



A Saved Environment



for study . . . for research . . . for enjoyment

"There is no known way to assign value to a saved environment. The influence of this project cannot be measured after only one year. The 125th Anniversary Year has simply launched a very long-range undertaking with the expectation that the Nature Area will persist as a bit of the 1844 environment being studied and enjoyed when the 200th Anniversary Year is celebrated."

Professor George H. Bick, professor of biology and project director of the Saint Mary's Nature Area says this and Professor Clarence F. Dineen, chairman of the biology department and of the area's administrative committee points out: "Conservation (wise utilization) of our environment is a prime objective of every institution of higher learning. Leadership must come from colleges and universities. Saint Mary's College took an extra step in that direction as part of the 125th Anniversary Year."

The Nature Area was established last year on approximately 100 acres of land owned by the Sisters of the Holy Cross north of the college campus. This long-undisturbed area, consisting of a variety of habitats, including the Saint Joseph River, old second-growth alluvial hardwoods, a well-vegetated pond and abandoned fields, plus birds, mammals, amphibians and innumerable insects, offers a diversity rarely so conveniently available to biology majors on the undergraduate level at any college. And its use, while primarily designed for study and research, is not confined by any means to those majoring in biology. Nonmajors will find it helpful in elective courses; faculty, students and Sisters from the Convent may pursue hobbies such as photography, bird-watching, spring flowers—the art department has shown special enthusiasm about the area. With biology majors (and others) such a hobby may well become a serious interest. And a walk along the Nature Trail can be just *pure enjoyment* as the writer, a nonbiologist, can testify.

Finally, to return to the opening comments, just having the area there is a valuable contribution, "even if it represents nothing except

a bit of the natural environment that will be left alone," to quote Professor Bick. But it does, of course, represent a great deal more as the reports of the project director and the committee testify:

1. A Nature Trail of 2.5 miles (with a shorter alternative route of 1.5 miles) has been laid out by Mr. Bick and his wife, a biologist who shares his enthusiasm for the project, with the help of Joseph T. Bonadies, in charge of grounds at the College, and others. The director made 68 visits to the area last year to supervise development of this trail which involved the physical aspects of clearing brush and vines, halting vandalism and unauthorized cutting of trees, preparing directional markers, and identifying each station with a numbered cedar post, as well as technical aspects of identifying plants and determining earlier land use.

2. A *Self-guiding Tour* of the Nature Area was prepared and published by Professor Bick. This not only identifies many of the trees, shrubs and plants but it also tells something of the former use, history and topography of the area. It is used in the guided tours given on Saturday mornings for anyone who wishes to join them, and is equally useful to visitors taking to the trail on their own.

3. The Saint Mary's Nature Area is listed and described in *Natural Areas in Indiana and Their Preservation* by A.A. Lindsey, D.V. Schmels and S.A. Nichols, published by Purdue University Press in April 1969.

4. Plans for the area were submitted by the College Library in applying under Title II Grant (HEW) for funds for books and audio-visual materials on taxonomy and natural history. The grant was received and with an additional sum added by the Library, a total of \$1,490 was allotted to this purpose.

At one of the 26 stations on the Nature Trail, Professor Bick calls attention to plants of special interest to Miss Carole DeMort, assistant professor of biology, Patricia Miller, a freshman, and Janice Johnson, a senior.



Professor Clarence F. Dineen, chairman of the Nature Area's administrative committee, visits a part of the unspoiled land along the river bank.



A special environmental library of books and materials has also been set up in the Science Hall for the use of biology students and staff.

5. Professor Bick, the 125th Anniversary year project director and, incidentally, the man who presented the idea for the Nature Area in the first place, has conducted the following activities on the research level:

a. Established a herbarium for the biology department with 194 plant species represented, 138 from the area.

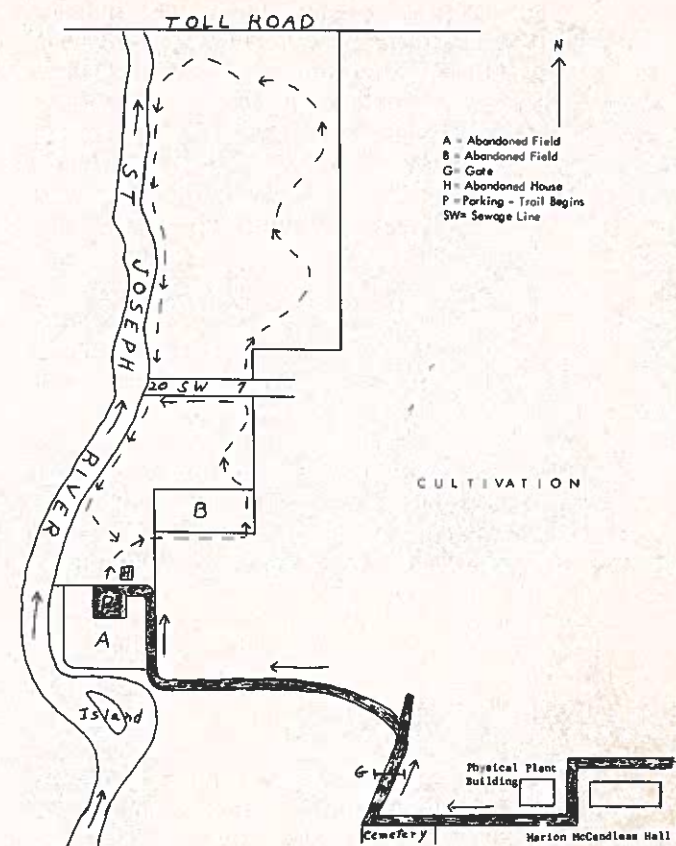
b. Begun a series of kodachrome slides with 28 general scenes and 90 of various plants in the area.

c. Made phytosociological analyses of plant succession on abandoned fields. In three different wooded areas effects of earlier land use on its present condition were studied.

d. Established a phenological (flowering) record for approximately 175 species of plants.

