacts and surveys.

Groups with specialized objectives are often willing to provide funds for special projects. Such groups must realize that public areas are for the benefit of all and cannot be assigned to any organization for exclusive use. This is particularly important if physical property is involved.

**P**ROPER FINANCING is vital to a successful program. As part of normal park and recreation department operation, the interpretive program may be financed from several sources.

- *Appropriated funds* provide normal year-to-year financing. However, they may tend to impede long-range planning, since they usually take the form of annual appropriations.
- *Direct tax levies* assure adequate and steady income for long periods.
- *Bond issues* are a particularly convenient means for financing capital improvements. Use them only when you are sure of enthusiastic public support.
- *Operating revenues* including fees and charges are an important source of revenue. But avoid overuse that might give an air of commercialism to the program. Entrance or parking fees are sometimes used in connection with specially-provided facilities.
- *Gifts, legacies and donations* often are the basis for the beginning development of interpretive programs. Such gifts may take the form of land, monetary donations, or the provision of special facilities.

## PERSONNEL

**I**NSIST ON GOOD interpretive personnel. Their ability, enthusiasm, personality and imagination are the keys to program success.

Interpretive personnel need:

- Knowledge and skill in program presentation.
- Tact, and an understanding of human nature.
- Patience and cheerfulness.
- Willingness to wear a distinctive uniform or insignia.
- Ability to work with and supervise other personnel.

Sources of interpretive personnel, either full-time or seasonal, include:

- College students in the natural sciences and allied fields.
- Nature school graduates.
- Schoolteachers.
- Professional scouts or youth group leaders.
- Recreational leaders.
- Recruits from in-service training programs.

## Salaried Staff

**H**IRE PERSONNEL on a trial basis unless they have already proven skill and general ability. Make permanent employment depend on practical performance and acceptance by the public.

Civil service rules or examinations sometimes are an obstacle in obtaining desirable personnel. Close cooperation with civil service officers is important to insure the selection of applicants with the proper combination of personality, imagination and training. Ill-chosen personnel can give the interpretive program a costly and sometimes fatal setback.

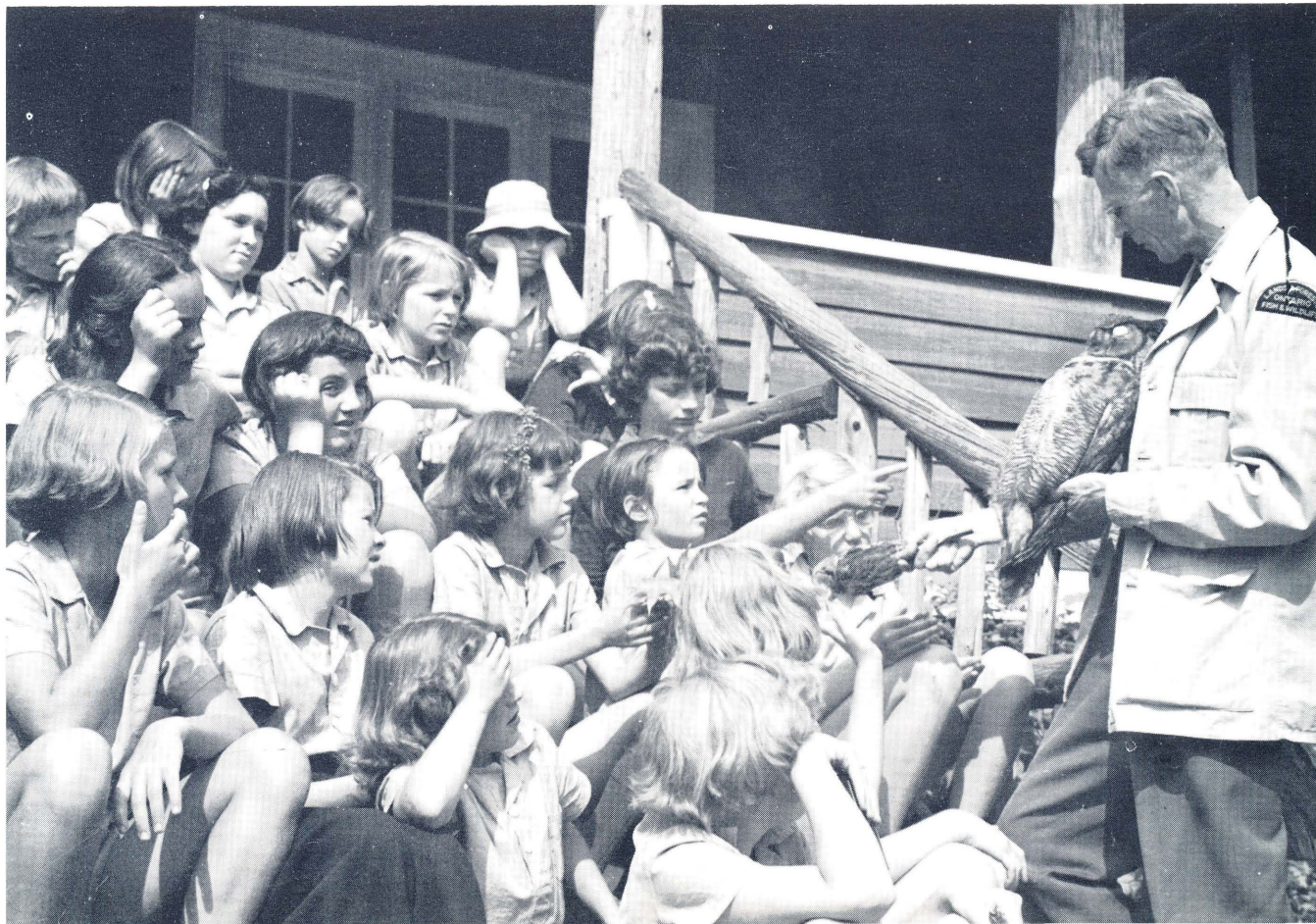
Give the interpretive leader equal status with other division heads, space in the main office when possible, and a place in departmental staff meetings and policy-making sessions. Interpretive personnel have close contact with the public, and they are often more aware of public feelings and attitudes than are other staff members.

## Professional Advancement

**E**NCOURAGE interpretive leaders to broaden their educational experience and professional contacts. Better programs and increased public respect and appreciation will result.

**Handling an object—such as the mounted bird being passed among this group—increases interest greatly.**

Courtesy: Department of Lands and Forests, Ontario.





Courtesy: Hamilton County Park District, Ohio.

**Enthusiastic, trained volunteers can contribute much to a successful program.**

Courtesy: Columbus Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.

**Good leadership is reflected in skillful guidance, combining technical knowledge with an understanding of human nature.**

### **Volunteer Workers**

**T**HE ALERT program director uses volunteer workers. Enthusiastic, trained volunteers are only slightly less important than salaried personnel. Voluntary help can accomplish many routine tasks which the interpretive leader and paid staff cannot find time to do. Take the time and effort to provide training programs for potential leaders in this group. Dependable volunteers also represent a future source of competent staff members.

Seek out persons interested in the natural sciences or in nature arts and crafts, amateur photographers, bird enthusiasts, botanists, wildlife experts, group leaders or camp counselors. These people can help your interpretive personnel promote outdoor education programs.



Let schoolteachers conduct children's classes at nature centers, museums, zoos and botanical gardens. Teachers can also help in handling the enormous workload created by group visits. School-park, school-zoo, or school-museum cooperative arrangements are working well in a number of larger communities.

Organized groups often ask park personnel to help in their activities and programs. Working with these already organized programs helps promote your interpretive program. And you can help these groups in leadership training.

### Leadership Training

**C**OMPETENT LEADERSHIP is vital to program success. If trained leadership is unavailable, develop training programs to fill this need. Take advantage of interested community experts who will teach their specialties. Concentrate your training program on employees who are:

- Enthusiastic.
- Congenial.
- Responsive to needs and desires of the public.
- Potential leaders.
- Good "salesmen."

Good leadership training is one of the best ways to multiply the efforts of trained park and recreation personnel.

### PUBLIC INFORMATION

**Y**OUR PUBLICITY can be very simple. It may involve only a well-qualified individual in the community to head the program. Have this person introduce the idea to the community and develop an awareness of the value of the interpretive program.

In all contacts with the public, interpretive personnel can encourage increased participation in the program and publicize better use of park areas.

Talks to school groups and others are opportunities for park personnel to come into personal contact with large numbers of park users. These talks, along with guided tours and illustrated lectures, promote intelligent use of parks. Gear the presentation to the interest span of the age or social level. Frequent breaks for questions or exhibits are good ways to keep audience interest, so bring samples along to show the group.

Most schools and organizations have projection equipment. The interpretive agency may be able to loan slides and movies or provide lists of good visual material.

**Group talks reach large numbers of potential park users. Live animals help maintain high audience interest.**

Courtesy: Oakland Park Department, California. Photo: Harold Winder.



Guidesheets, checklists and informative pamphlets contribute to better park use. Make them easily available to visitors.

