

The Swiss National Park

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THE SWISS NATIONAL PARK

THE Swiss National Park was created over half a century ago. At that time, bear, lynx and lammergeyer were already exterminated on the whole of Swiss territory. The last bear of Switzerland was killed on 1st September 1904. It is a strange coincidence that it died on the very ground of today's National Park.

The words "National Park" have a resonance all their own; in the mind of every child they immediately call up beautiful memories of hiking and holidays, or suggest forests and wild animals. There is practically no country in the world by now that does not possess one or more national parks, and nearly everyone has visited such a park at one time or another. A national park, then, embodies a concept that is honoured everywhere; the idea of a national park is one of the finest achievements of our civilisation.

Switzerland too is proud of its National Park, now already more than 50 years old and almost 65 square miles in area. It lies in the easternmost tip of the country, in the Canton of the Grisons, in a magnificent Alpine region, next to the Engadine, the renowned high valley. We are proud not only of the unspoiled beauty of this protected mountain landscape but also of the natural conservation ideal behind the park, an ideal formulated by the founders and cherished to this day. The National Park is, in the first instance, dedicated to the practical conservation of a stretch of untouched nature. All lovers of wild plants and animals can rest assured that when they enter this park, the largest nature preserve in Switzerland, they are associates in the work of guarding this precious mountain region. Here the observation of wild life assumes a constructive meaning, and our splendid Alpine game is not degraded to the level of a mere tourist attraction.

In the new National Park House at Zernez the visitor is oriented systematically on what he is about to see, and so his tour of the Park is not just a casual outing. Permanent exhibitions, films and other types of information along with all kinds of literature to help to put the visitor in the right frame of mind and invest his observations in the Park itself with an added significance. The Swiss National Park is ideal above all for hiking. One can, of course, simply drive through, on the Ofen Pass road, but the rest of the Park is accessible only on foot. Only the quiet and attentive mountain enthusiast, furnished if possible with a pair of good binoculars, can really get into the spirit of this primeval landscape and all its flora and fauna. The visitor is fascinated at every step by the beauty of the alpine vegetation, the still mountain forests and the agile wild animals. Ordinarily unnoticed things gain significance when experienced in the setting of such an interesting nature preserve by a well prepared and observant visitor. A troop of frisky young chamois tumbles playfully down a small lingering

snowfield, the dark yellow flowers of the Rhaetian Alpine poppy sway in the slope wind blowing down over the steep scree, a pair of golden eagles soar endlessly over the distant heights, the modest corn marigold presents its head to the radiant mountain sun at an altitude of nearly 9000 ft. — a jay pecks at a bluish cembra-pine cone, and plump marmots can be heard shrilly crying.

Nearly 50 miles of hiking trails run through the territory of the Swiss National Park. Signboards and markers of all kinds keep the visitor perfectly oriented on the Park and its environs. In a National Park neatness and cleanliness are expected as a matter of course — as nowhere else. Thus Park rules and regulations are actually welcomed and respected by the understanding visitor. To keep the region unspoiled, it is, for example, forbidden to stray off the marked trails in the Park and to wander about freely. Friendly park rangers will remind one of this necessary regulation, and they are ready at all times to render assistance of any kind.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

Hamilton Swiss Club

This year's Annual General Meeting was held in the Eureka Hall on Saturday, 15th April. After the minutes were read and accepted, the Treasurer read the financial report which is in a very sound state. The President, Mr J. Villiger, in his report touched on the highlights of the year, and thanked everyone who helped so willingly with all our functions.

Election of Officers resulted: President, Mr J. Villiger; Vice-President, Mr J. Staheli; Secretary, Mrs R. E. Waldvogel; Treasurer, Mr K. Waldvogel; Riflemaster, Mr H. Meister and Mr M. Pratt; Auditor, Mr W. Risi. The Committee was elected en block as follows: Mr and Mrs W. Steiner, W. Müller, J. Risi, E. Rust, E. Staheli and Mesdames V. Villiger, H. Staheli and M. Flühler.

After discussing various topics concerning the Club the ladies of the Committee served an excellent supper. —R.E.W.

Wellington Swiss Club

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On April 8th 33 members, who obviously are concerned about their club's wellbeing, got together for our Annual General Meeting in Westbrook House. A pleasant atmosphere was provided by the room of the Senior Citizen Social Club. While