

DNR employees work in many fields

By Steve Polston
Photography by Richard Fields



From bee stings
and rabies shots
to peeping Toms
and snake bites

Soil conservation education specialist Jon Smith (above) has worked 40 years as a communicator on natural resource conservation topics, 28 exclusively for the Purdue Extension Service and 12 in a hybrid program with the university and the DNR through its T-by-2000 program. State apiary inspector Kathleen Prough soothes the hives before inspection (right).



Kathleen Prough says that she doesn't keep track of the number of bee stings she's gotten.

"I prefer to think of all the stings I *didn't* get."

As the state apiary inspector, Kathleen and her seasonal crew stick their arms inside more than 500 beehives a year. In an age when nearly everybody has noticed the decrease in honey bees in the wild and in their backyards, certifying hive health is an important function of the Department of Natural Resources.

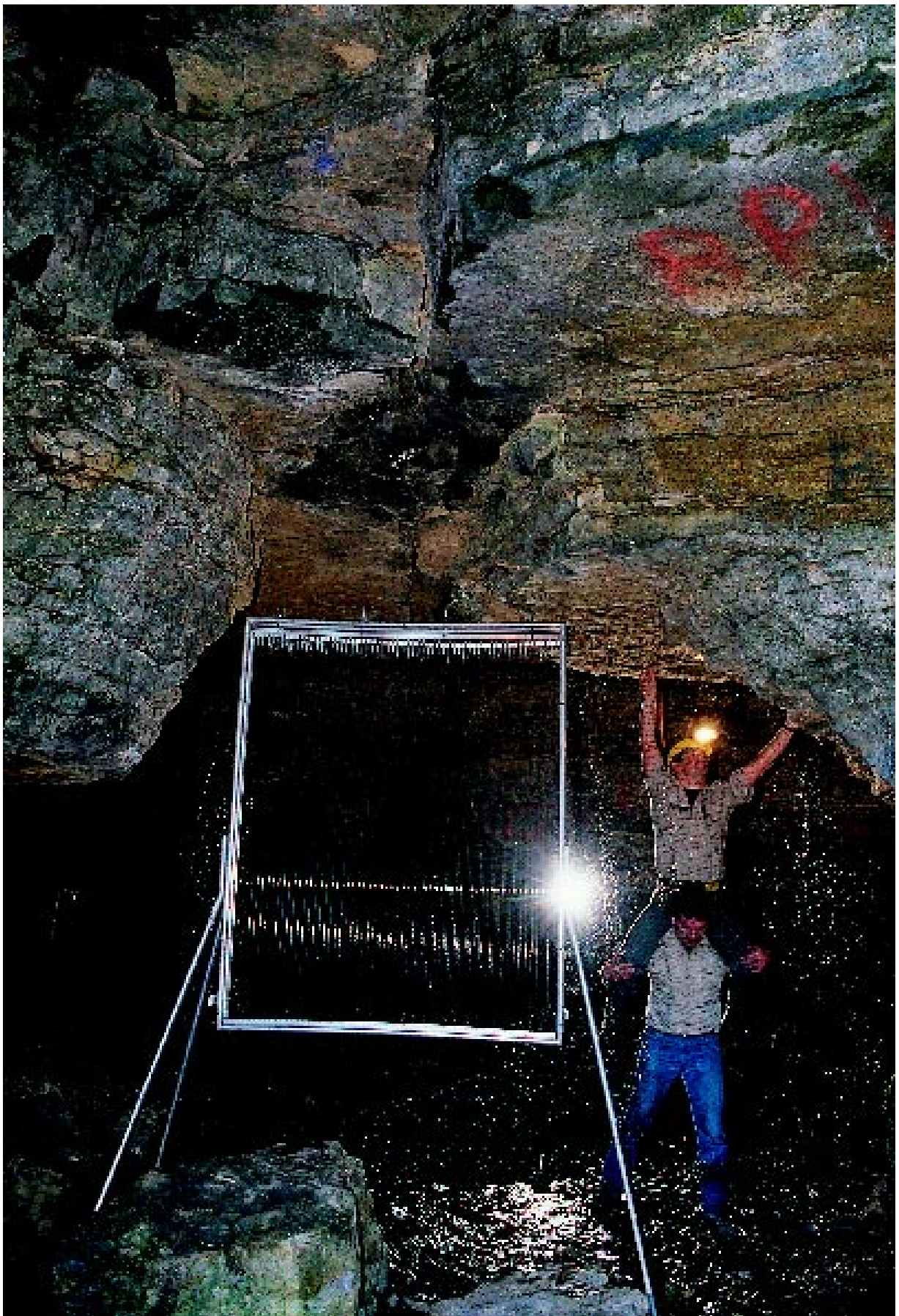
Kathleen's job is a specialty within the DNR. Nobody else has her responsibility to do this work. But