6. A course in principles of ecology and conservation for biology majors includes field trips to the area (as will other courses planned for the future) and about one-third of the laboratory work for this class relates to the Nature Area. Environmental studies are essential for biology majors and having this area adjacent to the campus eliminates costly and time-consuming trips.

7. The Nature Area will serve as the basis for research grants in the future. Professor Dineen has, for instance, received a grant from the Indiana Academy of Science to support in part his summer 1970 research on the Saint Joseph River; this is related to the Nature Area.



Map of the Saint Mary's Nature Area from the Self-Guiding Tour booklet.

Even here man intrudes. The sewage line indicated on map is a pipe going under the river to the South Bend treatment plant.

8. Detailed aerial photographs have been obtained and distributed to individuals interested in development of the Nature Area.

9. Cooperation of the Soil and Conservation District has been obtained and soil maps are in preparation.

10. Other local organizations with related interests have been furnished information about the area; they include Michiana Watershed, Inc., the Saint Joseph County Health Department and Department of Parks and Recreation, the Audubon Society and the Health Care Foundation for Northern Indiana. Talks to community organizations such as the Rotary Club are making it known to the public by whom its use (under direction) is encouraged.

11. The presence of the Nature Area will encourage scientific and conservation societies to meet at Saint Mary's. The Indiana Academy of Science, for instance, will hold its fall 1972 meeting here—the first time since it was founded in 1885 that the Society has met at the College. The South Bend Audubon Society will meet at Saint Mary's on May 23 for a tour of the area and other groups, such as Blue Birds, plan to take the shorter tour.

12. The area is expected to grow in a strictly biological sense as lists of flowering plants are built up, study and classification of birds which nest there are made, and so on.

For development of the Nature Area last year, approximately \$400.00 of the Anniversary Year budget was used—a ridiculously small sum to open up such tremendous possibilities. But these are only the dollars. To them must be added the very tangible generosity of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in allotting this valuable land for college use, and the time, thought and labor put into the project by many people in addition to those already mentioned.

The Nature Area is directed by a college and convent administrative committee and has the assistance of an outside advisory committee. Professor Dineen heads the administrative committee which includes: Sister M. Joan of Arc CSC, business officer for the Convent, Professor H. James Paradis of the art department, Professor Bick, Joseph T. Bonadies, supervisor of grounds for the College, Frank A. Koontz, director of plant and of maintenance for the Convent, and George Taylor, farm superintendent.

The advisory committee consists of Robert Fischgrund, president of the Saint Joseph County Department of Parks and Recreation, Robert McIntosh, professor of biology at Notre Dame, and F.E. Van Huffel of the South Bend Audubon Society.

The location of the Nature Area has, ob-



Students assist in erecting markers at each station on the Nature Trail. From the left, Carol Henninger, Mary Lou Cotroneo, both seniors, Sheila Cronin, junior, and Barbara Morrin, senior.

viously, many advantages and very few disadvantages. Unlike the Conrad Environmental Research Area at Grinnell College in Iowa, to which students must be taken 11 miles in buses, it can be reached by a short drive from the Physical Plant Building at the north end of the main parking lot—or even by walking from the campus. But unlike the Antioch College (Ohio) museum and Nature Area, it is not immediately adjacent to the campus and a certain remoteness from the center of activity—while adding to its charm—makes the Saint Mary's Nature Area more subject to trespassing and vandalism. This creates a paradoxical situation—the College wants to encourage use of the area but, at the same time, finds it advisable to keep locked a gate across the road which leads to it. (See map)

Casual visitors may, however, park their cars at this gate and walk the remainder of the distance. "Official" visitors—this includes alumnae—may obtain a key from the biology department or one of the campus security officers. It has, however, seemed advisable to encourage use by the general public only under direction, and a group of biology majors has been formed to conduct tours during the academic year. The Self-Guiding Tour Booklet will be available for all visitors at the signpost on the north end of the parking lot where the direction to the Nature Area is indicated.

To sum up, the Saint Mary's Nature Area is envisioned as having three purposes—as a teaching and research area with the research related to the teaching (plants are identified, specimens are obtained and these are conveyed to the class); as a place for the pursuit of hobbies and enjoyment of the outdoors; and as an important piece of "saved environment."



Joseph T. Bonadies, supervisor of grounds, stands by Nature Trail sign in front of the Physical Plant Building.



Biology majors in an ecology class during the academic year 1968-69 make good use of the Nature Area. From the left: Barbara Alban and Denise Acampora, current seniors, Patricia Engman O'Brien '69, Julie Castrop, senior, and Ann Collentine '69.

Along the Nature Trail



Some of the 138 plant species classified so far in this area: above, right, marsh marigold, below, bloodroot and buttercup.