Courtesy: Michigan State University.

Structures like this help orient the park visitor. Attractive, well-kept signs stimulate interest and tend to discourage vandalism. Note the use of interesting trail names.

Courtesy: National Park Service. Photo: Abbie Rowe.



### Press, Radio, and Television

INFORMATION DISTRIBUTED by press, radio, and television acquaints the public with outdoor educational activities. Newspapers and radio and television stations seek newsworthy items of public interest; they are usually anxious to cooperate with park and recreation departments. Many of them will provide advice and personnel to assure adequate coverage of events or exhibits. Work closely with city editors, as well as television and radio program directors. The effort will pay good dividends in public interest and support.

### Printed Material

USE BROCHURES and newsheets for wide distribution of information. Guidesheets and checklists of flora and fauna are popular and valuable tools. Have them mimeographed or printed. Some agencies find sponsors to print these informative publications—then they sell the circulars to park visitors.

Make guidesheets or checklists brief and accurate. Design them for the average layman's use. Good use of color and design gives them wider appeal. Area guidemaps and display boards are other helpful tools. Use them to present important messages to visitors.





Courtesy: Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois.

Park-sponsored tours provide an opportunity for many city children to see and study the outdoors through first-hand experiences.

## THE INTERPRETIVE AREA

**G**OOD COMMUNITY interpretive programs are not restricted to public properties. Use all resources. Every community has natural features or historical sites which, with proper interpretation, can contribute to community enjoyment and well-being.

Little things are often as important to the success of the program as the more obvious features.

Consider:

- Large or unusual trees.
- Glacial boulders.
- Bee trees.
- Marshes and bogs.
- The night sky.

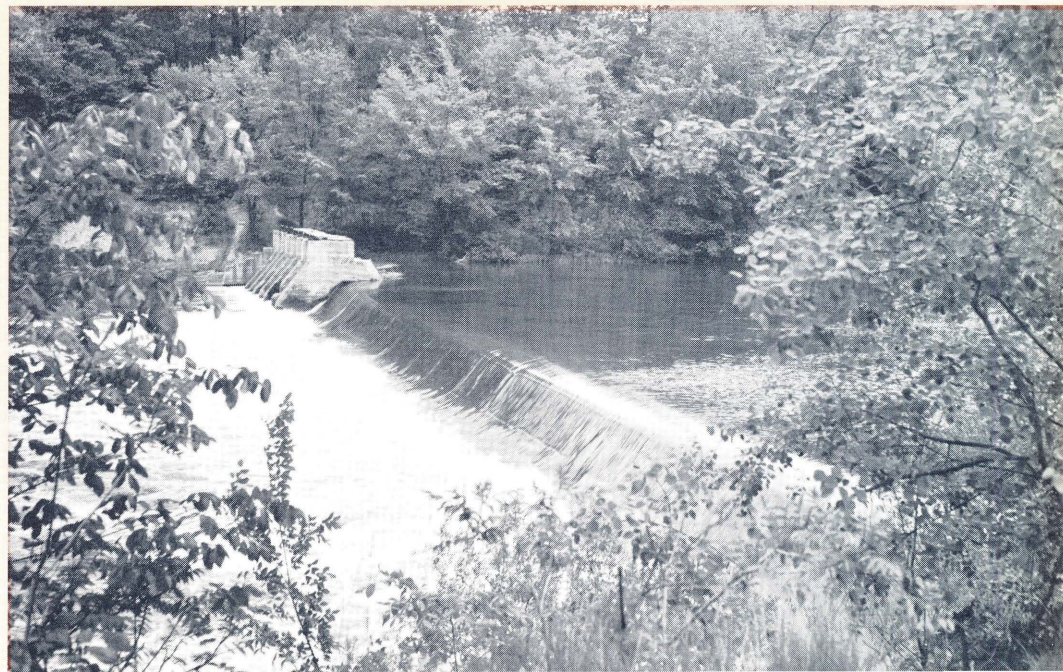
- The weather.
- Pioneer cabins.
- Abandoned ruins.
- Landmarks.
- Geological formations.

As part of the interpretive program, schedule trips to see local cultural and educational features. The ordinary becomes significant with interpretation. Such local attractions are valuable additions to the natural features found in recreational areas. They provide the basis for “special” tours and demonstrate the wide scope of a balanced interpretive program.

Guided tours include hikes or walks by groups with special interest in birds, spring flowers, trees, geology, or history. They may take the form of motor caravans, bicycle tours, fall color trips, boat trips, or photography walks.

**Rivers and streams have a wealth of interpretive material. Plants, fish, and rock formations make the Grand River a favorite spot.**

Courtesy: Michigan State University.

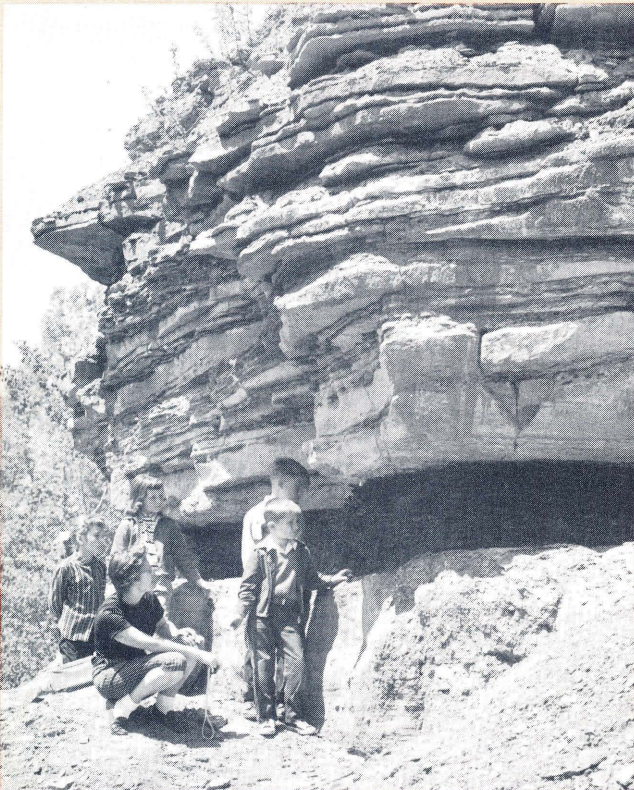




Your program need not be built on spectacular features. A city street or vacant lot, or one quiet pond shown here can lead to enriching outdoor experiences.



Shrubby wild areas hold many interesting natural features. Here, a grade schoolteacher shows her pupils a poisonous toadstool.



Closeup of the sand ledges which gave the city its name. The dark seam of high-grade coal was mined commercially in past years. Nearby shale beds furnish the raw material for local tile factories.

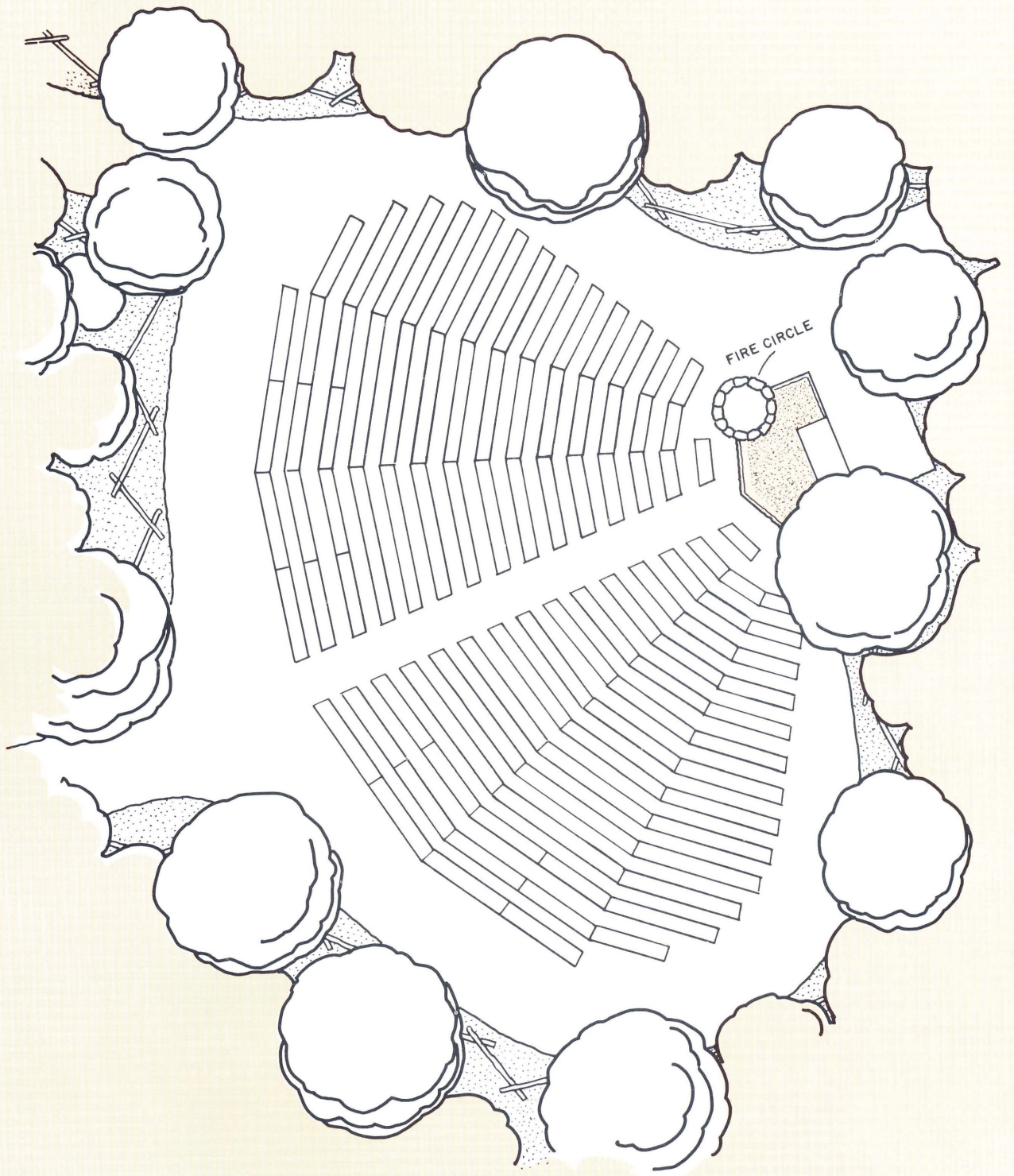
**E**VERY COMMUNITY is large enough to have natural features worthy of interpretation. These pictures were taken in Grand Ledge, Michigan, a typical small town of about 5,000 people. Shown here are scenes which emphasize a variety of interests—geology, plant and animal life, history, to name only a few. Ants on a sidewalk, bees in a hollow tree, even a farmyard or backyard garden, can be made equally interesting.



