
letters

To the Editor:

I am enclosing the abstract (see p. 7 this issue) of a paper scheduled for presentation at the 50th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Washington, D.C. (March 15-20, 1985). The paper will trace the history of park science, describe the current science program, and discuss a likely future scenario. I can't really say that much in the way of new ideas or material will be included. However, working on the paper and discussing it with park scientists has sharpened my perspective somewhat.

I would urge all park scientists to spend some time with the historical aspects of park science. (*Editor's Note: See the Autumn 1983 issue of the George Wright FORUM*). Dust and cobwebs have tended to obscure many important attributes of our program. Dark as it may seem some days – decades in some cases – we *have* made progress. In fact, our contributions have been distinct and, in many cases, of broad conceptual merit. Parks are no longer mired in the mediocrity of scientific isolation.

Certainly, the future is cloudy, but I can't recall many times when that was not so. We have the capability to rise above the clouds and make our own future with the proper attitude. Of course, attitudes have a price in terms of financial support, but the ultimate scientific resource – the human brain – is essentially free. There is no material replacement for a good idea and little to restrain that idea when an opportunity for its use appears.

So much for my philosophy. If you decide to publish my philosophical rhetoric, watch for missiles through your doorway, Cheers!

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To the Editor:

In looking at the Fall 1984 edition of *Park Science* I was interested in some of the subjects discussed, such as "urban soils of the Mall in Washington, D.C.". I am wondering whether you might encourage some of your readers to write something on the problems involved in maintenance of the C & O Canal, which is one of the nation's important historical parks. The Potomac River and the C & O Canal Historical Park, being closely connected physically as well as from a use standpoint, are under increasing risk of "overuse" by people fishing, boating, canoeing, powerboating, waterskiing and other recreational activities. There is always a problem of balance, *i.e.*, when does it become important in the public interest to deny some people use of these publicly supported facilities in order to maintain the resource for future generations, as well as permit enjoyment for the luckier portion of the public who manage to use the facilities within the use limitations.

I assume this is a problem common to all national park properties, but I do not recall that I have seen the problem of "overuse" discussed in the scientific setting, *i.e.*, water pollution, noise, danger to the environment, etc.

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