

B. W. Wells

Dr. Wells, the man

The question becomes how to condense 30 years of history to a mere page or so. For instance, his colleague, Dr. Troyer, wrote an entire book as the biography: **Nature's Champion: B. W. Wells, Tar Heel Ecologist**". That title states it succinctly. Prior to Dr. Wells, botanists had considered mainly the physiology of the plant itself. Dr. Wells was the first in North Carolina, to consider the plant in relation to its surroundings. In other words, he was the first Ecologist of North Carolina.

When NCSU hired Kevin Schlesier in 2006 to be the Exhibits Chairman, he asked who should be the subject of the first exhibit. He told me that, by acclamation, the subject chosen was Dr. B. W. Wells. Records of the exhibit have been kept in the archives of the D. H. Hill library at NCSU.

See: <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/exhibits/b-w-wells-pioneer-ecologist>
and <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/archivedexhibits/wells/index.html>
and <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/archivedexhibits/wells/exhibit.html>.
and <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/archivedexhibits/wells/histories.html>
and <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/archivedexhibits/wells/credits.html>

When Dr Wells was appointed as Professor of Botany and Plant Physiology at the new North Carolina State College in 1919, his department was surpassed by the highly acclaimed departments at UNC and at Duke. Dr. Wells raised the status of his department to a level comparable to those two schools.

Dr. Wells unique contribution to North Carolina was defining regions of plant communities. While we traditionally think of North Carolina as Mountains, Piedmont and Coastal Plain, Wells defined two regions in the mountains and seven in the coastal plain. These are described in his classic book for the layman titled "The Natural Gardens of North Carolina" (UNC Press 1932). He specified that all proceeds from the sale of the book be given to the Garden Club of North Carolina.

The Park

The Park is situated close to the Stony Hill community, where the population has increased amazingly in the past twenty years. The farm, known as Rockcliff Farm, was located on an isthmus, created by Falls Lake. It is of great interest to botanists and to geologists. When Continental Drift was occurring 300 million years ago, The North

American Continent slammed into North Africa creating features we can see today. When North America broke away from Africa 200 million years ago, the Zeagles rock formation travelled westward becoming a landmark on the Neuse River today. Other unusual rock formations consist of Soapstone and Serpentine, rocks that are considered to be ocean floor rocks, thrust upwards by tectonic collisions.

Rock Cliff Farm

B.W. and Maude Wells moved to this 154-acre farm in 1954 and named Rockcliff Farm because of its unique geology and wild flowers. In 1983 the Neuse River was dammed, creating Falls Lake, which flooded about 70 acres of the farm. Rockcliff Farm now consists of about 83 acres of meadows, successional and mature forests along the banks of Falls Lake. Six miles of trails traverse the farm enabling the visitor to enjoy the varied flora and geology of the farm.

Rockcliff Farm and its features are on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is maintained by and is located within the Falls Lake State Recreation Area assisted by the B.W. Wells Association. To request a guided tour, fill out the form below.

Rock Cliff Farm is an ideal setting for the study of plants and animals in their natural habitats, as well as the ecological relationships of biological elements, including humans, with the physical environment. Exemplifying Dr. Wells' philosophy of man living in harmony with nature through understanding the natural environment, the farm is a living historical/ecological memorial to him.

Touring the Park

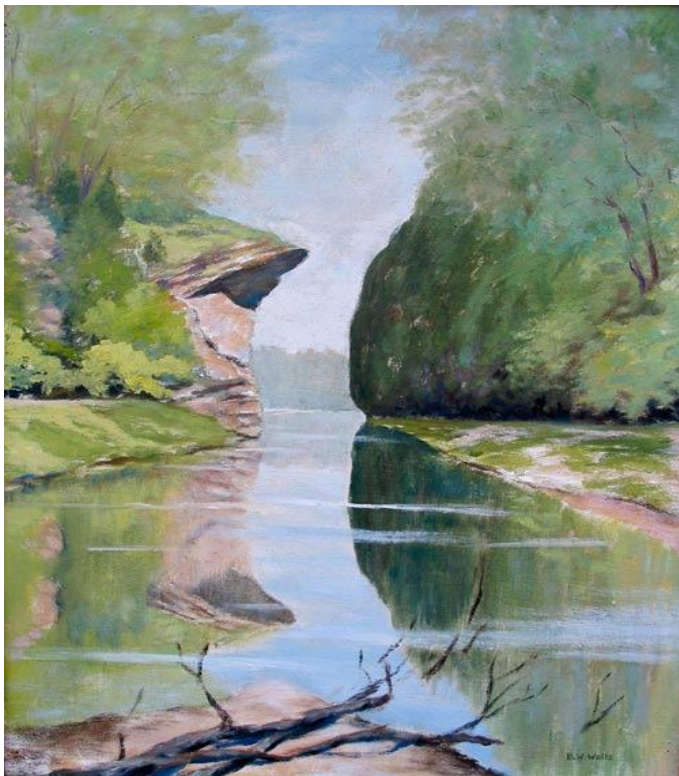
The members of the B. W. Wells Association, regularly conduct tours, that highlight the wildflowers, the geological features, the historic home plus the farm structures built nearby.

Website:

<http://www.bwwells.org/>



Zeagles Rock in 2008



Eagles Rock in 1968 Painting by Dr Wells