

LESSONS IN HISTORY

A BOOK REVIEW IS UNUSUAL TO FEATURE AS A COVER STORY IN *PARK SCIENCE*. YET “Preserving Nature in the National Parks” by Richard Sellars is not an ordinary book. A study in the management of nature in the national parks, this work examines our record, inconsistent at best, in embracing science as a management tool over the past 125 years. Although biologists such as George Wright, Adolph Murie, and A. Starker Leopold advanced the notion that management of park resources requires a scientific approach, the book shows that the Park Service has been very reluctant to embrace scientific management since this was first promoted by Wright in the early 1930s. What we have been good at doing, Sellars details, is developing parks for visitor enjoyment, a tradition in park management with deep roots, extending back into the nineteenth century. Have we become prisoners of this success? Can we change? “Preserving Nature” is a fine historical basis for discussion of these questions; to be sure, it reminds us that natural resource management based on unsubstantiated beliefs comes with high ecological costs.

Park Science was inaugurated 17 years ago to address some of the same concerns analyzed in Sellars’ book. The stories published in these pages are testimony that science in management is indeed a reality in parks today. However, we must further this union and increase our application of science in the parks if we intend to meet the vast resource preservation tasks at hand. Sellars’ historical account may help elevate the role of science in management by presenting us with a clear analysis of the past. We will continue to do our part by publishing good examples of the application of research in management.