An avid bonsai fancier and gardener, Mr. Robert Maxson enjoys showing his collection of dwarfed trees and shrubs to interested visitors.

To prevent removal of the largest tree in town, motorists on Clinton Street are diverted around this American Elm.

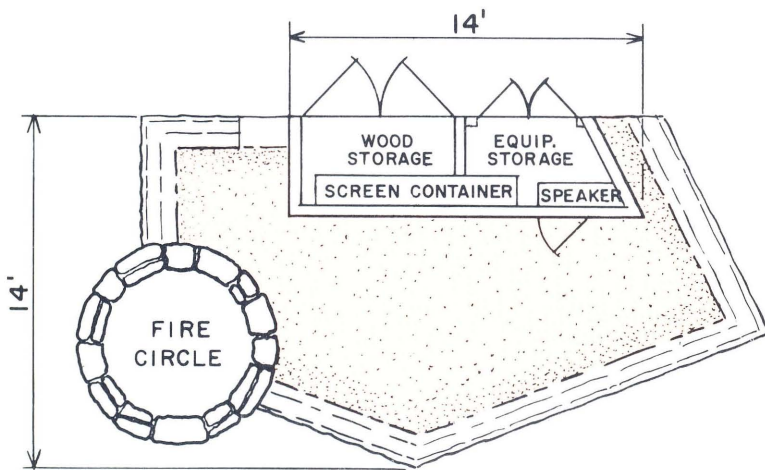






Courtesy: Bernheim Forest, Clermont, Kentucky. Photo: John Thierman.

This nature museum was remodeled from a storage building. Note the ventilating louvers under windows, in roof, and in end walls. The interior is of plywood with a floor of creek gravel.

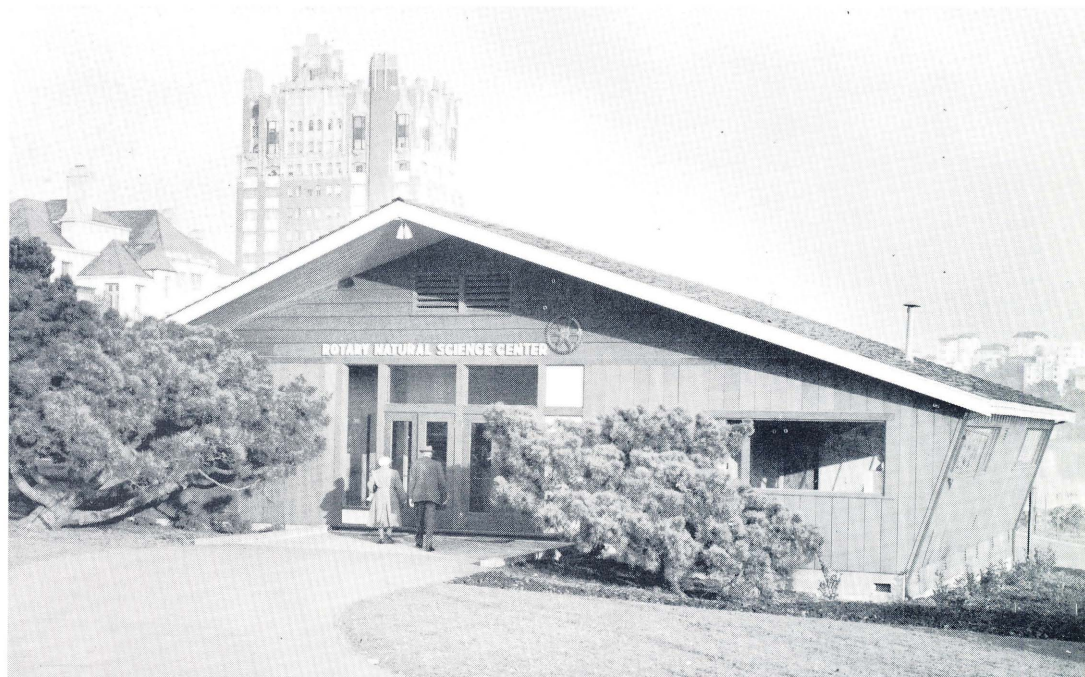


Financed partially by Rotary Club subscriptions, this building is headquarters for interpretive programs. Included are a lecture hall, memorial library, and exhibits, as well as offices for the park naturalist staff.

Courtesy: Oakland Park Department, California. Photo: Harold Winder.

This campfire area, shown on page 12, has many good features. The raised stage is equipped with storage area and screen. The campfire is well located for visitor appeal without interfering with the campfire program. The drawing above shows storage space behind the stage.

Division of Beaches and Parks, California



## Interpretive Centers

**A** COMPLETE interpretive program requires a carefully-designed center where people can meet. Here, natural features can be interpreted and programs carried out under the best conditions.

Develop the interpretive center according to a master plan—as an integral part of overall development.

Begin with an outdoor meeting place for gatherings, talks and campfires. This area does not need to be elaborate or expensive. Make it large enough to accommodate groups with some privacy. Design it so that ceremonies can be conducted easily.

Good campfire programs require gifted leadership. Take advantage of youth group leaders and persons having special talents. Let elements of pure fun, audience participation and, where possible, spiritual values be the objectives. But also remember that the campfire program is an excellent place to get across good interpretive material.

As interest increases and funds become available, develop nature trails, exhibits, trailside museums, and live exhibits of native animals.

Make the interpretive center widely known. Give it a “catchy” name. Refer to it with the same familiarity as you do the school, post office or city hall.

Eventually, a building will bring the center under cover and permit greatly expanded services. Include:

- Headquarters for interpretive staff.
- A meeting place for groups using the project area.
- A training center for leaders of organized groups.
- A workshop area for groups of children and adults.
- Public toilet facilities.
- Exhibit space.
- Storage space.
- Room for anticipated expansion.

As community needs increase, enlarge the program by expanding public information programs and adding interpretive centers or other interpretive facilities.

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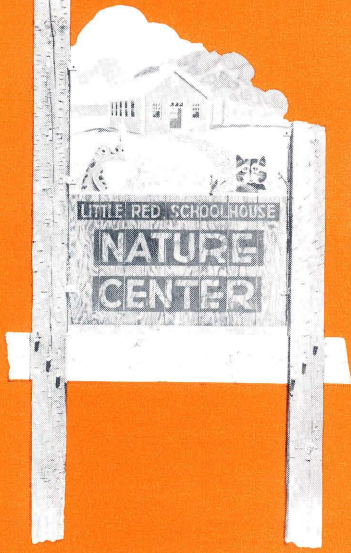
**Here is a simple outdoor meeting place adaptable to large or small groups. Half-circle design lets the speaker face the audience.**

Courtesy: Oakland Park Department, California. Photo: Harold Winder.



# LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

Of  
Cook  
County



Courtesy: Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois.

**T**HE SCHOOL HOUSE above is the focal point that keeps urging visitors to walk the three labeled trails that radiate from it. Exhibits and displays are found both inside and outside the building to increase visitor interest. Transformed from an abandoned one-room rural school and located on a knoll overlooking a marshy lake, the nature center is an attractive meeting place and exhibit area. Designed for guided trips of school children, it has become increasingly attractive to adults and family groups as well.



