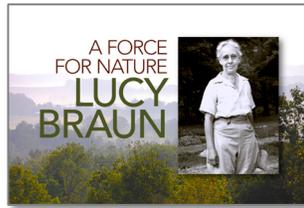


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A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun

Acclaimed documentary premieres on WOSU Television

Tuesday, December 18 at 9:00 pm.

How did one woman help establish the science of ecology, break down gender barriers and preserve some of the most important natural sites in Ohio and Kentucky?

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 documentary, a co-production of Meg Hanrahan Media and Voyageur Media Group, Inc., is a collaborative effort among dozens of regional scholars, archives and academic institutions. The documentary features interviews with scholars, rare archival photographs, beautiful videography, historical reenactments and a compelling soundtrack. Lucy Braun's career continues to impact numerous natural sites, academic institutions and state agencies in Greater Columbus.

A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun premieres on WOSU on Tuesday, December 18 at 9:00 pm. WOSU plus (34.3) will show an encore presentation on Wednesday, December 19 at 9pm. Meg Hanrahan, Writer/Producer/Director, of the documentary says, "Lucy Braun 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 beyond the academic community know of her work. 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." Hanrahan adds, "We are thrilled that so many viewers will see how one determined woman changed our world."

E. 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. Braun was a researcher, writer, photographer, college professor and conservationist during a career that spanned six decades. She published four books, over fifty scientific papers and hundreds of articles, some of which are used 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 for her landmark book *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*, which was published in 1950. 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.

Photo 1: *Lucy Braun in the field, ca 1960. Courtesy, University of Cincinnati.*

Columbus Connections

E. Lucy Braun earned numerous distinctions from Ohio institutions. She was the first female president of the Ohio Academy of Science (1933), and the first woman inducted into the Ohio Conservation Hall of Fame (1971). Several organizations based in Columbus provided funding and in-kind support, including Ohio Humanities, The Nature Conservancy in Ohio, and the Ohio State University Press.

A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun includes several scholars, sites and institutions from Greater Columbus:

- Hope Taft, former First Lady of Ohio (1999 -2000), reveals how Lucy Braun influenced the establishment of the Heritage Garden at the Ohio Governor's Residence;
- Guy Denny, President, Ohio Natural Areas & Preserves Association, describes how Braun's books are still being used today by ecologists in Ohio;
- Richard Gardner, Chief Botanist, Division of Natural Areas & Preserves, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, explains how Braun's research from the 1920s is serving as a baseline for the restoration of prairies in Adams County;
- Martin McAllister, Appalachian Forests Project Manager, The Nature Conservancy, describes how he is using Braun's original transect data in Davis Memorial Nature Preserve.



Photo 2: Hope Taft giving a tour of the Heritage Garden at the Ohio Governor's Residence in 2017.

Regional Collaboration

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.

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. So single-handedly, she started an effort that's now resulted in literally thousands and thousands of acres being protected.

- Martin McAllister, Appalachian Forests Project Manager, The Nature Conservancy.

Breaking Barriers:

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 members 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.*

I think she hurdled over all 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.

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 helped establish 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.

Support Materials

A Force for Nature: Lucy Braun has a companion website, Facebook site and website where viewers, teachers and students may download educational materials.

Lucy Braun project website: <http://voyageurmedia.org/wordpress/portfolio/lucy-braun/>

Voyageur Media Group, Inc. hosts a companion website with news, articles, "behind-the-scene" videos, media kits, photographs, DVD information, and links to related projects and archives.

Lucy Braun Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/MegHanrahanMedia/>

Meg Hanrahan Media has a Lucy Braun Facebook page for those who want project news and to interact with the production team.

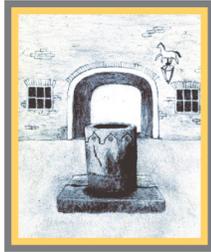
Lucy Braun educational materials: <https://www.cincymuseum.org/nature/e-lucy-braun>

The production team is partnering with staff members from the Edge of Appalachia Preserve System, Cincinnati Museum Center, on the development of educational materials for students (K-12) to enhance use of the documentary in the classroom.

Funding

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Major Donors



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