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LAKE KEOMAH WOODLAND TRAIL



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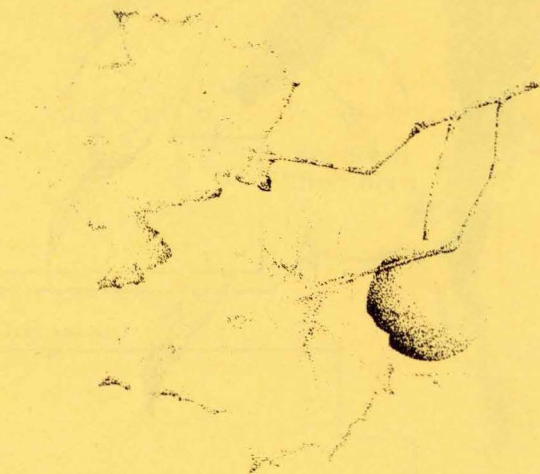
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Welcome to the Lake Keomah Woodland Trail. This short trail (1/3 mile) will help acquaint you with the woody inhabitants of Lake Keomah State Park. The woods of south central Iowa are part of the Central Hardwood Forest Region located throughout much of the eastern United States. This region is characterized by hardwood trees such as: oaks, hickory, cottonwood, black walnut, black cherry, and ash. The numbered descriptions in this brochure correspond to the numbered posts along the trail. Please enjoy your walk. Be sure to "*Take Nothing But Photographs And Leave Nothing But Footprints.*"

1. **American Sycamore.** The American Sycamore prefers moist soil such as what you find here in the Lake Keomah area. This is an unusual tree in that it grows new bark from the inside of the previous bark resulting in a peely look.

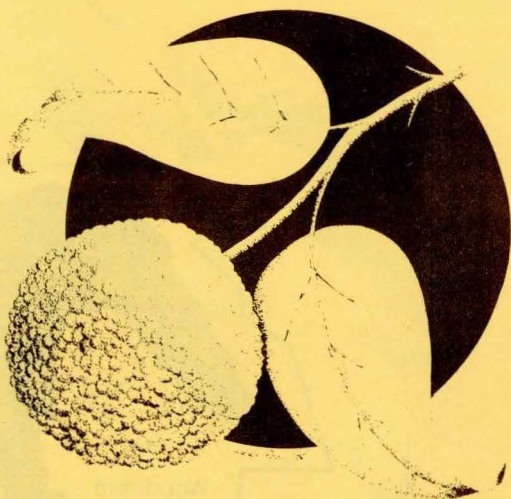


The leaves have a maple-like appearance. The unique multiple fruit, commonly called buttonballs, can be seen in the fall. They contain many tiny long seeds and break apart when ripe. The wood is used for a variety of purposes including veneer, fencing, railroad ties, flooring, and food containers.

2. **Honeylocust.** The hardy honeylocust prefers moist bottomlands but survives on all but the very driest sites. This wicked-looking tree is armed with stout, rigid, three-forked spines on its branches and trunks, so you want to be

careful when walking near them! The fruits are twisted, strap-like, purplish-brown pods which contain oval seeds. This tree derives its name from the fact that the thin pulp of the pods has a very sweetish taste.

3. **Osage Orange.** The osage orange is a thorny tree of rich bottomlands in the Osage Indian country. It was widely used as a hedge plant.



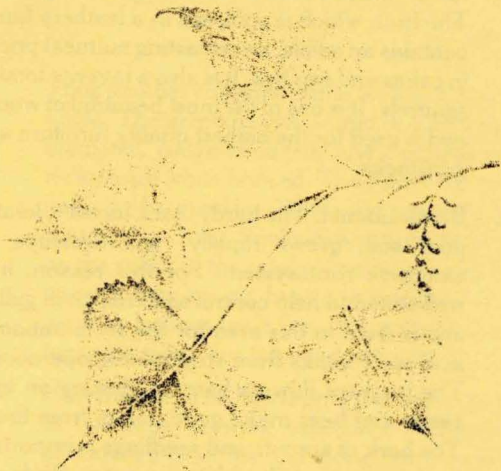
Thus another common name for it is the hedge-apple. The greenish yellow fruit is 4-5 inches in diameter, rough-surfaced, and exudes thick milky juice when bruised. The fruit is not edible nor is it very good for wildlife. However, the tree is useful for cover. Squirrels and bobwhites feed on the seeds of the oranges occasionally. The wood is very strong, hard and flexible and was used by Indians for bows. Currently, it is used for fence posts, for they can last 100 years.

4. **Hawthorne.** The hawthorne is a common tree in this area growing especially profusely in abandoned pastures and along fence rows. In the spring, the clusters of white, pink, or red flowers make it a showy tree. The small apple-like fruits are not used by wildlife as one might think, although the thorniness, dense branching, and heavy foliage of these small trees make them a favorite nesting site for many birds. The fruit or "haws" were one of the ingredients of "pemmican", a dried meal which the Indians ate.