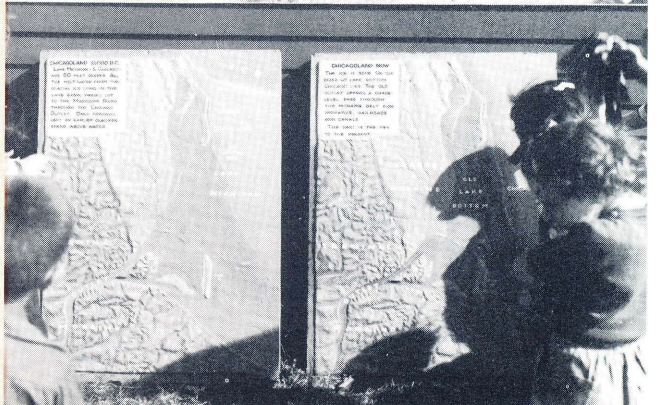
Taking turns, these children search the lake for birds and aquatic animals.



Recreating the colorful past, this Indian display makes a convincing interpretive feature.

Plaster relief maps showing the area's geologic history help visitors understand present conditions.

Interesting yard exhibits feature special displays.





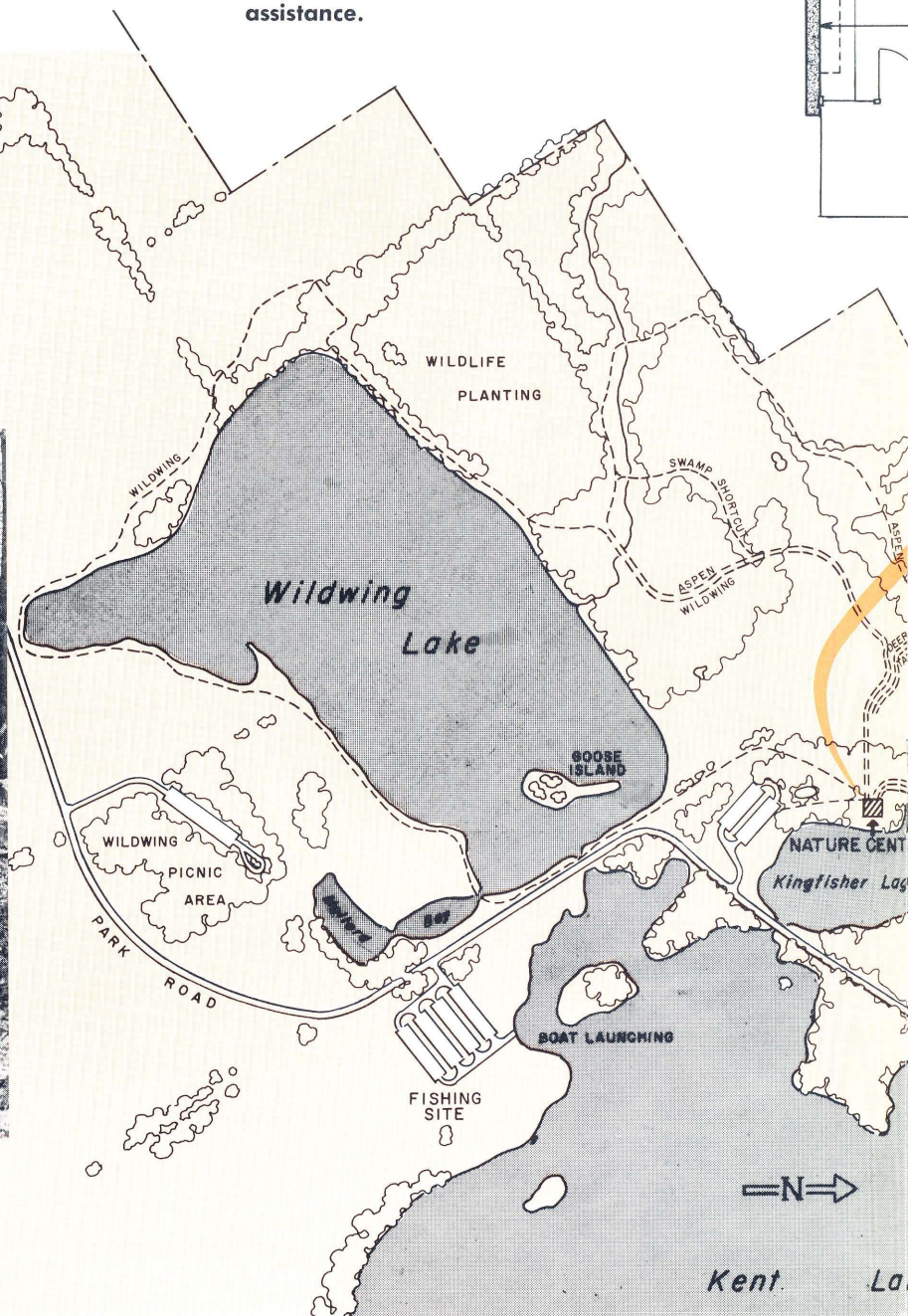


Courtesy: Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, Michigan.

**K**ENSINGTON PARK (part of the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority), typifies a trend to expanded interpretive programs. Some 30 miles northwest of Detroit, Michigan, this nature area is part of a 4,500-acre regional park. Overlooking Kent Lake from a wooded knoll, the Nature Center is of attractive contemporary design. Exhibits and illustrated lectures introduce visitors to the area. Well-marked trails, labeled for nature study, spread out from the Center. School classes are encouraged to visit the area to supplement classroom instruction. A Park Naturalist is available for assistance.

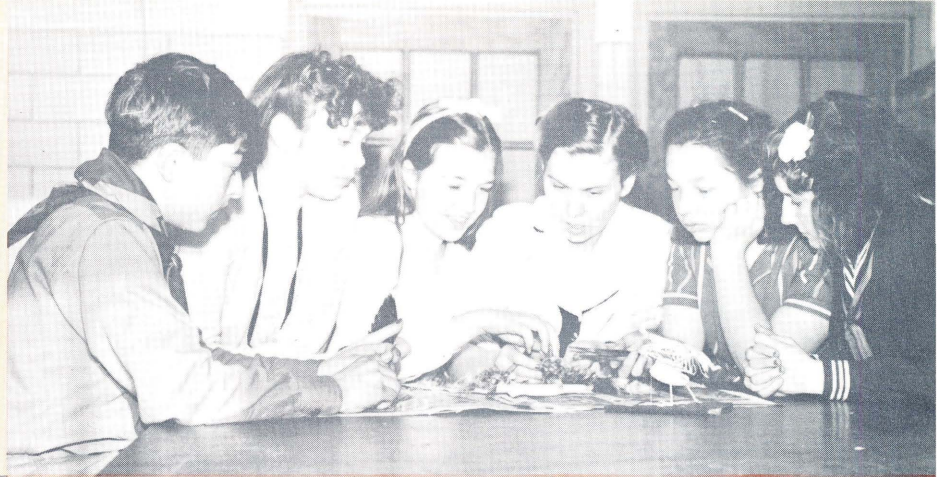


Good directional signs aid traffic flow without being too conspicuous.



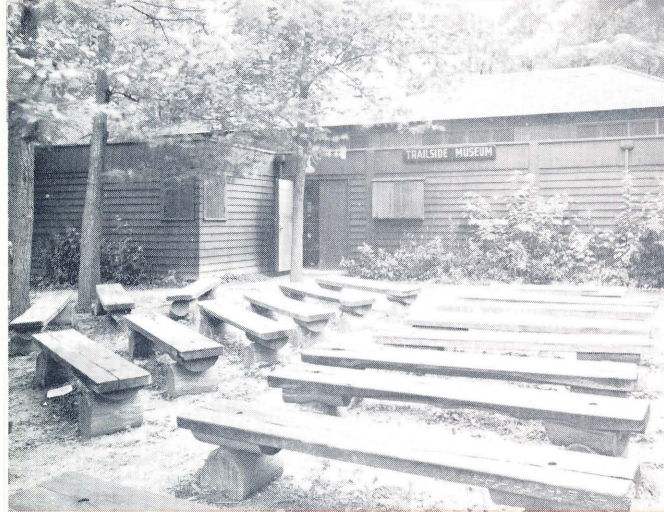


**This outdoor seating area at Rocky River Trailside Museum combines an outdoor meeting place with the trail-side museum.**



Courtesy: Staten Island Zoo, New York. Photo: Jack Muntzner.

**A skilled adult who understands the ways of children can stimulate curiosity and interest which will lead to a lifelong appreciation and affection for nature.**



Courtesy: Cleveland Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.  
Photo: R. Marvin Wilson.



Courtesy: Department of Lands and Forests, Ontario.

