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INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM

Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources

by ROBERT J. LONG*

As the administrator of Saskatchewan's renewable resources, the Department of Natural Resources has long had an interest in environmental education. Provincial Parks have been planned with this in mind, Hunter safety programs have attempted to improve the behaviour of sportsmen, and Conservation Information Service publications have attempted to keep residents informed on resource developments. The Museum of Natural History in Regina is a division of D.N.R. whose primary function is to disseminate information on Saskatchewan's natural and historical heritage.

In recent years, the dramatic upswing in interest in education out-of-doors has forced the department to step up its programs. One of the most significant developments has been the expansion and consolidation of the Interpretive Program, which had previously existed as a series of independent trails and exhibit centers in our Provincial Parks. This project has been assigned to the Interpretive Services Section of the

Museum of Natural History.

The Interpretive Program is still a long way from being 100% operational, but progress is being made. Existing facilities are being upgraded, and new services are developed each year. We are now working on an over-all "master plan" which will provide guide-lines for future development. Ultimately we will see a far-reaching program that deals not only with nature-study topics, but also subjects within the realm of human history and resources management. Provincial Parks will continue to be the centers of development, but facilities will also be developed on D.N.R. lands where conditions and local interest warrant.

The Interpretive Program is intended to provide facilities and information that will encourage residents and visitors to look at and understand their surroundings within the parks, and after they leave.

There are four elements to the proposed program, including Nature Trails, Nature Center Exhibits, Naturalist Programs, and Publications. Each of these is an essential part of a

Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, Saskatchewan.



Sask. Gov't. Photo

Young naturalists examine an old bear den along Duck Mountain's Red Squirrel Nature Trail.

well-rounded program, but the needs of each area will determine which elements predominate.

Nature Trails are and will continue to be the most common facility in our Interpretive Program. In laying out a trail, we strive to find an easily travelled route of one to two miles that winds through and past a variety of habitats. Standards have been developed that will ensure that the route will be enjoyable and safe for young and old. Two systems of interpretation are in use. One employs a series of numbered markers, and a printed guide sheet which discusses features at each station. The second method, which is to become standard for well-established trails, utilizes small printed signs placed along the route. These signs discuss features close at hand and free the trail user from the encumbrance of a printed sheet.

Nature Center Exhibits are intended to supplement and enhance the interpretation that is presented along the nature trails. They may be no more than small decorative exhibits such as are presently situated in the Trans-Canada campsite offices, or they may constitute

an in-depth interpretation of a region's natural history. In all cases they serve to whet the visitor's appetite, and provide additional interest to the program.

This year, for the first time, seasonal naturalists will be assigned to Cypress Hills, Meadow Lake, and Duck Mountain Parks. These people will offer a program of campfire talks and guided nature hikes throughout the spring and summer. In addition they will be carrying out more intensive research into the area's natural history, so that the entire Interpretive Program can be continually upgraded. Naturalists will be encouraged to try new and different activities to add variety to the program as a whole.

Special publications will provide reference material and take-home mementos. Many will be intended to round out the program, filling in additional information about the area. At Buffalo Pound Park the theme of the exhibit center will be "The Bison and Man". A publication of the same title will delve into the natural history of the plains bison, and its relationship with Indians, Metis, and white man.

In smaller parks a brochure or booklet may comprise the entire nature interpretive program. At Goodspirit Park, for example, the terrain of the sand dunes is not conducive to the layout of a nature trail, so we have prepared a booklet entitled "Exploring the Dunes". This will encourage visitors to explore on their own — and look for the various features discussed.

A series of publications on the "Exploring" theme is planned. "Exploring the Aspen Forest" will provide a guide to the plants and animals that a visitor may find in an aspen bush, under logs, in tree trunks, in leaf litter, etc. Eventually there should be a similar publication for each of the major types of habitat found in Saskatchewan.

At the present time there are six nature centers and 11 nature trails that are operational in nine parks. In addition, there are exhibits at La Ronge, and at Trans-Canada campsites at Coosomin, McLean, Besant, and Maple Creek. One additional trail is located in the Waskwei River protected area, north of Hudson Bay.

Duck Mountain Park

The Red Squirrel Nature Trail has been operating for several years, and presently is our only trail using the metal signs that will become standard throughout. It is a 3/4-mile walk through predominantly coniferous forest. The Whitethroat Trail, opened in 1972, is a slightly longer route which winds through aspen forest and partially along the shore of Madge Lake.

