

5-1950

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Recommended Citation

Lewis, D. K. (1950). Report of the Autumn Meeting of the Minnesota Academy of Science at Itasca State Park. *Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Science, Vol. 18 No. 1*, 161-162.
Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/jmas/vol18/iss1/3>

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REPORT OF THE AUTUMN MEETING
OF THE MINNESOTA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE
AT ITASCA STATE PARK

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The University of Minnesota Forestry Camp and Biological Station at Itasca State Park entertained the Academy at its autumn meeting, September 1 and 2, 1950. Members arrived during the afternoon and leisurely enjoyed the Station's peaceful lakeside facilities or visited various scenic features within the Park. Dr. William H. Marshall of the Division of Entomology and Economic Zoology, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, and his assistants from the State Teachers College, Bemidji, and the University of Minnesota registered the guests and assigned accommodations in the Station dormitories.

Approximately sixty-five members and friends attended the evening program in the new assembly hall. Dr. Henry L. Hansen of the University School of Forestry gave the official welcome in place of the Director of the Station, Dr. T. Schantz-Hansen, on special assignment in the east, and Itasca's Superintendent Andrew Peterson extended the Park's greetings and services to all. The Commissioner of Conservation, Chester S. Wilson, then discussed the role of the Minnesota State Park system in conservation. He described the many fine recreational offerings which these public areas provide for thousands of our people in need of respite from the travails of trying times. This is human conservation at its best. The final talk, given by John Dobie, Aquatic Biologist with the Department of Conservation, took the gathering back over fifty years to the early beginnings of the Itasca preserve and presented some enlightening research dealing with its pioneers. He illustrated this talk with his lantern slide reproductions of pertinent old time photographs.

The second day started at sunrise when the Itasca Park Naturalist and Dr. R. W. Dawson, Department of Zoology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, conducted an early morning bird walk up the La Salle Trail. About fifty people attended this activity and enjoyed the bracing, balsam scented air, but the seven o'clock breakfast deadline back at the Station terminated this expedition before the warming sun could stimulate more than a few hardy birds into noticeable mobility.

At 8:30 the members started by auto caravan to special research areas located within the Park. Dr. Carl O. Rosendahl, Professor Emeritus, Department of Botany, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, conducted the tour through outstanding examples of the

maple-basswood forests and the spruce-balsam forests. Mr. Vernon E. Gunvalson, Department of Conservation Area Biologist at Bemidji, explained the relationship which has existed during the past years between the Park forests and the resident deer. He explained that a steady decrease in predators and uninterrupted protection through the years expanded the population of Itasca's deer to the point wherein they had eaten down most all the young tree browse. This seriously threatened the forests and caused extensive deer starvation. Dr. William H. Marshall pointed out the improved conditions of young reproduction trees occurring in test plots and throughout the forest generally during the last five years as completely justifying the past several seasons of legalized hunting in the Park with its marked deer population reduction.

During the noon period, the members lunched and rested at the assembly hall. The afternoon schedule offered a special excursion boat trip on Lake Itasca, starting from Douglas Lodge and a conducted auto caravan around the Park Drive. The attendance split about equally on these two activities. The afternoon was warm, clear, and quiet, certainly most enjoyable for either the lake or the deep forest trip. About a dozen cars followed the Park Naturalist on this final tour, which included the Mississippi Headwaters Museum, the Headwaters of the Mississippi, the Bohall Trail with its big red pines, the deep balsam woods near Elk Lake, and the Minnesota Forest Service fire tower on Aiton Heights.

Thus, with the fine good will of all concerned, with beautiful weather and delightful surroundings, another successful autumn meeting became a happy memory.