

"Wild Life in Our National Parks"—  
Paul B. Riis.

"Wild Life in Our Parks"—Four Parts  
—Paul B. Riis.

"Wilderness Parks and Wild Life"—  
Three Parts—Paul B. Riis.

"Lure of Unbeaten Trails"—Paul B.  
Riis.

If seed from these messages germinate and

take root here and there, the committee will feel amply repaid for the preparation of the many articles published in its columns the past year.

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## THE ARBORETUM AND THE UNIVERSITY

By ALDO LEOPOLD, *University of Wisconsin. An address of Dedication  
of University Arboretum, June 17, 1934*

For twenty centuries and longer, all civilized thought has rested upon one basic premise: that it is the destiny of man to exploit and enslave the earth.

The biblical injunction to "go forth and multiply" is merely one of many dogmas which imply this attitude of philosophical imperialism.

During the past few decades, however, a new science called ecology has been unobtrusively spreading a film of doubt over this heretofore unchallenged "world view." Ecology tells us that no animal—not even man—can be regarded as independent of his environment. Plants, animals, men, and soil are a community of interdependent parts, an organism. No organism can survive the decadence of a member. Mr. Babbitt is no more a separate entity than is his left arm, or a single cell of his biceps. Neither are those aggregations of men and earth which we call Madison, or Wisconsin, or America. It may flatter our ego to be called the sons of man, but it would be nearer the truth to call ourselves the brothers of our fields and forests.

The incredible engines wherewith we now hasten our world-conquest have, of course, not heard of these ecological quibblings; neither, perhaps, have the incredible engineers. These engines are double-edged swords. They can be used for ecological coöperation.

They are being used for ecological destruction on a scale almost geological in magnitude. In Wisconsin, for example, the northern half of the state has been rendered partially uninhabitable for the next two generations by man-made fire, while the southwestern quarter has been deteriorated for the next century by man-made erosion. In central Wisconsin a single fire in 1930 burned the soil off the better part of two counties.

It can be stated as a sober fact that the iron-heel attitude has already reduced by half the ability of Wisconsin to support a coöperative community of men, animals, and plants during the next century. Moreover, it has saddled us with a repair bill, the magnitude of which we are just beginning to appreciate.

If some foreign invader attempted such loot, the whole nation would resist to the last man and the last dollar. But as long as we loot ourselves, we charge the indignity to "rugged individualism," and try to forget it. But we cannot quite. There is a feeble minority called conservationists, who are indignant about something. They are just beginning to realize that their task involves the reorganization of society, rather than the passage of some fish and game laws.

What has all this to do with the Arboretum? Simply this: If civilization consists



of coöperation with plants, animals, soil and men, then a university which attempts to define that coöperation must have, for the use of its faculty and students, places which show what the land was, what it is, and what it ought to be. This Arboretum may be regarded as a place where, in the course of time, we will build up an exhibit of what was, as well as an exhibit of what ought to be. It is with this dim vision of its future destiny that we have dedicated the greater part of the Arboretum to a reconstruction of original Wisconsin, rather than to a "collection" of imported trees.

The iron-heel mentality is, of course, indifferant to what Wisconsin was. This is exactly the reason why the University cannot be. I am here to say that the invention of a harmonious relationship between men and land is a more exacting task than the invention of machines, and that its accomplishment is impossible without a visual knowledge of the land's history. Take the grass marsh here under our view: From the recession of the glacier until the days of the fur trade, it was a tamarack bog—stems and stumps are still imbedded there. In its suc-

cessive layers of peat are embalmed both the pollens which record the vegetation of the bog and the surrounding countryside, and also the bones of its animals. During some drouth, man-caused fires burned off the tamarack, which gave place first to grass and brush, and then, under continual burning and grazing, to straight grass. This is the history and status of a thousand other marshes. What will happen if the decomposed surface peat is all burned off? At what stage of the retrogression from forest to meadow is the marsh of greatest use to the animal community? How is that desirable stage to be attained and maintained? What is the role of drainage? These questions are of national importance. They determine the future habitability of the earth, materially and spiritually. They are just as important as whether to join the League of Nations—it is only our iron-heel inheritance which makes the comparison ludicrous. The scientist does not know the answer—he has been too busy inventing machines. The time has come for science to busy itself with the earth itself. The first step is to reconstruct a sample of what we had to start with. That, in a nutshell, is the Arboretum.