**The entranceway is a silent invitation to participate. Design it as carefully as you do the nature center building.**

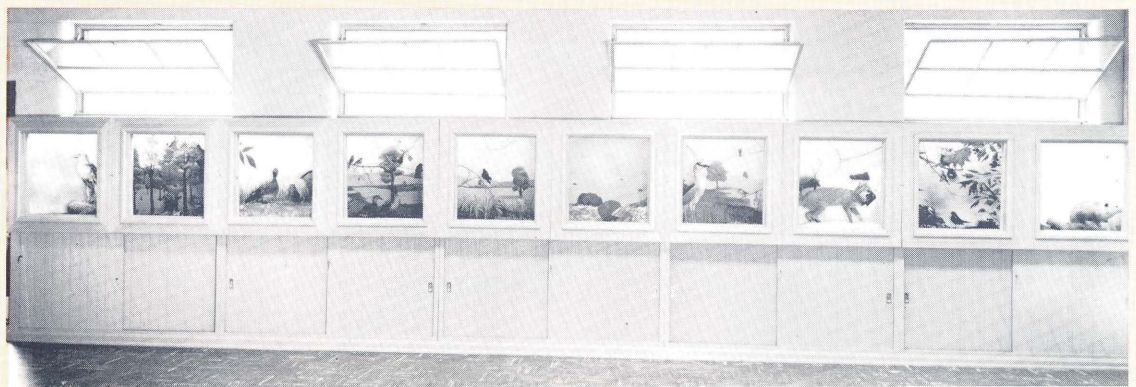


Courtesy: Columbus Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.

**This nature center in Blacklick Woods is heated and winterized for year-round use. The 28- by 48-foot main room seats 120 for meetings and programs.**

Courtesy: Hamilton County Park District, Ohio.

**Good lighting, plenty of fresh air, attractive displays with ample storage, and a feeling of spaciousness are outstanding features of this room.**



## Museums

**M**USEUMS PRESENT facts and ideas that cannot be interpreted adequately in the field. By themselves, or as part of general interpretive centers, they add to the value of outdoor experiences by presenting carefully-planned educational exhibits.

Types of museums include:

- General.
- Historical.
- Industrial.
- Nature.
- Science.
- Man.

Specialized museums are adapted to a particular purpose:

*Trailside museums* are teaching tools and an integral part of the interpretive program. Design self-explanatory exhibits that can tell a part of the park story to visitors without the use of interpretive personnel.

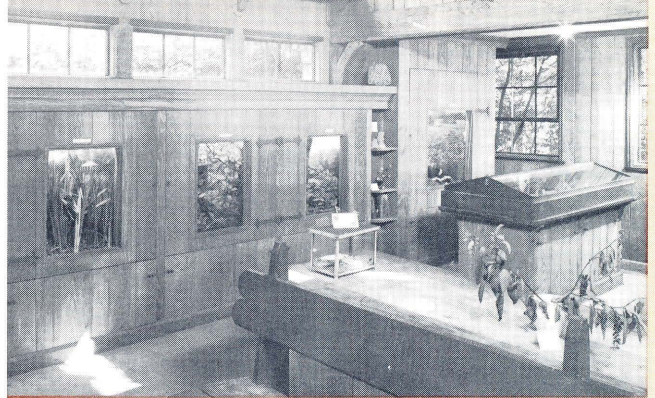
*Children's, travelling and camping* museums serve other specialized purposes.

Museums:

- Exhibit and explain objects found locally in the field.
- Use graphic devices, models, pictures, and maps to develop understanding and appreciation.
- Display living plants and animals to demonstrate life processes and behavior.
- Provide study collections for those seeking further information.
- Serve as focal points for other interpretive activities.

The museum may be part of a general interpretive center or a structure by itself. Provide:

- Meeting room for public groups and lectures.
- A workshop for children.
- A laboratory for developing interpretive devices and exhibits.
- Facilities for displaying living animals which cannot be shown satisfactorily in the out-of-doors.
- Storage of collection and exhibit materials.
- A staff work area.
- Exhibit space flexible enough to permit change.



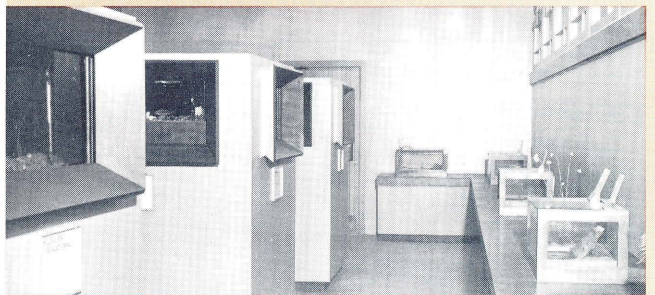
Courtesy: Cleveland Metropolitan Park District, Ohio. Photo: R. Marvin Wilson.

**This museum features good ventilation, lighting and skillful use of native woods.**



Courtesy: Oakland Park Department, California. Photo: Harold Winder.

**Combine versatile exhibit space with adequate storage.**



Courtesy: Department of Lands and Forests, Ontario.

**These aquaria display a variety of local fish.**



Courtesy: Detroit Zoological Park, Michigan.

**Turtle shells are an inexpensive aid to field identification.**



**Properly displayed live exhibits have high visitor interest.**

Courtesy: Detroit Zoological Park, Michigan.



Courtesy: Bernheim Forest, Clermont, Kentucky.

This simple pen is satisfactory for the display of many small animals. A drop door between the display pen and shelter keeps animals in sight of visitors and permits control for maintenance. Wire on outside of barrier protects both children and animals.

First-hand experiences with live animals increase interest among children. Here a park naturalist gives youngsters a closeup of Mr. Turtle's "snapper."

Courtesy: Department of Lands and Forests, Ontario.



## Collections and Exhibits

COLLECTED MATERIAL can be handled in several ways:

*Display collections.* Improve your interpretive service through interesting explanation of exhibited material. If display space is restricted, limit specimens to native plants and animals.

Change exhibits often to stimulate continuing interest. Remember that a good display is selective. Center each exhibit around an idea or theme worth "selling."

For example:

- Food.
- The carrying capacity of the land.
- The relation of plants and animals to their environment.
- The role of predators.
- The importance of multiple land use.
- Geologic history.
- The balance of nature.
- Parasitism.
- Wildlife management problems.
- The interdependency of species.

Children play a large role in molding public opinion. Good exhibits directed toward children are always worthwhile.

*Reference collections* are scientific collections which record the name, date, place of collection, collector's name and other identifying characteristics for each specimen. Although actually an inventory of the area, they can serve equally as well as a basis for the interpretive program.

If collecting is impractical, keep written records of the occurrence of all species in the interpretive area.

The *accession* record provides a number for every specimen and contains all of the information concerning material added or loaned to the museum.

The *catalog* record records every specimen in the museum by number and gives all pertinent information regarding the specimen.

*Live exhibits* are drawing cards for both children and adults. The ideal exhibit shows the animal in its natural environment. However, it may be necessary to use captive animals where it is not practical to view or study them in their natural state. It is better to have no live display than to have poor design and maintenance. Few features draw criticism more quickly than poorly-kept live animals.

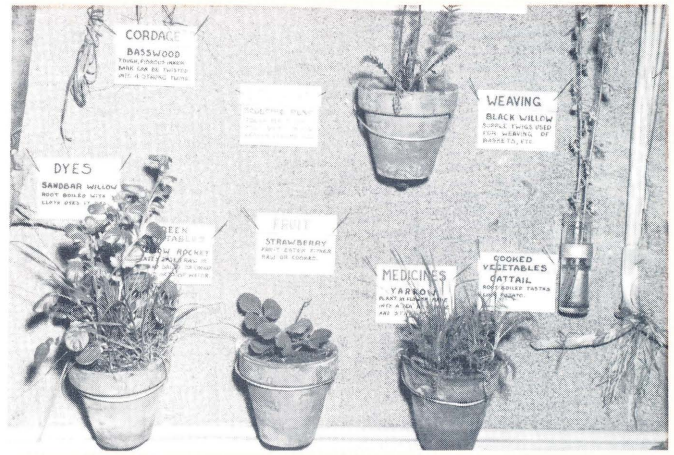
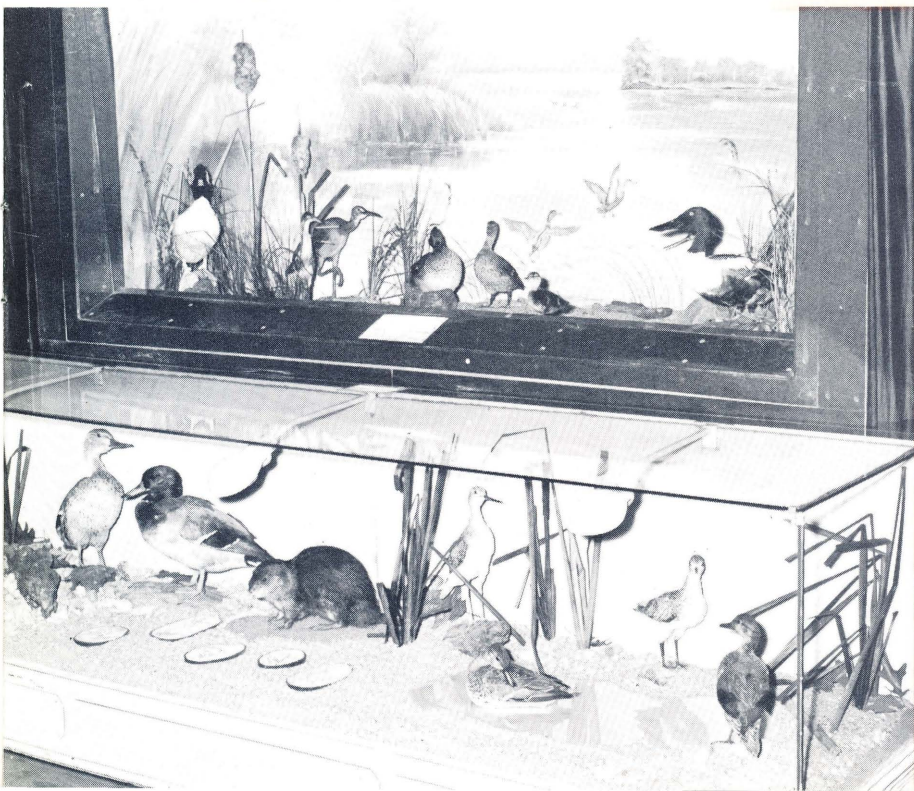
Confer with zoological park officials when planning live exhibits.

