does not completely cure the graying of the fur, which responds to Labco Rice Polish Factor II. It is to be emphasized that we used black mice, whereas Woolley used white albino mice. Our results agree with those implied by György and Poling[4] to be published.

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## NEED FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL AREAS EXEMPLIFYING VEGETATION TYPES

THE communication on this subject by Dr. Henry I. Baldwin in SCIENCE for January 24, 1941, should arouse not only ecologists but all interested in natural history, whether merely amateurs or people seriously engaged in botanical or zoological work.

Dr. Baldwin, in concluding his statement, says that "until data are circulated on (a) what vegetation types (and animal communities) are at present adequately represented in protected areas and (b) what other types should be so protected . . . we shall go on setting aside reserves in hit-or-miss fashion, duplicating some excessively and overlooking others until it is too late."

It must certainly be admitted that we have been acting not merely in the "hit-or-miss" fashion that Dr. Baldwin warns against, but with especial emphasis on the "miss" part of the alternative. We have secured really enormous reservations of the least important kinds—high mountain areas—because they are of no commercial value and nobody objects much, and we have as a rule failed entirely to protect examples of the most important of all kinds of areas and those which are disappearing most rapidly. These are the last and rapidly vanishing remnants of the various types of primeval forest.

The U. S. Forest Service, which alone has the power and opportunity to give us such reservations on any considerable scale, has persistently failed to recognize this obligation to the American public.

The so-called "primitive areas," "roadless areas," "recreation areas," etc., which the Forest Service has established had first to pass a searching test for absolute commercial worthlessness before selection. Naturally, they consist almost entirely of high, rocky, barren, nearly or quite treeless areas, which are inhospitable to most forms of plant and animal life, and which were safe from exploitation anyway because nothing exists there to exploit. Were they made wild life sanctuaries, that would be one thing to be thankful for, but they are nothing of the kind. Quite the opposite.

[4] Paul György and C. E. Poling, *Proc. Soc. Exp. Biol. and Med.*, 45. 773, 1940.

Those interested in the ecological side of zoology and botany or in the preservation of areas of especial scenic, geological or other scientific interest should wake up to the fact that of the vast extent of our immense country the national parks are the only areas required by law to be kept in a natural state.

This is not an ideal state of things, for the protection of the national parks can not be as complete as it should be, owing to the necessities of providing for the tourist traffic. The parks consist also in too large proportion of high mountain areas, and their extent of fine primeval forest with trees of any considerable size is far less than commonly supposed, yet they contain all we have of undisturbed nature that has any prospect of surviving. The National Park Service realizes this and tries to protect the natural plant and animal life and scenery of the parks.

There are still on government-owned lands at least three or four more considerable areas of outstanding scenic and scientific interest in urgent need of protection. Only by making them national parks can we save them.

Some of the existing parks also need to be enlarged in order to serve their purpose properly. For instance, a number of them are composed so nearly exclusively of high-altitude areas that they can not provide winter range for the large mammals that they are supposed to protect. We need also to safely protect as "national monuments" a number of most interesting localities of too small area for national parks.

Thirty years' experience shows that no action toward fulfilling the requirement of the nation which Dr. Baldwin's letter pointed out can be expected from any government bureau we have now, or have any prospect of having under a government constituted as ours is, except the National Park Service.

Heartily as we may agree with Dr. Baldwin in regard to the need of more land reservations for scientific purposes, we must dissent from his assertion that the first thing to do is to spend a matter of years in an "inventory" of desirable areas. The most important natural areas and the most immediately threatened ones are well known now. What we need is action before it is too late.

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## RESEARCH IN TROPICAL AMERICA

BARRO COLORADO ISLAND in the Canal Zone was set aside as a reserve for biological study and its preservation has recently been assured by Act of Congress. In a recent visit there we were able to secure two-toed and three-toed sloths, armadillos, anteaters and iguanas in abundance and in good condition for studies of their respiratory metabolism. These animals were

selected because they differ phylogenetically from the animals which have commonly been studied and because the edentate mammals apparently live with a body temperature which is usually lower than that of other mammals. The management of the laboratory is adjusted to receive all the benefits of the various technical and other facilities in the Canal Zone, and the provision of animals was very satisfactory. By careful arrangement in advance we transported all the equipment necessary for our physiological work. We found that we could count upon such essential local supplies as distilled water and ice and some reagents and articles which had been omitted or consumed. The laboratory space and the living arrangements were satisfactory, and it was a great advantage to be able to live and work isolated in the establishment at Barro Colorado Island. The situation was also pleasant and interesting, and the opportunity for observing the rich tropical flora and fauna was especially agreeable to physiologists who are usually confined to the artificial environment of the laboratory.

To many biologists the opportunities in the tropics are quite familiar, but it is not usually realized how great is the opportunity for experimental and comparative physiology in the tropical parts of America. Barro Colorado Island by reason of its situation and stable establishment is particularly favorable as a site in which to carry on experimental work, for the living material is there in its natural condition, and by careful planning the means for experimental study can be well provided. It seems likely that with so much of the world now cut off from the view of American biologists they will turn more particularly to the American tropics in order to extend their range of study and reduce the deadening influence which isolation will certainly bring. In tropical America the emphasis will be largely upon the new animals and plants and new environments rather than upon the personal element of association with large groups of scientists. Among the institutions of Central and South America there are, however, ancient cultural institutions, and many are carrying on scholarly work which pertains to the country in which they live. By travel among those countries, American biologists working among the scholars of Central and South America will find friendly interests which will go far toward developing good-will among the different nations of the Americas.

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