5. **Black Cherry.** The black cherry is not a very tall tree, perhaps attaining 60 feet, but it certainly is a valuable one. The fruit is among the most important wildlife foods during the summer for a wide variety of song birds and small mammals of the park. Deer and rabbits feed extensively on the twigs, leaves, and bark. the reddish-brown wood is prized for fine furniture.
6. **Red Mulberry.** Some people find the black-berry-like fruit of this tree to be a nuisance but it is one of the most popular foods of song birds. The edible fruit also makes delicious pies, jellies, and drinks. This is a small tree, usually 20 to 30 feet in height. The trunk is usually short and the stout, spreading, and often crooked branches form a dense, broadly round-topped crown. The soft wood is rather tough and very durable. It is used for furniture and fence posts.
7. **Black Walnut.** This tree has often been referred to as the "*Queen of the Woods*," since it is so valuable for a variety of reasons. It gives a very stately appearance with its height of up to 100 feet and straight trunks usually free of branches for a considerable distance from the ground. The fruit, which is enclosed in a leathery husk, contains an edible, sweet tasting nutmeat prized in cakes and candies. It is also a favorite food of squirrels. It is one of the most beautiful of woods and is used for the highest quality furniture and gunstocks.
8. **Black Locust.** The hardy black locust tolerates poor soil, grows rapidly, and develops an extensive root system. For this reason, it is well-suited to help control soil erosion in gullies and is used in this area for the reclamation of acid spoil banks from strip mining operations. The fragrant flowers hang in clusters on long stems and bees make good honey from them. The bark of sprouts and seedlings is important food for cottontail rabbits in winter. Birds will eat the seeds found in flat, brownish black pods. Fence posts, ties, and stakes are products of this tree.
9. **The Edge.** Looking straight ahead you can see a little known but important habitat known as the "*edge*". This is the blending in of two habitats, the forest and open area, containing a variety of plants, trees, shrubs, and forbs. It

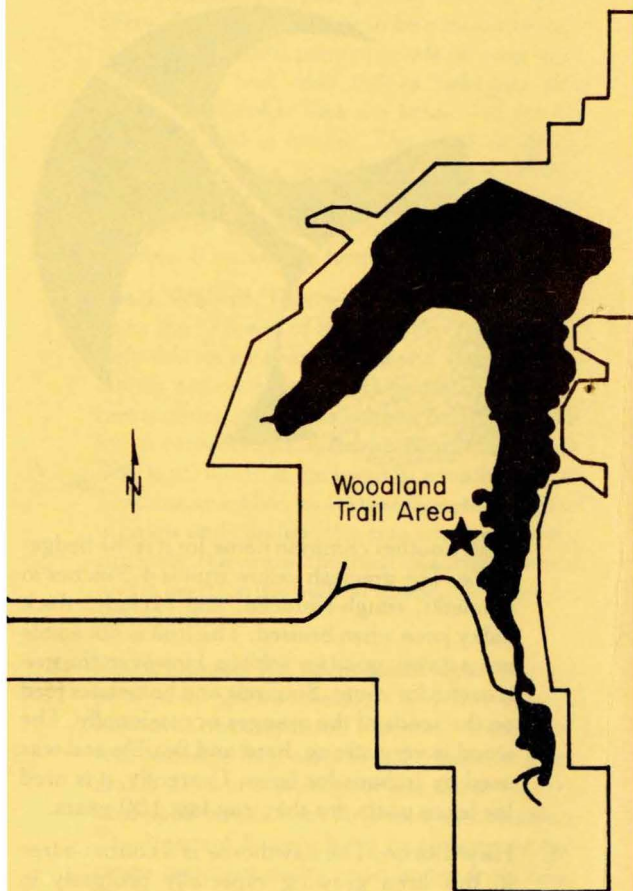
combines the shelter of the woods with the abundant food availability of the open area. This results in an increased number of wildlife species who also agree that "*variety is the spice of life.*"

10. **River Birch.** The only native birch of southeastern United States, the river birch, is common along streams. Its reddish-brown bark which peels off in thin, papery layers is a distinguishing feature of this tree. Seeds found in small erect cones are a valuable food source for song birds, waterfowl, and small mammals. The wood is light but rather hard, strong, and close grained. It is not of great commercial importance, but is used to a limited extent for furniture, woodenware, and boxes.
11. **Eastern Cottonwood.** You would expect to find this tree near the shores of Lake Keomah as it is typically a tree of rich, moist river bottomlands, swamps, and lakeshores. It is a fast growing tree and also one of the tallest trees of eastern forests, attaining heights close to 200 feet. It receives its name from the fruit which, when ripe, splits open and releases many tiny dark seeds with tufts of cottony hairs. Cotton-



woods require lots of sunlight to survive. Because of this, very few seedlings are found growing underneath the parent trees since they are shaded out. Young cottonwoods are also susceptible to many diseases and insect damage. Cottonwoods are important commercially for the production of pulpwood used in high-grade magazine and book paper.

12. **Eastern Redbud.** This particular species is frequently planted as an ornamental. From mid-April to early May, the five-petaled, pinkish-purple flowers which adorn these trees make them immediately recognized and appreciated by many. Redbuds are abundant along the roadways in the park and many people come to view and take pictures of their colorful displays. These trees are shade tolerant and quite hardy.



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