

Editorial Comment

The Field Trip and the Leader

In the July-August number of *Audubon Magazine* appears an article with above title, by Maurice Brooks, which deserves more than the passing attention it would have received by inclusion in Biological Briefs. It is not just another article on field trips; it centers attention on the leader in his part in making a field trip successful. Since biology teachers are automatically interested in the outdoors and since field trips are part of their regular activities, it may be well to call attention to the eight points made by Mr. Brooks: "1. The leader of a field trip need not be an encyclopedia of the outdoors . . . 2. Every field trip should have a definite, attainable objective . . . 3. A field trip is not primarily a 'hike' . . . 4. The leader must create a classroom situation outdoors . . . 5. Names of living things are not enough . . . 6. The leader must discover the level of his group, and teach at that level . . . 7. The field trip should train people to use all their senses . . . 8. Every field trip should teach some principles of conservation."

Each of the points is developed in some detail. It is difficult to convey the spirit of an article in a review, but perhaps a further quotation may help. Under the third point, the author says: "I have no objection to walking, and I know, of course, that Boy Scouts and other youth groups take organized hikes to fixed objectives. However, the teacher who takes a class into the field cannot be too much concerned with physical education. Sound planning dictates that the class be taken as quickly and as directly to the objective, with only such

stops as circumstances and good fortune dictate.

People on a hike tend to straggle. They form little groups of their own, and the conversation and laughter are not conducive to good attention and observation. Things happen quickly outdoors. A warbler may be in position for good observation for only a few seconds. Those who lag behind will not see it. The best directive for the leader of a field trip is found in 'Stonewall' Jackson's oft-reiterated command, 'Close up the ranks.' . . . A group of laughing, talking students strung out for a block or two, gives rise to the jaundiced view that the students' obvious pleasure is dictated more by freedom from the four walls of the classroom than from an inward joy in learning. On the other hand, a compact group, moving briskly and obviously going some place, creates a favorable impression."

This editorial is not primarily a plug for either Mr. Brooks' article or for *Audubon Magazine*, although I do believe that the issue of the magazine is worth having just for the field trip article, not to mention the several other fine articles in it. I had just heard one of my fellow instructors say, upon returning to the laboratory with Lab. Section 10 of our General Biology class, "I've been over the route seven times, and I've learned something new each time—one of the main things I learned was that a class is even easier to handle on a field trip than in the lab, if you have the trip well planned." No doubt he had the seventh trip much better planned than the first, but the point was obvious. I

had also been reading the field trips section of a recent book on science teaching* and was particularly impressed by the rather long list of disadvantages of field trips. Many teachers wonder whether field trips are worth while. Can't you get the same results with a suitable movie? Can't you get the same results by the use of a terrarium or an aquarium at the time when a certain kind of observation is necessary? Can't you organize your course so that field trips are unnecessary? Is the trip worth the time and trouble it takes?

I do not propose to answer these questions. Out here in the great wide open spaces field trips are easy to plan and execute, and we make much use of them. But in the great cities the situation is not as favorable, and perhaps field trips are not worth the trouble they involve. This is an urgent invitation to anyone who has tried an unusual approach to the field trip problem or anyone who has anything he has tried and found helpful to share the ideas with the readers of *The American Biology Teacher*. We are specially anxious to hear from teachers in large city high schools where classes are large and schedules closely timed. How do you manage the field problem? What do you substitute for field trips? What values do you think are lost by the inability to do as much field work as you would like? Do you take large classes all together or do you divide the class into several sections? If you divide the classes, what leadership do you have for the smaller groups?

It is trite to say that a knowledge of the fundamentals of life science is basic to sound general education; it is not so easy to determine just what phases of life science are most important and what values may best be obtained from each

* HOFF, ARTHUR G. *Secondary School Science Teaching*, reviewed on page 311 of this issue.

teaching technique. There is so much in biology that no two teachers necessarily need to follow the same procedures. But any teacher can use some help in getting the best out of the techniques he has determined are most suitable for his own use.

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Paper No.

1. PALMQUIST, E. M., University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.
 2. MILLER, D. F., Department of Zoology, Ohio State University, Columbus, O.
 3. EMLER, JOHN T., JR., University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.
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 9. RIDDLE, OSCAR, Plant City, Fla.
 10. IVEY, JOHN E., Chapel Hill, N. C.
 11. KASAK, MICHAEL, County Hospital for Mental Diseases, Wauwatosa, Wis.
- Banquet Speaker, WINSOR, A. L., Director of the School of Education, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.