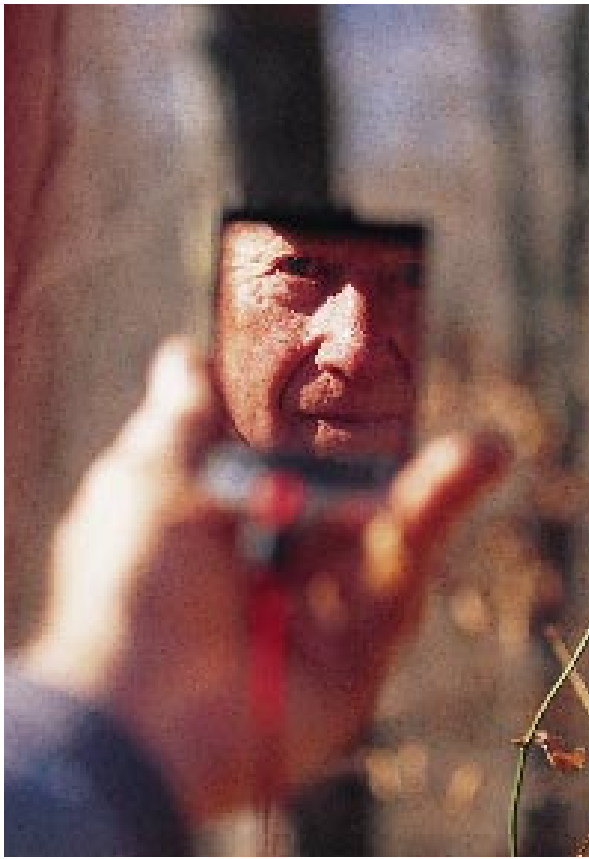
she is like many other of the diverse agency's employees—she enjoys the work and she took interesting paths to get to the job she's in.

You might know a DNR staff member from your contact in any number of public circumstances. Chances are you never met Kathleen.

Kathleen Prough — bachelor of science degree in biology from Western Michigan University; certified for secondary education. Advice to beekeepers on finding the queen bee — look for her eggs first, since they're easier to find than the queen.







Scott Johnson has one of the most sought-after positions among wildlife biologists. For 12 years he has been the non-game wildlife biologist best-known for work with endangered creatures, including otters and bats.

Through the past several years while Indiana reintroduced North American river otters to Hoosier watersheds, Scott was part of the program to study and identify available habitat and even travel to Louisiana to bring the otters here for release. With more than 300 otters released into Indiana, the reintroduction program ended this winter.

The time on the road was often eventful. This winter, his crew had to buy two new truck tires in Mississippi, replace two more in Indiana and replace the tires on the trailer used to haul the otters. In 1997, the roof of that trailer blew off on an Alabama interstate highway.

Scott is a member of the Indiana bat recovery team and has paid his dues in ways few people would want to—rabies shots.

As a preventative to rabies and because of his work with mammals, Scott was given rabies antiviral shots several years ago. Seven in one day. He is given regular booster shots and his blood is tested often by the Indiana Department of Health.

Good thing, since a few years ago Scott was bitten by a bat brought to the Bloomington field office for observation.