**Areas for exhibition of live animals must be carefully designed. Note adequate, convenient parking area off the main park drive. The nature museum serves as a focal point for the development. A winding promenade runs in front of the cages; convenient service alleys are behind.**

Courtesy: Department of Conservation, Indiana.

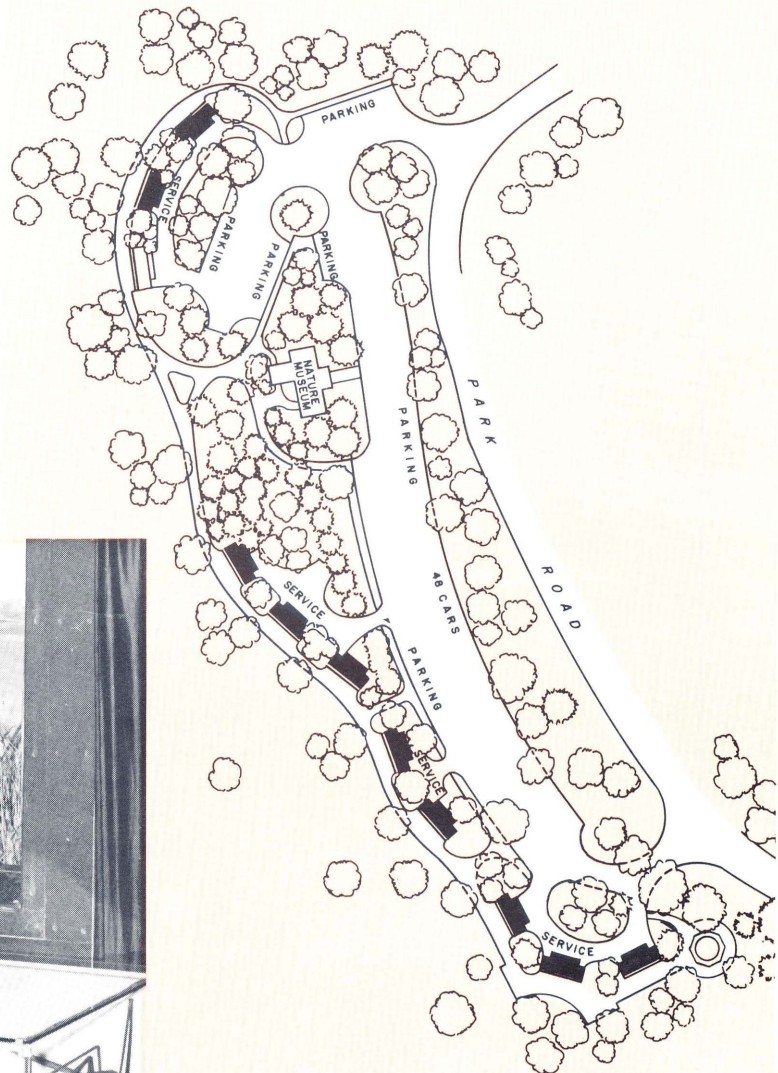
**Interesting natural exhibits can be made without great expense. Lifelike poses help to convey a natural feeling. Note the plaster casts of tracks in the foreground.**

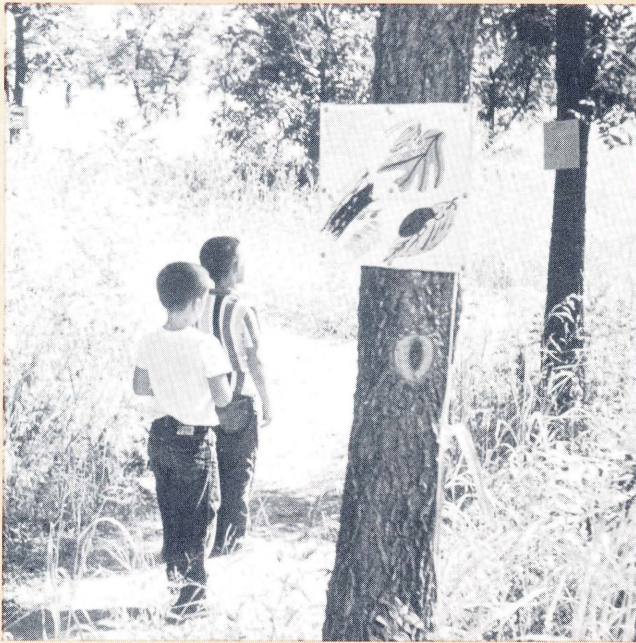
Courtesy: Detroit Zoological Park, Michigan.



Courtesy: Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois.

**Exhibits always interest park visitors. This inexpensive display uses live plants with explanatory labels to tell a story.**





**A feature of the Dallas nature program is active child participation. Children clear trails, make signs and labels, and build trailside exhibits.**

Good captive exhibits follow standards used in zoological parks.

Include:

- Cages for small game.
- Large enclosures for big game.
- Birdcages that permit observation of birds in flight.
- Barless and moated exhibits that create an impression of freedom.

*Portable exhibits* are valuable aids. Use them in public places, at conferences or meetings, in schools and other public institutions. Stimulate interest in the program by using portable exhibits to give people a preview of their visit to the interpretive area.

### **Nature Trails**

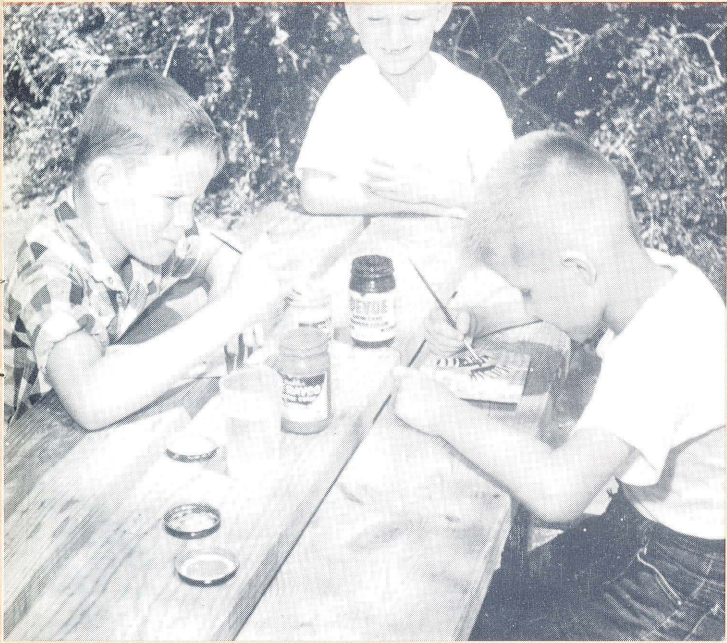
**A**LL TRAILS leading through the woods, alongside lakes, or over hills and mountains are nature trails. They bring men, women, and children into healthy and voluntary contact with nature. Unfortunately, although these trails provide the environment, they may lack the means of interpreting that environment. The purpose of the labeled nature trail is to develop an awareness of the values in an area through better acquaintance with the surroundings.

Develop trails leading from the interpretive center carefully, and encourage their use. Nature trails are best used under the guidance of trained naturalists. Constructed trips have the great value in the interpretive program for they involve personalized and expert service in the environment itself. The excitement of discovery never lessens. Provide for group surprises, even though the feature may be well-known to the leader.

Establish self-guided labeled trails and trailside exhibits-in-place as soon as there is a reasonable amount of supervision available. The labeled trail takes the place of a friendly naturalist who walks with the visitor and explains the things to see along the way. These trails put the potential value of the area to more intensive use than a naturalist can hope to do through limited personal contacts with the public.

