

A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun

Biography

E. Lucy Braun was born and lived her entire life in Cincinnati. She received a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Cincinnati before becoming the second woman in the sciences and the third woman ever to receive a Ph.D. there -- (her sister Annette was the first) -- accomplishments that all came before women received the right to vote. According to Ronald L. Stuckey who wrote a biographical sketch of Braun shortly after her death in 1971, "Dr. Braun was one of the truly dedicated pioneer ecologists of the first half of the 20th century. Her work coincided with the time when the field of plant ecology was becoming recognized as a scientific discipline. Truly her work was instrumental in the development of that discipline." Her research culminated in the book *Deciduous Forests of Eastern Northern America* (1950), a groundbreaking publication that received recognition and praise for its detailed documentation of deciduous trees from New Brunswick to Florida. In all, Braun published over 180 works including four books and papers in 20 different journals.



One of Braun's most important traits may have been her ability to inspire others toward learning and conservation. Common stories tell of expeditions in which she led students, garden club members, and patrons into the field to share her knowledge and enthusiasm, and to garner support for preservation of areas she found ecologically significant. She was the catalyst for what became the nearly 20,000-acre Edge of Appalachia Preserve System in Adams County. Her impact is also apparent in numerous organizations like the Ecological Society of America and Cincinnati Wildflower Preservation Society, and in important publications of those organizations, including *Naturalist's Guide to the Americas* (1926) and *Wild Flower* magazine.



Lucy Braun is well known by botanists and naturalists for her published works, but her contributions remain largely unknown by broader audiences. Her private /personal life remains hidden even to those appreciative of her scientific contributions. "This documentary promotes greater appreciation for a remarkable woman of science who worked ceaselessly to produce botanical guides still in use today," according to Meg Hanrahan, Writer/Producer/Director. "She was the driving force behind the preservation of some of the most beautiful natural spaces in Ohio and Kentucky, and who still provides inspiration for those who carry the torch for conservation in our state and beyond."



Photos: (top) E. Lucy Braun, Courtesy, University of Cincinnati; (middle) Braun at Beechwood Camp, Hueston Woods, Ohio, 1910. Courtesy, Willard Sherman Turrell Herbarium, Miami University; (bottom) Braun at plaque dedicating Lynx Prairie in Ohio as a National Natural Landmark, 1967, Courtesy, Lloyd Library and Museum, Cincinnati.