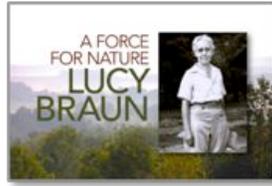


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Contact: Tom Law, Voyageur,
513-612-8775 (cell)
contactus@voyageurmedia.org



A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun

Media Release

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Lucy exemplifies the power of one person to make change. The legacy she has left is really profound. And now generations removed from Lucy, we have an extraordinary conservation community and I think that's the enduring part of her story.

-- Devere Burt, Artist; Retired Director Emeritus, Cincinnati Museum of Natural History.

How did the science of ecology emerge in America? What did it take for a woman to break down professional barriers during the early 1900s? How did some of the most important natural sites in Ohio and Kentucky become preserves? These are just some of the questions examined in ***A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun***, a one-hour documentary that explores the life and legacies of E. Lucy Braun, one of the foremost botanists and ecologists in American history. The one-hour documentary features interviews with scholars (some who worked with Braun), rare archival photographs, beautiful videography, historical reenactments and a compelling soundtrack. The project features a one-hour documentary, a companion website and educational materials being developed for viewers, teachers and students. ***A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun*** is a co-production of Meg Hanrahan Media and Voyageur Media Group, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the creation of public media about science, history and culture. (See Voyageur's website for public television broadcast information: <http://voyageurmedia.org/wordpress/portfolio/lucy-braun/>)

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, E. Lucy Braun (1889 - 1971) was a pioneer in the science of plant ecology, a trailblazer in her professional career as a woman of science, and a leader in the early conservation movement. In 1950, she published *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*, a landmark book that documented forest communities from Florida to Canada. In addition, Braun helped to preserve natural spaces across Ohio and Kentucky, including the Edge of Appalachia Preserve System in Adams County, Ohio. Meg Hanrahan, writer/producer/director of the documentary, says, "She was truly a pioneer in the development of the science of ecology in America, with contributions that pre-date better known 20th century figures like Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold. Yet few outside academia know her. She deserves recognition for her contributions to ecology and botany, for leading the way for other women in science, and for being instrumental in the preservation of numerous natural sites that we enjoy today."

E. Lucy Braun was a researcher, writer, photographer, college professor and conservationist during a career that spanned seven decades. She published four books, over fifty scientific papers and hundreds of articles, some of which are used in college classrooms to this day. Braun helped establish numerous professional organizations such as the Ecological Society of America, and preservation groups, including the precursor to The Nature Conservancy. Lucy and her sister Annette traveled 65,000 miles to conduct scientific research in remote regions throughout North America. These trips resulted in a rare collection of over 1,700 photographs documenting ecosystems from the East coast, the Appalachian Mountains and the swamps of Florida to the deserts of Arizona, the Rocky Mountains and the West coast.

Dozens of donors, scholars, academic institutions and civic organizations collaborated to bring Braun's story to public television viewers, teachers and students. E. Lucy Braun's major accomplishments fall in three general areas:

Science of Ecology

Ecologists study the relationship between organisms and the environment. Before the early 1900s, natural scientists often compartmentalized their research. Inspired by Henry Chandler Cowles, E. Lucy Braun joined a pioneering group of scientists who examined how plant and animal communities were affected by geology over time. "When Braun graduated with her PhD from Cincinnati, she couldn't get a degree in ecology. There was no field of study for it," says Allison Cusick, Ph.D., Research Associate in Botany, Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Braun contributed to the field of American ecology in many ways through her long tenure as a professor at the University of Cincinnati, her landmark books and her leadership in establishing professional associations. "She contributes to a general ecological thinking, helping to educate a new generation of botanists and ecologists, who themselves will become activists in that later environmental movement," according to David Stradling, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Humanities & Professor of History, University of Cincinnati

One of the things that Lucy Braun did, which was unique for her time, is that she looked at how vegetation changed. She looked in the Cincinnati area and compared the vegetation at the current time to how it was earlier, and this was one of the first times this had been done, and was used as a framework for other studies that went back and looked at plants through time.

-- Sunshine Brosi, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Ethnobotany and Forest Ecology, Frostburg State University, Maryland.

Breaking Barriers

I think she hurdled over all the men scientists, not just by her dogged determination, but by her sheer excellence as a scientist. The males of the time didn't quite know how to deal with that.

-- Chris Bedel, Preserve Director, Edge of Appalachia Preserve System, Cincinnati Museum Center.

At the turn of the century, E. Lucy Braun smashed through many barriers to women who wanted careers in science. Lucy was the third woman to earn a PhD from the University of Cincinnati. At age 28, she was one of 21 women who were charter member of the Ecological Society of America. She was the first female president of the Ohio Academy of Science (1933-1934), the first female president of the Ecological Society of America (1950), the first woman listed in the Ohio Conservation Hall of Fame (1971), one of two women inducted into the first class of the Kentucky Botany Hall of Fame, and she is among only three women named to the *Fifty Most Outstanding Botanists* by the American Botanical Society. In 1930, she wrote a letter to a friend describing an invitation to a Forest Service research trip: *...they 'thought Dr. Braun was a man.' I'm just wondering how the most of this gathering will take the invasion by a woman.*

Conservation Leader

One of the most enduring legacies of E. Lucy Braun is her early leadership in the American conservation movement. Braun had the knowledge, tenacity and fundraising skills needed to help preserve dozens of natural sites in Ohio and Kentucky. She also established several organizations instrumental in conservation today, including the Ecologists Union, which became The Nature Conservancy in 1950. "The sites that she was studying in the 1920's when conservation wasn't on anybody's mind became nature preserves and those grew into even larger areas," according to Martin McAllister, Appalachian Forests Project Manager, The Nature Conservancy. "So single-handedly, she started an effort that's now resulted in literally thousands and thousands of acres being protected."

She was a pioneer in preservation, in conservation, in ecology, and too often we forget the shoulders of the people who have come before us...If she had not been on the forefront of that movement and coalesced interest in preserving natural areas, ...there's a good chance that we would not have any of those natural areas as parks or as preserves or especially conservation areas today. That would be a great loss.

-- Hope Taft, founder, Ohio Heritage Garden; former First Lady of Ohio.

Documentary Project website

<http://voyageurmedia.org/wordpress/portfolio/lucy-braun/>

A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun also features a companion website hosted by Voyageur Media Group, Inc. The website is a portal for additional information, news and links about the documentary project.

Lucy Braun Facebook site

<https://www.facebook.com/MegHanrahanMedia/>

We're on Facebook! Meg Hanrahan Media has created a Lucy Braun Facebook page for those who want project news and to interact with the production team and other organizations and scholars working on research, exhibits, archival materials and even a one-woman play about this pioneer ecologist.

Educational website

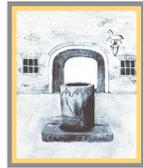
(address to be announced)

The production team is collaborating with Robyn Wright-Strauss, Chief Naturalist, Edge of Appalachia Nature Preserve System (Cincinnati Museum Center), and Catherine Knoop, Curriculum Specialist, on the development of educational curriculum to support the documentary in the classroom.

Funding

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Major Donors



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