

A Brief History of Edwin Way Teale



Trail Wood is the former home of Edwin Way Teale and his wife Nellie. Mr. Teale was a well-known and influential author of 31 books on nature. At the ripe age of nine, he declared himself a naturalist. In 1923 he married Nellie Imogene Donovan, who he had met while at college. Nellie was Edwin's equal as a naturalist and an indispensable companion in all projects and adventures. They shared a life-long love of nature.

Mr. Teale began his career as a staff writer for *Popular Science* magazine in 1928, writing articles on everything from homing pigeons to the latest technological inventions. He spent 13 years working for *Popular Science*, all the while perfecting his skills as a writer and a photographer.

His first book as a naturalist was *Grassroots Jungles*, published in 1937. It detailed the lives of common insects and was filled with Mr. Teale's unique, up-close photographs. He was the first to come up with the notion that if you put insects in the refrigerator before photographing them, you would have a more cooperative and stationary subject!



In October of 1941, the Teales took the plunge towards independence and Edwin left his job to pursue a free-lance writing career. He and Nellie ever afterward celebrated October 16th as their own personal Independence Day. His accessible style and extensive knowledge of the natural world, combined with an unquenchable curiosity made him an instant success as an author. He is probably best known for his series on the American seasons, *North with the Spring*,



Journey into Summer, Autumn Across America and *Wandering Through Winter*. Most of Mr. Teale's 31 books are out of print, but the season books and *A Naturalist Buys An Old Farm* have been reprinted and are available for purchase at Trail Wood. They can often be found at your library or at used bookstores.

In 1959, the Teales left their home in Baldwin, Long Island to escape the crush of humanity that was steadily encroaching upon them and moved to Trail Wood in Hampton, Connecticut. They spent the rest of their lives becoming familiar with every inch of the 156 acres. They named each trail, pasture and corner so that they could share the news of their daily rambles if they happened to go out separately. Ten of Mr. Teale's 31 books, including his Pulitzer Prize winner, *Wandering Through Winter*, were written at Trail Wood.

Mr. Teale died of cancer on October 18th, 1980. His study and writing cabin remain as he left them. In 1981, Nellie Teale deeded the Trail Wood property to the Connecticut Audubon Society as she and Edwin had agreed to do before his death. Nellie lived on at Trail Wood for 13 years after Edwin's Death. She died in 1993. The property is managed by the Connecticut Audubon with the help of the Friends of Trail Wood and numerous other volunteers. The Dodd Research Center on the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs houses the extensive Teale collection. In the late 1990's, Connecticut Audubon purchased an additional 11 acres abutting the sanctuary and received one acre in donation, growing the sanctuary to it's present size of 168 acres.