The Duck Mountain Nature Center was opened in the spring of 1972. The exhibits illustrate a few of the common and interesting species but, more importantly, they attempt to explain the formation of the highlands, the climate, and some of the ecological processes that make the area interesting.

Meadow Lake Park

The Jack Pine Nature Trail was established in 1971, during a summer of very intensive research in this park. It is a route of 1.5 miles that passes through a mature Jack Pine forest and

across a recently logged area. On the return route visitors pass an active beaver-cutting operation and the nest of a Goshawk. Interpretation is given by a printed guide sheet available at the park office.

Cypress Hills Park

A small nature center exhibits a few of the interesting species found in this unique area, and also gives a brief discussion of geological history. This center will be closed in 1973, with the opening of a new visitor center which includes a large exhibit hall. Some of the new exhibits will be completed at that time.

Two nature trails are operating in the park. The Valley of the Beavers Trail features a chain of beaver ponds of various ages, some active and some abandoned. The Valley of the Windfalls Trail leads through a forest of large conifers. Guide sheets have been used to the present time, but plans are to have interpretive signs in place this spring.

Moose Mountain Park

The Blue Heron Trail has been operating off and on for a number of years, and in 1972 a formal guide sheet was prepared. The trail is a 1.5-mile route through typical Moose Mountain aspen forest; it skirts a number of small lakes. It also passes a recently abandoned Great Blue Heron colony.

Greenwater Lake Park

This park has a nature center with exhibits depicting common wildlife in the park. In association with the center, the short Hazelwood Nature Trail follows the banks of a small stream. At Marean Lake a panel exhibit explains life in a heron colony, one of which can be seen across the Lake.

Pike Lake

A small nature center and short trail have been open for several years. Plans for expansion of the trail have been developed, and expansion should be accomplished early in 1973. A guide sheet for this "Veery Nature Trail" will be prepared at that time.

Buffalo Pound Park

A spanking new exhibit room has recently been added to the park entry office, and the major exhibit is very nearly complete. The theme of the center's exhibits will be "The Bison and Man", and the major exhibit is a life-sized replica of a buffalo pound, with a huge bull just entering the crude corral.

The Buffalo Coulee Nature Trail is a half-mile route starting from the Maple Vale Campground. It follows the bottom and side of a ravine, and features the typical flora and fauna of these important wildlife refuges. The Big Valley Trail is longer; it descends into a wide valley that runs down to Buffalo Pound Lake.

Battlefords Park

The Wintergreen Trail is a tribute to park staff who have independently developed this excellent trail. The 3/4-mile route leads up a forested coulee, and returns across a prairie hilltop. On-site interpretation is presented by typed labels protected by wooden "flip-boards".

Condie Nature Refuge

For the past three years seasonal naturalists have provided group tour guided walks and other programs for groups visiting the refuge. Many private groups and hundreds of school children have been able to take advantage of this service.

The Nature Center Exhibits explain the glacial origin of the Condie terrain and discuss the natural and human history of grassland and marsh.

The Boggy Creek Nature Trail runs along the valley of this slow-moving stream. Interpretive panels give added information on subjects of interest.

Much still needs to be done to bring about the kind of Interpretive Program that we all would like to see. With the continuing support of the Natural History Societies, school teachers and Outdoor Education Associations, we should be able to develop a program in Saskatchewan that rivals the finest that exists anywhere. We're working on it!

PEST CONTROL

by MAURICE E. TAYLOR*

Over the past several years people have become increasingly aware of environmental concerns regarding the use of chemical pesticides. Reaction to this concern has resulted in much anxiety and confusion for the general public and the homeowner in particular. The homeowner now feels that he is confronted with a dilemma: can he safely combat pests in and around his home and property without hazard to himself and the environment, or must he stand by and watch insects and other pests ruin his garden and the landscape?

While this concern is understandable, the situation really is not that serious. Home ground plantings of or-

namentals, fruits and vegetables can be safely protected from serious pest injury by good management practices and, if necessary, by the proper use of pesticides that have little or no harmful effect on the environment.

The number of non-chemical methods used to manage or control pests can be as numerous as the people involved. Many gardeners have their own "pet" methods that may work well for them but not prove satisfactory to others. The following are a few effective and practical management practices that help prevent or reduce damage from garden pests:

(1) *Resistant plant material* — Always

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