



## AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT FOR THE STUDY OF THE ECOLOGY OF GRASSLANDS

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*(Abstract)*

A committee on the Ecology of Grasslands of North America has been organized under the auspices of the National Research Council. The members of the committee are V. E. Shelford, University of Illinois, Chairman; Herbert C. Hanson, North Dakota State Agricultural College; K. M. King, University of Saskatchewan; Walter P. Taylor, U. S. Biological Survey, University of Arizona; B. C. Tharp, University of Texas; J. E. Weaver, University of Nebraska, and A. O. Weese, University of Oklahoma, Secretary. At its June, 1933, meeting at Austin, Texas, the committee discussed and approved a plan for the furtherance of grassland investigation by the cooperative establishment of seven or eight study centers so spaced as to represent the various types of grassland in North America. These centers would have their headquarters at the institutions represented in the committee membership. The committee's aims are to improve the quality of research in progress by the interchange of ideas, the standardization of methods, and the correlation of the work at the different centers. The research in progress at the several centers is, in most cases, incomplete in that it concerns only plants, only insects and invertebrates, or only plants and mammals. The work on birds seems to be most generally neglected; that on mammals is not much more extensive, having been carried on at but one study center, the University of Arizona. It is hoped that the programs of the several centers may be extended to cover both plants and animals, in some degree, and that a really complete program may be set

up in at least two centers so that all the larger and more important animals (including the larger vertebrates) and important plants may be studied. The present research interests of their staffs, work completed and in progress, would make a complete program most feasible at the Arizona and Oklahoma centers. One of the centers should have an outlying tract of 25 to 40 square miles in the short grass plains, well buffeted with grassland in partial use. This can be used for experiments with larger animals and to study the recovery of the flora and fauna after over grazing. The Texas center possesses the necessary land. At two or three other centers, federal, state or provincial lands are available.

It is of interest that grassland is one of the most important of all vegetational features. Excluding desert grassland, it comprises about 40 per cent of the earth's land area. The desirability of vastly expanded continuous scientific work on what is without doubt the most important land area of the world, both theoretically and practically, needs no elucidation. The great cereal growing and grazing areas of central North America were originally grassland, supporting a large animal community characterized by many of the best known large mammals and birds and many rodents and small carnivores, as well as reptiles and invertebrates. Its original life has largely been destroyed without adequate study from the standpoint of either pure or applied science. Results valuable to the to the general sciences of paleontology, geology, geography, botany and zoology, and especially to modern ecology can still be obtained.

