

BOOK REVIEW

Ohio's Natural Heritage

PAUL B. SEARS — TAOS, NM*

I must confess to a touch of what big game hunters call "buck fever" on being asked to review this beautiful, useful, and well-made book. Aesthetic response to superb illustrations and admiration for the skill that puts a mass of scientific information within reach of the general reader follow more than eight decades of affectionate interest in rural Ohio. Mingled with all of this are vivid memories of listening to pioneers born in the early eighteen hundreds when virgin forest, prairie, spring and clear stream, abundant fish and game were still the rule.

The idea for such a book as this is due to Charles C. King of the Ohio Biological Survey. Its 19 chapters are the work of 28 authors. A list of something like 100 sponsors and supporters, scientific, financial, and editorial, includes both individuals and institutions. Especially moving is the dedication to the late Trent Sickles whose persistent efforts on behalf of Ohio's natural heritage are a powerful reminder of the debt that concern for environment owes to those who serve it as an avocation in active business or professional life.

The first of 3 divisions in this well-planned book is headed **The Land**, using that term in the broad sense of good economic discourse. It marshalls the basic components—earth, air, water, life—of the world of nature. Disdaining the current fashion of ignoring the past, the authors view these entities in the perspective of time and process. Every chapter is competently written; the reader will enjoy judging for himself (if he does not already know) those which reflect life-long interests that have led to especial distinction.

The record of major events in Ohio's past goes back to the marine deposits of ancient geological time, rich in invaluable calcium with its many uses, and forming the bedrock of the western half of the state. Overlying these deposits to the east are the younger sandstones and shales of middle geological time whose poverty in mineral nutrients is made up by their generous content of coal formed from extinct types of vegetation. What perhaps I miss most is any account of the fossil remains of these bizarre precursors of modern seed plants.

Stretching west from a northeast-southwest diagonal is a blanket of materials scraped into Ohio and distributed by enormous masses of creeping ice that had their origin in the high lands of eastern Canada. The last of these continental glaciers reached the vicinity of what is now Cincinnati around 20,000 years ago. Some 10,000 years later, after a vacillating pattern of retreats and readvances, Ohio was finally cleared of ice save for buried remnants whose final melting left ponds that eventually became bogs. These bogs, along with prairies that are relicts of dry and warm climatic episodes as well as caves dissolved out of limestone bedrock, get attention under the reading **Relicts of the Past**.

A 30 page chapter on Ohio forests includes valuable information on animal as well as plant life. Only one other chapter, on waters, exceeds 20 pages in length. A lively chapter on climate makes clear the truth sometimes heard that "intemperate" would be a more accurate term for the climate of the north central states than the one that is commonly used. Actually, the opening 157 pages of **Ohio's Natural Heritage** present information essential to responsible citizenship. Certainly these pages convey

*Dr. Paul B. Sears is an internationally known conservationist, now Emeritus Professor of Botany, Yale University. Dr. Sears became a member of the Ohio Academy in 1915, was elected a Fellow in 1921, and served as our President in 1949.

a sense of respect for the forces and processes that have made human survival, even man's existence, to say nothing of the good life, possible.

The second part and midsection of the book is made up of 6 chapters in just over a hundred pages. Each chapter deals with what is termed a natural region of the state. So accustomed are we to stereotypes of people, places, and political units that we forget that variation is a rule of experience. Even the soil on a single farm field is seldom uniform. No surprise, then, that a state larger than Denmark and Switzerland combined should include a variety of surface forms, qualities, and potential. Lake Erie and its islands form a welcome addition to the 5 land regions.

Historical perspective continues through the final 4 chapters that make up Part III—**The Impact of Man**. Beginning with the prehistoric cultures of the Adena and Hopewell, this section traces the revolution in land use following European invasion, its technology, and the resulting population increase. Although the index shows no listing of population, it is worth noting that the land area per capita has shrunk from 4 square miles in the early seventeenth hundreds to less than 3 acres today.

Fittingly, the final chapter on preservation of natural areas is preceded by one on Ohio's naturalists. Interest in natural history that began with woodsmen and surveyors, fostered by generous cooperation among amateurs and the many schools for which Ohio is famous, took form in 1891 with the founding of the Ohio Academy of Science.

The other producer of the book under review, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, is the result of planning by a commission that Governor Bricker appointed to consider problems following World War II, later strongly supported by Governor Lausche. Under the chairmanship of the distinguished engineer Arthur Morgan, this commission recommended that the several agencies dealing with natural resources be combined with technically trained personnel in the ranks and a director in the governor's cabinet. The adoption of this recommendation, which put Ohio in the first rank, was made possible largely by the dedicated efforts of many voluntary citizens' groups. To them and to their sustained interest, this volume is a silent tribute.

Ohio's Natural Heritage. 1979. Michael B. Lafferty, ed. Published by The Ohio Academy of Science, produced jointly with the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources. pp. xii plus 324. \$17.95.

OHIO ACADEMY OF SCIENCE 1980 ANNUAL MEETING

The 89th Annual Meeting will be held April 18-20, 1980 at the Medical College of Ohio, University of Toledo.

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