“It was acting strange so I had it in a bat cage in my office. While I was feeding it I felt that slight cut, sort of like a sharp blade of grass. The next day the bat was dead.”

Another booster shot. Another day.

Scott Johnson—non-game wildlife biologist for 12 years with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources; education—bachelor of science in zoology from Ohio University, master’s degree in wildlife management from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Chances are that you *have* met Andrea Smith, curator of the T.C. Steele State Historic Site near Nashville in Brown County, Ind., but did you know that she has a little apartment at the back of Steele’s hilltop home?

Or that the historic site doesn’t have a city water supply or even its own potable drinking water system?

Getting a lift from an assistant, DNR non-game wildlife biologist Scott Johnson sets up a mist net in a southern Indiana bat cave (left). The bats are surveyed and released. Natural science manager Bob Vollmer (above left) of the DNR’s Division of Engineering has been sighting boundaries in survey mirrors for the agency for nearly 36 years, for which he was honored by the DNR in 1998. He works in all sorts of weather climbing over hill and dell to survey topography for construction and boundary lines for agency property. “He is a valuable part of our team and we are proud of his work,” says Engineering Division Director Tom Hohman. T.C. Steele State Historic Site curator Andrea Smith (above right) wears many uniforms—sometimes the brown and green of the DNR and sometimes the more genteel and lady-like uniform of turn-of-the-century Indiana. Here she interprets country life in the pastoral gardens of the historic site, located near Nashville.



Water is trucked into the historic site for drinking fountains and use in Andrea's home; it also is trucked in for fire suppression and humidifiers that stabilize the environment surrounding priceless paintings and other artifacts belonging to Steele and his wife, Selma, who donated the cottage and collection to Indiana in 1945.

Living on-site as curator and property manager gives life some interesting twists, Andrea said.

"Imagine taking a sick day because you're sneezing and coughing and you're lying in bed at the back of the house and a visitor to the historic site is curious about what's behind the curtains," Andrea said.

"So you look up and see this set of eyes peering through the window at you and—quick!—you grab a blanket and pull it over your head!"

Andrea Smith—associate's degree for teaching; bachelor's degree in American history and master's work in early American history. Began career as an assistant to a private collector of horse carriages; was assistant curator at Culbertson Mansion State Historic Site for two years; has been curator eight years at T.C. Steele.

Gary Langell works in the Fish and Wildlife Bloomington regional office as the District 11 wildlife biologist.

"I like meeting new people and helping them develop wildlife habitat, developing quail habitat and developing wetlands," Gary said.

Gary's contact with the public in these circumstances is almost always positive. "Everybody likes rabbits and quail. I enjoy helping people learn how to make management plans on their lands for wildlife."

This is not just a seasonal job nor is it always happy. "I have to be out there in all sorts of weather and sometimes I meet irate land owners who are unhappy about deer damage to their property."

Gary Langell—has worked for the DNR for 20 years and has a bachelor of science degree from Purdue University in wildlife studies. "I started off as a summer aide for a year with the Division of Fish and Wildlife, working on the roadside habitat development program, fresh out of college." He likes to hunt, fish and snow ski, which he has done all over the United States.

The 43 miles of Indiana's Lake Michigan shoreline is the workplace of Janel Palla, assistant fisheries biologist for five years.

"I enjoy my work because it's very diverse but not very consistent. We work on one thing one day and then may switch to another project, but this is a very public job with a high profile," Janel said.

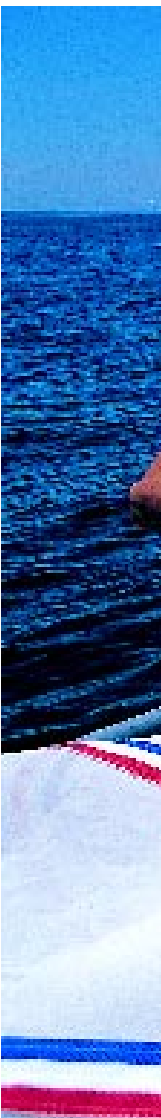
Research and education for the public are major responsibilities in this DNR field station, which has a small staff.