*General interest trails* name plants; shrubs; trees; evidence of animals; plant succession; and geological, historical, and topographical features. They may point out the interrelationships of plants and animals to their environment and present such ideas as the carrying capacity of the land and the role of predators.

**Carefully designed, well-maintained nature trails extend a special invitation to enjoy and become better acquainted with nature.**



Courtesy: Department of Parks and Recreation, Dallas, Texas.



Courtesy: Columbus Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.







Courtesy: Hamilton County Park District, Ohio.

The trained naturalist adds greatly to the value of a nature trail. He can point out features that would otherwise be missed, answer questions, and capitalize on the curiosity of his guests.

*Specialized trails* emphasize special kinds of features. Examples are:

- Geology.
- Ecology.
- History.
- Water life.
- Insects.
- Birds.

The nature trail entrance shows the visitor where to go and helps him select the trail he wants to use. Area guidemaps such as this may be printed in smaller scale for general distribution.

“Question” trails test trail users and add a distinct thrill to trail use. Test trails may be separate trails or part of the labeled nature trail. Short loop trails may give answers at the end.

Courtesy: Columbus Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.





Courtesy: Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois.

*Trail Construction.* Short trails cut fatigue and keep interest high. The most effective labeled nature trail is about a half mile long and takes about 45 minutes of walking time.

Winding one-way trails reduce monotony and provide an atmosphere of privacy. Good trails run through a variety of habitats—from stream bank to rocky ridge, from swamp to forest. Lead the visitor to points of interest. Accent scenic spots and emphasize special features.

Interconnecting trails that allow a choice of walking time add to the variety and interest of the area; they also accommodate more people. Locate trail labels so they can be seen from a distance, drawing the visitor onward. Use signs to indicate distance and walking time. Construct trails that:

- Are well-marked, with directional signs where necessary.
- Are relatively narrow to prevent bunching.
- Reduce erosion and general disturbance of the natural environment.
- Minimize natural hazards.
- Provide drinking water and sanitary facilities where appropriate.
- Include benches and shelters for visitor comfort.
- Have cleared discussion areas at main stations where groups can assemble.

Give names to trails, because names:

- Are interesting, appealing, and popular.
- Create a feeling of familiarity and affection.
- Help to identify the trail in relation to others.

Look for some appropriate identifying feature or local historical association when naming the trail.

**Trails should lead the visitor to varied points of interest. Here a group gets an extra treat watching netting operations.**

**Convenient rest stops, where the visitor may pause, will help him relax and enjoy the beauty of his surroundings. The rest stop might be a railing, log, or bench.**

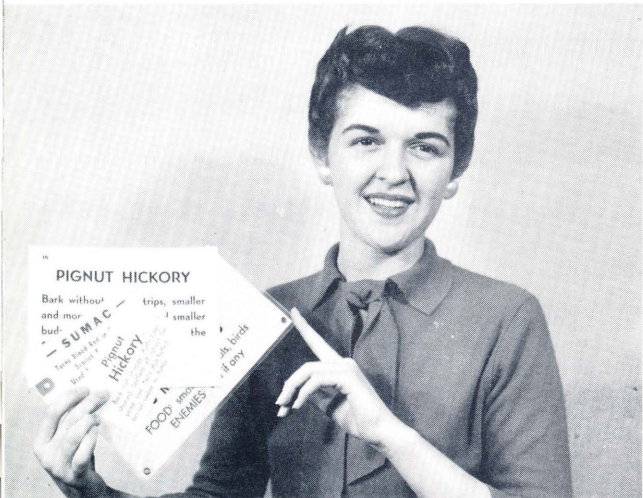
Courtesy: Columbus Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.





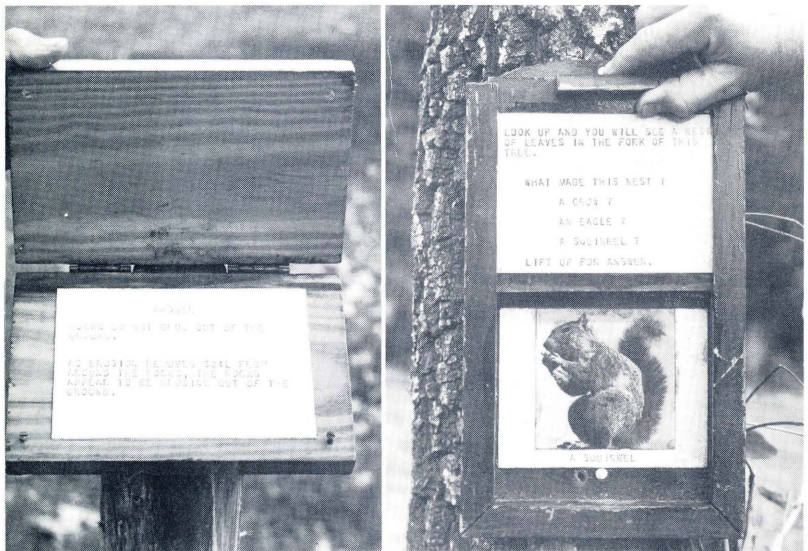
Courtesy: Department of Recreation and Conservation, British Columbia.

**A single major sign is often the best way to present unusual natural features.**



Courtesy: Michigan State University.

**One label is printed on a paper shipping tag. Another is sealed between plastic sheets to increase its useful life. The small pignut hickory label is designed to be tacked on a tree, the other for attachment to a sign panel.**



Courtesy: Bernheim Forest, Clermont; Kentucky.

**On these quiz labels only the question is visible until the visitor lifts the hinged cover or the sliding plate to reveal the answer underneath. Pictures are especially good for children.**

## Labels

**I**T IS DIFFICULT to write good short labels. Make labels:

- Interesting and attractive.
- Accurate in every detail.
- Capture attention quickly.
- Easy to read, with legible type.
- Brief.
- Easily understood.
- Relate the subject to something familiar to the reader.

*Use names carefully!* A tongue-twisting name often overshadows the object being shown. Try:

Red Maple  
Acer rubrum

Not:  
ACER RUBRUM  
Red Maple

Scientific names are justified in some places since common names are often local in character. For example, the Honeysuckle of some southern states is the Azalea of the northern states.

Change label texts often to stimulate interest and repeated use of the area by regular park visitors.

Use mass-produced labels with care. Avoid repetition or a stereotyped appearance. Make labels of:

- Paper shipping tags.
- Cardboard.
- Wood.
- Plywood.
- Masonite.
- Metal.
- Plastic.

Where frequent changes are necessary, the paper label is commonly used. More durable materials are better for permanent labels, particularly on all-purpose trails, picnic sites and other public use areas.

Labels may be backed with wood, plastic or metal for nailing purposes, better viewing angle, or to prevent destruction. To waterproof paper labels, dip them into wax or varnish, or spray them with varnish or lacquer.

Imaginative use of color, interesting shapes and varied sizes, illustrations and designs—all add to the effectiveness of your labels.

Testing or quiz labels are valuable devices for creating interest. The quiz label is usually a lift-up device with the question on the top. Lift the label for the answer. Another type asks a question and directs the reader to another point for the answer. Possibilities are limitless. A few question labels greatly increase trail popularity.

Many trails require the use of guidesheets to locate labeled items. This is an excellent teaching device when used for question and answer games.

This printed map is an excellent nature trail guide. The self-marking quiz in the upper right-hand corner allows the visitor to test his knowledge of features seen along the way.

Courtesy: Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Illinois.



### PLANTS ALONG THE TRAIL

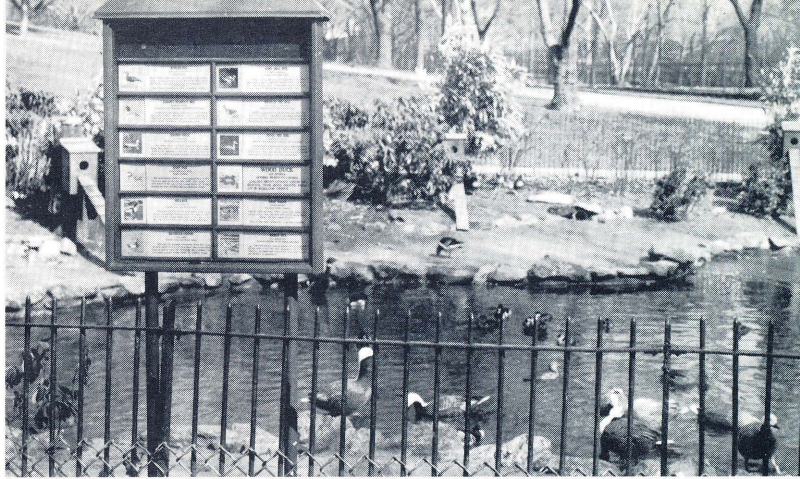
[a] eastern hemlock	[j] Austrian pine	[o] balsam fir	[r] red cedar
[c] Carolina hemlock	[k] white pine	[l] white fir	[u] false cypress
[e] European larch	[m] red pine	[v] false cypress	[w] Douglas fir
[d] mountain pine	[n] Jeffrey pine	[x] common juniper	[y] Japanese yew
[g] pitch pine	[a] arbor vitae	[z] rhododendron	
[f] Jack pine	[b] Norway spruce		
[h] limber pine	[p] white spruce		
[i] Ponderosa pine	[q] Colorado spruce		
[s] Scotch Pine	[t] bald cypress		

