

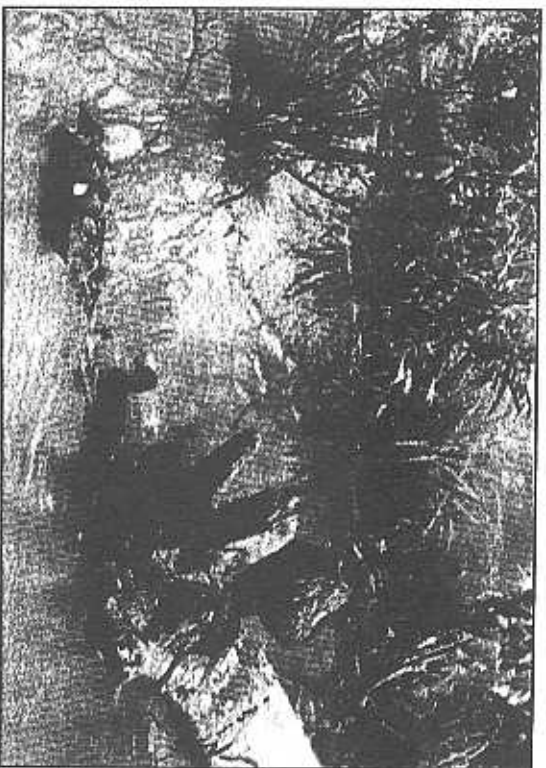
Zoo exhibit educates about endangered wetlands

By Ellen Blevens
For *eventure!*

The latest exhibit at the Cincinnati Zoo celebrates one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world, one that is essential to the survival of many endangered species.

The swamp.
Wetland Trail, the zoo's newest exhibit, is designed to give visitors a glimpse into wetlands. Wetlands are comprised of a wide variety of habitats where the land is wet for at least a portion of the year. These habitats include fens, bogs, freshwater marshes, swamps, and vernal pools.

Wetland Trail is located near the Reptile House on the shore of Swan Lake. The new exhibit will educate visitors on the importance of maintaining our wetland areas. Of the 215 mil-



lion acres of wetlands that once existed in the United States, more than half have been destroyed, and 90 percent of Ohio's wetlands have been destroyed.

"Wetlands are an endangered habitat," Dave Jenke, the zoo's director of education said. "It's important that we pay attention to a habitat that is in our own backyard."

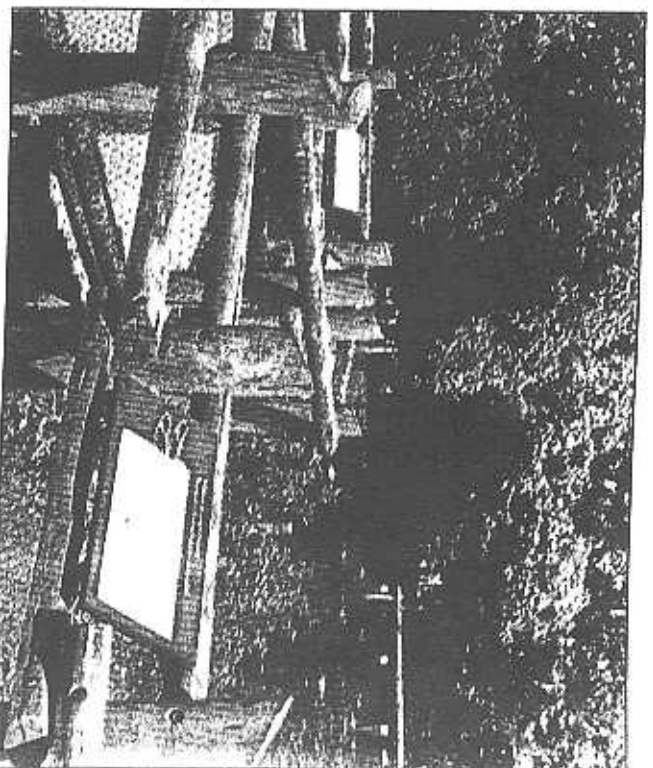
Wetlands, like tropical rainforests and coral reefs, are one of the world's most important and diverse ecosystems. It provides a habitat for a wide assortment of plants and animals. Wetlands are sometimes

considered "nature's nursery," providing food and security for juvenile wildlife. In Ohio, 60 percent of the state's endangered species use wetlands sometime in their life.

Wetlands provide great assistance to humans as well. The habitat filters pollutants from water sources. It also acts as a sponge, reducing damage from flooding.

"People need to learn that wetlands are not wastelands," Jenke said. "They improve the quality of life for animals and humans."

The Ohio Department of National Resources Division of



The Cincinnati Zoo opens its newest permanent exhibit today, this one devoted to the wetlands, a vitally important ecosystem that has all but vanished from Ohio.

Greg Lynch/For *eventure!*

Wildlife, who partnered with the zoo in this exhibit, has already restored 5,000 acres of wetlands statewide. These improvements were pivotal in the Division of Wildlife's success in reintroducing the trumpeter swan and North American river otter to Ohio.

Today the exhibit will celebrate its grand opening with the

release of two trumpeter swans into Swan Lake.

"The swans are nesting and thriving in Ohio," Jenke said. "It is an example of successful conservation."

"As John Sawhill once said, 'We can save endangered species.' The work we've done has made a difference."

If you go ...

WHAT: Wetland Trail grand opening

WHEN: 11 a.m., today. Exhibition is permanent.

WHERE: The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, 3400 Vine Street, Cincinnati

HOW MUCH: \$6 children, \$9 seniors, \$11.50 adults, and \$6.50 parking per car. Call (513) 281-4700