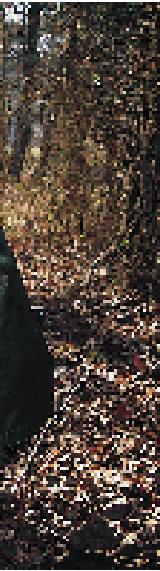
Janel helped develop and maintains a public fishing hotline with information on what fish are being caught where. "I conduct creel surveys with anglers for about nine months of the year on the lake and its tributaries. People want to know what fish are hot and where we can predict success."

Janel is team leader for technical work, so that means handling big nets on a big boat on this big lake, which Indiana shares responsibility for with a host of governmental and management organizations.

Research done on the tiny Hoosier shoreline is shared throughout the Great Lakes region because, as Janel says, "Fish don't know boundaries or states."

Janel Palla—bachelor of science degree with specialties in wildlife and fisheries from Purdue University in 1993; previously worked for CINERGY in Plainfield, Ind. as a fisheries technician.





Jim Mohow is a state archaeologist, helping uncover Indiana's past. His special interest is stone tool analysis and the early prehistory (11,000 to 6,000 B.C.) of the eastern United States.

His passion is making history "speak."

"When I was about 12 years old, my father showed me an 'arrowhead' and said, 'if only this arrowhead could talk, it could tell us so much about the past.' After years of training, I've learned that the artifacts *can* talk, you just have to know the language."

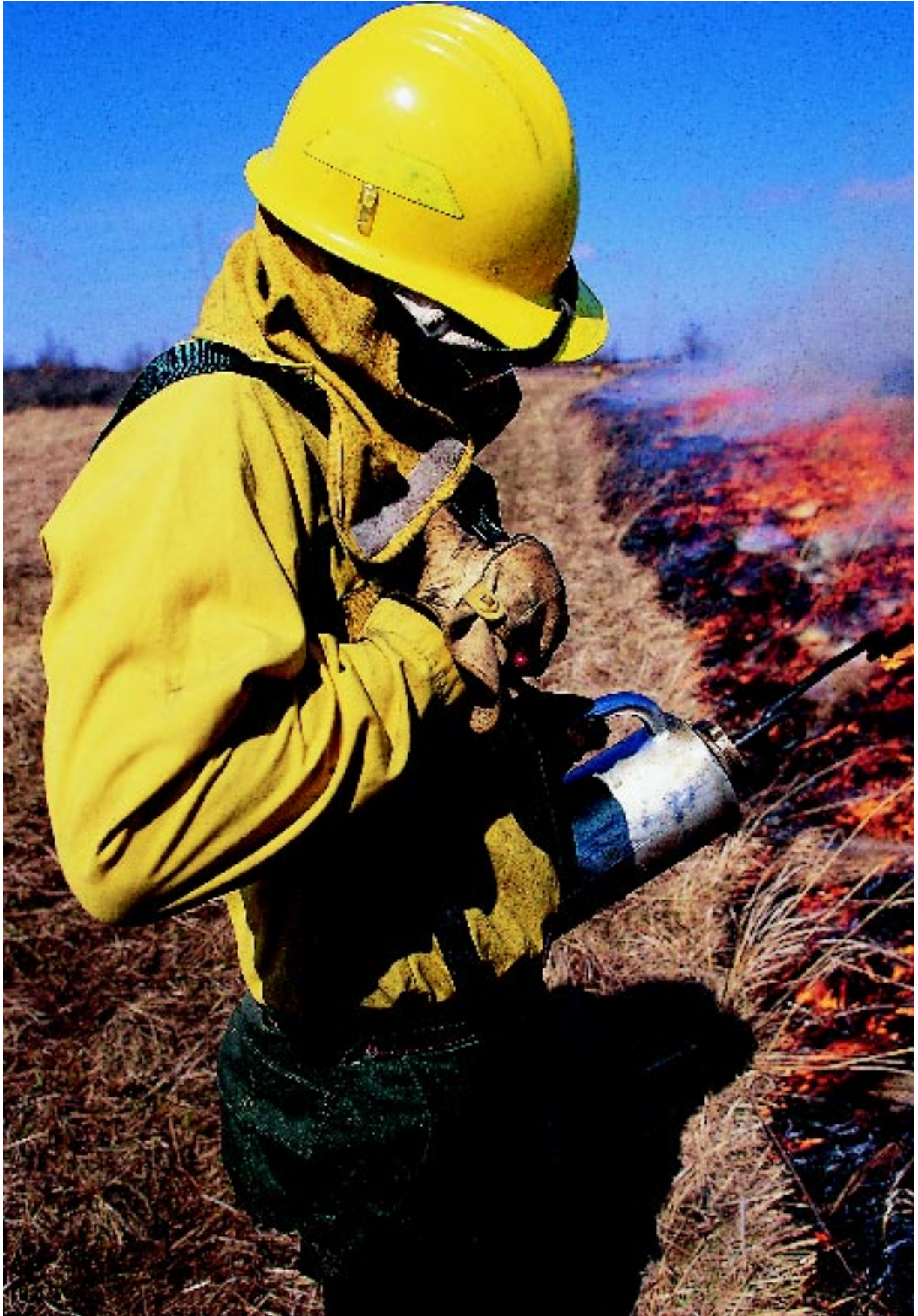
Some of Jim's major responsibilities are the review of federal and state projects that may impact cultural resources, the nomination and listing of such resources in the national or state historic registers and the review and permitting of archaeological investigations in the state.

