

Nov. 7, 1932

Dr. Paul L. Errington  
Iowa State College  
Ames, Iowa

Dear Paul:

A hurried visit to town from field work on demonstrations for the Wisconsin Commission makes me unable to do justice to your request for a criticism of the two papers. I have read them only hurriedly and what I have to say consists only of snap impressions.

The extension bulletin is, I think, a useful resume of moot questions which will enlighten the conservationists already equipped with some concept of the issues at stake. It will be useful, for instance, to ornithologists, biology teachers, the most advanced group of sportsmen, and the upper strata of farm leaders.

It does not, however, create a concept in the minds of less educated people. To do this is more properly the field of the Handbook. I think your extension bulletin will perform a complementary function, the Handbook, when finally perfected, serving for the other part.

It is logical, I think, that you, with your general knowledge of quail but still limited knowledge of Iowa, should first write the kind of a paper which you have written. I think, though, that the other job is even more important, and as your knowledge of local detail increases, that you will be able to perfect the necessarily crude effort represented by the present Handbook.

I enjoyed reading the account of Mrs. Stewart's quail. Your observations on the inclusion of a new covey are especially valuable. Nobody but Stoddard has so far thrown any light on this matter.

It is only with considerable trepidation that I attempt to comment on your letter to Dr. Boone. It is so easy to agree or disagree about words, when the real question is actions, which may or may not be accurately portrayed by those words.

First of all, I can't follow your distinction between "research" and "demonstration areas." Constant observation of these areas offers a chance to test conclusions otherwise supported only by inference or assumed correlations, and hence seems to me to be research of a higher order than one could possibly do without them. Of course to consume time with the purely administrative aspects of these areas is another matter.



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Again, I cannot at all agree that Bill Schuenke knows how to run these demonstrations in any but an administrative sense. Nobody does, nor do all the combined brains of the Iowa staff, or of all the game managers in North America.

There are four basic research questions in Iowa which I can see no way to answer except on the demonstrations: (1) What is on the land? (2) What kill will it stand? (3) What would be there if the environment were modified? How? (4) What kill will it stand then? Why?

All this, of course, is only words. It may be exactly what you have in mind doing, but use different words to describe. All I am sure of is that this matter of your relations to the demonstration areas is the acid test of whether it is possible to steer a course which is biologically sound and at the same time of immediate benefit to the conservation plan.

I return the papers. Thanks for giving me a look at them.

Yours sincerely,

*Aldo Leopold*

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AL/vh  
Incl.