Letters are for work sheet, above; Symbols: from Asia from Europe  
 from part of America shown by arrows

THE MORTON ARBORETUM

numbers on the map refer to explanations in the Guide booklet obtainable for 10cents

TRAIL STARTS and ENDS HERE  
 PARKING No. 2



Courtesy: Zoological Society of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

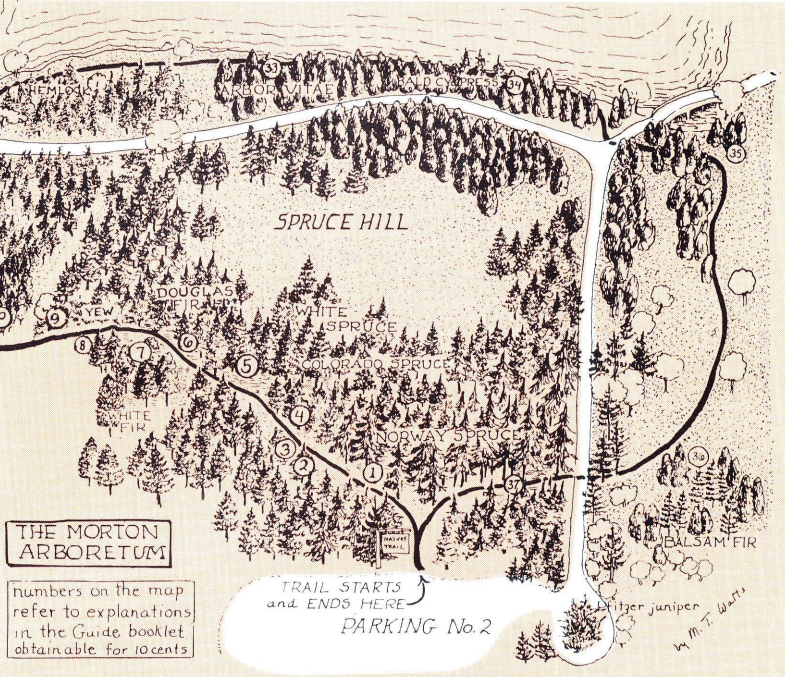
This unusual sign features colored sketches and descriptive texts to help identify the waterfowl.

### EVERGREEN TRAIL MAP and WORK SHEET

planned to accompany EVERGREEN TRAIL GUIDE booklet

Test yourself by filling squares with letters preceding names in list at lower left-hand corner of this page. This is a self-marking test. If you know your conifers, it will tell you so.

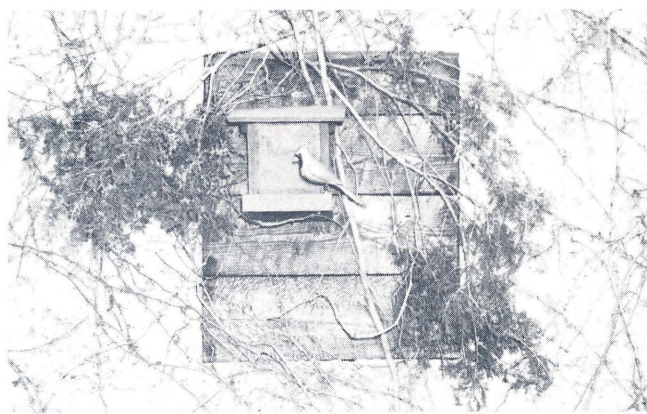
1. The evergreen with coral-red berries is
2. The spruce with drooping twigs is
3. The evergreen that does not get along with hawthorns is
4. The 5-needled pine of great value as lumber
5. The evergreen with all its needles flat and overlapping is
6. The spruce with the longest, stiffest cone is
7. The tree from the Pacific northwest with drooping twigs is
8. The deciduous conifer from Europe is
9. The spruce from northern Europe is
10. The evergreen planted in low, wet places along this trail is
11. The pine with orange bark on its upper branches is
12. The pine with shortest needles is
13. The eastern pine with 3 needles in each bundle is
14. The deciduous conifer from southern swamps is
15. The evergreen from the North that makes the most fragrant of Christmas trees is





Courtesy: Bernheim Forest, Clermont, Kentucky.

**This trailside bulletin board protects displays from the weather. Wide places in the trail where groups may gather are necessary for such displays.**



Courtesy: Bernheim Forest, Clermont, Kentucky.

**Lifelike carved birds are available from several sources. Use them with discretion to stimulate visitor interest and aid in identification.**

**A simple label along the trail means much to those who seek knowledge and understanding of their environment.**

Courtesy: Columbus Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.



Courtesy: Columbus Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.

**This attractive outdoor feeding station invites birds to a spot where they can be more easily seen. The log section provides a step for children.**

## Trailside Displays

**T**RAILSIDE DISPLAYS and exhibits rate high on the list of requirements for a good labeled nature trail.

Trailside displays include:

- Labels in series.
- Bulletin boards.
- Sheltered labels, such as "The Prayer of the Woods" or "The Conservation Creed."
- Trail maps.
- Interpretive signs.
- Bird feeding stations.
- Small structures for specific exhibits such as live animals, rocks, fossils, or plants.
- Charts to show animal tracks, rock formations, or tree leaves.
- Drawings of birds and animals.

These displays are small museums. They are added features that improve interpretation. Protect them from the weather or trail users by shelters, small display structures, or fences. *Don't let them dominate the trail!*

Use living exhibits only at points on the trail where there is good protection. The beginning of the trail and easily-watched open spots are best.

Exhibits-in-place are outstanding natural features along the trail. Examples are:

- Ponds.
- Enclosed portions of streams.
- Beds of wildflowers.
- Geological formations and rock outcroppings.
- Outstanding tree specimens.

Organizations such as historical societies, civic clubs, or nature clubs who are interested in special projects may mark *exceptional* sites.

Interpretive signs and displays are an important tool for community education and enjoyment. Do not restrict them to nature trails alone. Use them in:

- Picnic grounds.
- Campgrounds.
- Roadside lookouts.
- Scenic observation points.

The public regards signs, displays and other facilities in the interpretive area as models of good practice. Here is the place to favorably impress the visitor. Good maintenance, cleanliness and sanitation will do much to win continuing public support.



GLACIAL BOULDER OF  
ENGADINE DOLOMITE  
TRANSPORTED FROM  
THE OUTCROP NORTH  
OF ST. IGNACE DURING  
THE ICE AGE A MILLION  
YEARS AGO.

Courtesy: Michigan State University.

This shady trout stream is stocked with many kinds of larger fish. It is an excellent example of the nature trail “*exhibit-in-place.*”

Courtesy: Detroit Zoological Park, Michigan.

Single features may be so outstanding that they merit special labelling, even though they are located outside a formal nature area. This glacial boulder in Wilderness State Park, Michigan, is a good example.



## SUMMARY

- Be sure the program satisfies a permanent, important community need; then gain support by making program plans known.
- Insure continuous, adequate financing, whatever the source of income.
- Make interested, qualified employees your key to success. Use specialists from allied fields, volunteers, and a core of trained salaried employees. Increase their effectiveness through training and advancement programs.
- Acquaint the public with your program by using every agency available to distribute information and news. Make this a continuing activity.
- Use all kinds of methods to make interpretation meaningful. Displays, legends, exhibits, examples and slogans are all useful. You never know what will “get the message across.”
- Make the museum the introduction to the interpretive area. Use it to show things that cannot be approached or handled easily in the outdoors for study.
- Get visitors out on the nature trail where they are surrounded by the out-of-doors and can see examples of things you have shown earlier. Find different and imaginative ways to feature important points.
- Make your interpretive area the crowning glory of the park system. Include your best examples of design, construction, and maintenance to stress *quality use of resources*.
- Be sure the visitor learns things that benefit him *and* the parks. But, also make certain he enjoys himself.

**No season is an off-season to those who enjoy the out-of-doors. Here, folks identify resident birds from the picture label at the left.**

Courtesy: Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, Michigan.





### PRAYER OF THE WOODS

"I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights, the friendly shade screening you from the summer sun, and my fruits are refreshing draughts quenching your thirst as you journey on. "I am the beam that holds your house, the board of your table, the bed on which you lie, and the timber that builds your boat. "I am the handle of your hoe, the door of your homestead, the wood of your cradle, and the shell of your coffin. "I am the bread of kindness and the flower of beauty. "Ye who pass by, listen to my prayer: harm me not."

Courtesy: Columbus Metropolitan Park District, Ohio.

**The Portugese "Prayer of the Woods" is an outstanding inspirational label. It has been used in Forest Reservations in Portugal for more than 1,000 years.**



# Park Education Program Workshop

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