THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL AREAS EXEMPLIFYING VEGETATION TYPES

DR. VAN NAME'S specific criticism of the United States Forest Service in the third and fourth paragraphs of his discussion, "Need for the Preservation of Natural Areas Exemplifying Vegetation Types" in SCIENCE of May 2, 1941, page 423, and in his reply to Dr. Baldwin, SCIENCE, July 18, is both inaccurate and unjust. Many of his statements are easily refutable by any one willing to make a fair and impartial examination of the facts.

Directly contrary to the statement which Van Name makes, the so-called "primitive areas" which the Forest Service has established do not have to "first pass a searching test for absolute commercial worthlessness before selection"; neither are they "nearly or quite treeless." The National Forest wilderness, primitive and roadless areas, which are now generally referred to as wilderness areas, were set aside to preserve primitive conditions of transportation and habitation in which the works of man would not intrude upon those desiring wilderness recreation. In accordance with good land use planning practice these areas, it is true, are largely in the high back country and care was taken to choose areas with no outstanding commercial values, but the areas do include millions of acres of timber land of all age classes and of many species and types. A considerable portion of this timber is mature and over-mature virgin stands, the low commercial value of which is the result of inaccessibility, not the condition or size of the timber, because much of it would be of great commercial value if it were more accessible. From a scientific standpoint, it does not appear that the low commercial value of this timber is any drawback since it is just as valuable for ecological study purposes as though it were worth $10.00 per thousand board feet. National Forest Wilderness areas number 70 and include 14,000,000 acres, a very appreciable acreage certainly not indicative of lack of interest. A list of these areas and a map showing their location was published in *The Living Age* for July, 1940 (Vol. 5, No. 5).

More important from the standpoint of preserving natural areas exemplifying vegetation types, the point with which Van Name is primarily concerned, are the 41 natural areas on the National Forests, containing approximately 50,000 acres. Representatives of over 20 major forest types are included in this series. These areas are specially reserved to preserve permanently in an unmodified condition areas representative of the virgin growth of each forest or range type within each forest region so far as they are represented within the National Forests, to the end that its characteristic plant and animal life and soil conditions, the factors influencing its biological complex, shall continue to be available for purposes of science, research and education.

The existence of these areas and the more than ten-year-old policy under which they have been established directly contradict Van Name's assertion that the United States Forest Service has failed to recognize its obligation to the American public in setting aside such areas. Although set aside to preserve for scientific study typical examples of major vegetative types, particularly timber, in a virgin or as near virgin condition as can be obtained, and not necessarily to preserve merely areas of large trees or high scenic value, these natural areas do contain magnificent examples of big trees and mature or over-mature stands of high scenic and inspirational value. A list of these natural areas will appear in an early number of *Ecology*.

As the writer stated last December, in a report before a joint meeting of the Committee for the Study of Plant and Animal Communities, and the Committee for the Preservation of Natural Conditions of the Ecological Society of America, at Philadelphia, the Forest Service does not consider the present system of natural areas within the National Forests as complete, and additional ones will be added. Suggestions from ecologists and other competent individuals and organizations as to desirable areas and types of vegetation needed for completeness will be welcomed. Nevertheless, the Forest Service does feel that the set of natural areas mentioned above, probably the largest by far set aside by any one organization with the primary purpose of preserving natural vegetation for scientific study, is a forward step which, incomplete though it may be, deserves the understanding and support of scientists, particularly ecologists.

I. T. HAIG

U. S. FOREST SERVICE

MAN'S BIOLOGICAL OUTLOOK

IN recent issues of SCIENCE, Professor Eliot Blackwelder (April 18, 1941, pp. 364–366) and Professor H. D. Goodale (June 27, 1941, p. 618) have discussed the subject of man's probable future as a mammalian species. Professor Blackwelder asks the question (p. 366) ". . . will his [future man's] life and conduct be controlled by his intellect rather than by his feelings?" and Professor Goodale replies that recent work on animal and plant improvement "demonstrates that man holds his biological destiny in his own hands."

Neither of these writers, however, gives consideration to three factors in the problem of man's racial future that may be the most vital of all, namely (1) that man, physically and considered as a mammalian