Archaeologists put in long hours, "but for me one of the greatest rewards is helping people have a

D*NR District 8 biologist Gary Langell examines a deer jaw found in a farmer's field (far left). Relative age and health can be determined by measuring the wear on various teeth. From behind a camouflage screen, First Sgt. Jeff Barker (left) observes a decoy deer used in poaching investigations. Trained in wildlife and human observation, the state's 200-plus conservation officers enforce environmental and game laws and focus on public education. Barker has been an officer for 20 years; he is assistant commander of the District 6 headquarters in Nashville. Janel Palla, assistant fisheries biologist at the DNR's Lake Michigan station in Michigan City, collects perch larvae from the lake. Palla is studying life stages critical for a healthy yellow perch population.*



John Maxwell





better understanding of and respect for the irreplaceable archaeological resource. There is a special thrill in discovering evidence of cultures long-gone and the fascinating peoples that created them.”

“After 20 years, I’m still pretty excited about what I and others will discover tomorrow, and I plan on staying that way,” Jim said.

Jim Mohow—received his bachelor of arts degree in anthropology from Indiana University in Fort Wayne in 1985, master’s degree in anthropology with a specialization in archaeology from Ball State University in Muncie in 1989. His first degree was in commercial art and advertising, and he worked in that field for 10 years. “In 1981, my loving and supportive wife, Melonee, gave me a class in North American prehistory as a Christmas present. I loved it. From that point I was on a course to make a career in archaeology.”

Marquita Manley says the most consistent thing that happens to her on the job is that someone will bring a

snake to the McCormick’s Creek State Park Nature Center and ask her to identify it.

“The second question almost always is, ‘Do you want it?’ ” Marquita said.

The answer is almost always “no,” since it’s better to leave the creatures alone to live naturally in the wild. Marquita is interpretive naturalist at McCormick’s Creek, a popular southern Indiana DNR destination.

“I like snakes and just about everybody knows it, so people call me on the phone a lot and bring the critters to the nature center. They want to know what it is that they’ve found.”

What impresses Marquita most is that more people are becoming adept at trapping snakes without being bit.

And she has been impressed with the severity of the bites she has received, which provide for some interesting educational moments when she’s conducting a wildlife program for school groups and families.

