Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Early last year I was in the middle of checking the species of plants that were in flower in a local city park. This was one of a series of visits every three days for a phenological study I've had going since 1984.

I suddenly stopped, stamped my foot hard and said, "Damn!", with vigor. I was alone, but to me it would have made no difference if all the members of the forest had ears. I was not happy with the situation. Here was a valuable natural resource, a park with over 200 species of vascular plants, the majority native and wild, and no one gave a damn except me. I've tried to interest local grade school and high school biology teachers and offered my help. Besides the public school system there is a good Lutheran system K-12. None of the buildings for either were more than two miles away. Zero!

What's more, I've talked to local women's groups, Rotary Club, church groups, and the local historical society. "You have beautiful pictures of flowers."

Oh, yes, occasionally the local city council has talked of selling off part of it for a condominium. After all, it's valuable lakeshore property.

And that is only part of the story!

I had just received my copy of AMCBT's Biscenes. There was not a single field biology oriented article in it. I even very softly swore, just a little bit, at Bob Buchholz because he was given credit for unearthing some of the articles for that issue. Since we are (were?) friends, I chose my vocabulary very carefully. I checked my Biscenes back for five years and could find only four articles of a field nature. Have we all forgotten that biology did not begin in the laboratory. What on earth are your students led to believe? Is all that biology amounts to consist of genes, bacterial cultures, comparative anatomy, and those subjects to be studied in a nice, dry, air conditioned laboratory? It's no wonder so few are environmentally conscious.

I'll have to admit I was encouraged when I learned that the theme of our '87 annual meeting was "biodiversity." Now all I'm hoping is that some of this year's program will penetrate the course work taught back home.

If our students and potential teachers don't get this from you, where will they learn of this vital information?

The battle to save some of our biological resources from destruction is only slowed, not won, and not even that in some parts of the world.

Russel O. Wagner
University of Wisconsin-Platteville
Retired

P.S. This was prepared to squeeze into the Springfield meeting, but an opportune moment did not seem appropriate. Also, in Lake Mills the Boy and Girl Scouts have shown a token interest.