“Snake bites—any snake bite—almost always pro-

Regional ecologist Tom Swinford communicates via 2-way radio with team members in the Division of Nature Preserves during a controlled burn on a prairie near Monon (left). Prescribed burns thwart non-native plants and improve habitat for threatened and endangered species. Safety comes first; prescribed fire requires extensive planning and coordination. Tom has been with the agency for six years. Although his passions run toward dragonflies, oak woodlands and wetland plant communities, he can be found on weekends playing rock and roll in dark, smoky habitats. Archaeologist Jim Mohow (above) identifies artifacts brought in by visitors to Mounds State Park’s Adena-Hopewell Rendezvous.



duce a deep wound with lots of blood. You try to smile, but it makes a negative impression when you're bitten."

This is always a good time to tell park visitors that a park is not a home for anything they've found in their yard or along the road. "Return it to nature," Marquita says. "We help people find answers. Their questions are the challenges that make this job interesting."

But her job isn't only about bird watching or wildlife watching.

"Increasingly we are asked to study nature so that management plans can be developed for the parks. We look for invasive plant species, we look at wildlife to see what's moving and where," Marquita said.

Knowing this will help the parks determine where roads and buildings should be built or what controls need to be put in place for plant and wildlife management.

Marquita Manley—bachelor's degree in elementary education and master's degree in parks and recreation from Indiana University. Worked several summers as a

children's camp counselor at Camp Riley and the Girl Scout camps at Bradford Woods; has been a naturalist for 13 years for the DNR—six years at Turkey Run State Park, one year at Spring Mill State Park and six years at McCormick's Creek.

Jim, Janel, Gary, Andrea, Scott, Marquita and Kathleen are just a few of the 1,300 DNR staff working across the state to preserve, protect and manage a diverse and complex matrix of natural and cultural resources.

Staff include petroleum geologists and mechanical and hydrological engineers. People work as ecologists, naturalists, interpreters, creel clerks, trails and stream specialists, mathematicians, editors, photographers, permit clerks, license clerks, conservation officers, accountants and in many other jobs.

Their education includes a number of scientific and technical degrees and specialties. They use binoculars, microscopes, computers, cash registers, backhoes, motorboats, canoes, live traps and fish nets. They touch,

Sylvia Wilcox, an administrative law judge for the Natural Resources Commission (above left), has worked for the DNR since 1993, having come from a private practice. Sylvia's undergraduate degree is in chemistry and she was a polymer chemist at Goodyear Tire & Rubber in Akron, Ohio after graduating from Purdue. "I am most grateful for having the opportunity to practice what I call 'nerd law' by delving into scientific areas and combining law with it." Mike Martin works on a trail as streams and trails coordinator for the DNR (center), a job he did frequently for the agency from 1989 through 1997, until he assumed duties as the Division of Outdoor Recreation geographic information system coordinator. Both jobs in the DNR call upon his Purdue bachelor's degree in forestry and his master's degree in outdoor recreation.



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feel, hold, educate, write, listen, look and learn. They work in all sorts of weather conditions—snow, harsh wind, glaring sun and mud.

They get bit by snakes and rabid bats, stung by bees and gawked at by visitors.

They seem to like their work. ■

Steve Polston is senior editor of *Outdoor Indiana* magazine.

Stephanie Stewart (seated left) has worked as a Division of Water hydraulic engineer for 18 months; she has a bachelor's degree from Purdue. Stephanie completes technical reviews for proposed construction in floodways to ensure public safety and the efficiency and capacity of the floodway. "I enjoy contact with a variety of people," Stephanie said, "but I dedicate most of my time to reviewing hydraulic computer models." Working with Stephanie is Darlene Emerson, who has been promoted through the ranks to become an engineering assistant. "Before coming to work for the DNR, I had no appreciation of the outdoors. Now my family and I go camping often and I teach my children to appreciate nature," Darlene said. Marquita Manley (below) has been interpretive naturalist at McCormick's Creek for six years and has worked in similar capacities in state parks for 12 years.

