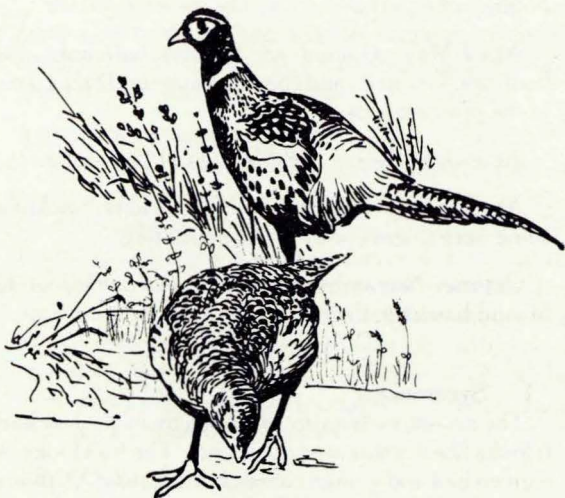


LAKE VIEW NATURE TRAIL



PARK RANGER'S ADDRESS

Green Valley State Park
Route 1
Creston, Iowa 50801
Telephone 515-782-5131

Lake View Nature Trail extends 1.5 miles over gently rolling meadows. Along the trail are nineteen numbered posts that correspond with the numbers in the brochure. The trail another 1.5 miles past the last post if you are interested in a longer walk. On the average, the guided portion of the trail takes an hour and a half to walk.

Green Valley is predominately a grassland habitat. Habitat is most easily defined as the "address" of animals or plants. Below is a list of possible "events" you may witness.

February-March: Meadowlarks, horned larks and killdeer arrive and Canada geese visit on their way north.

April-May: Upland sandpipers, bobolinks, lark buntings, kingbirds and sparrows appear. Ducks return to the prairie ponds.

June-July: Nesting and feeding of the young.

August-September: Early migrants, including some ducks, leave while goldfinches nest.

October-November: Canada geese and ducks stop by and hawks gather.

1. Sycamore

The sycamore is easily identified by its peeling bark. It looks like it is diseased but it's not. The fruit looks like a green ball and is often called "button balls." Although the sycamore is intolerant of extremes its growth rate is very rapid, which aids in its adaptability. The wood is used for furniture, boxes and woodenware.

2. Winter Identification

Identification of trees during the winter can be simplified by learning the characteristics displayed by the bark and twig. Each tree has its own personality like the peeling plates of the sycamore and the horizontal lenticels of the cherry.

3. Competition

There are two major factors that determine whether an area is best suited for grassland or trees: wind and rain. If rain is moderate, then competition is keen, but grasses probably will win the battle. Grass can withstand fire because its growing level is at, or below the surface where the growing tissue of saplings is destroyed. The root system of grass is also better equipped than trees to handle dry years.

4. Boxelder-Ashleaf Maple

The boxelder grows rapidly along streams, roads and fields but is short lived. The boxelder belongs to the maple family and has the typical winged-fruit, but is different because of its compound leaves. Squirrels and songbirds enjoy the seeds, and if the seeds are roasted between May and June, they are palatable to humans also.

5. Wildflowers

We can thank the homesteaders and farmers that came before us for the abundance and variety of wildflowers found here. Queen Ann's lace, daisies, black-eyed Susan's and others of the composite family flourish in fields that were formerly tilled.

6. Poison Ivy

Beware! All parts of this plant, including the smoke, can be an irritant. Everyone reacts differently, so please take care. Poison ivy can grow in two forms, shrub or vine. It has alternate leaves composed of three leaflets.

If contact is made, wash with a strong soap and apply a soothing lotion. The settlers often used the juice of the jewelweed. Relief is nearby because jewelweed is always found near poison ivy.

7. Ash

The leaves of the ash are opposite and compound, with seven leaflets. The fruit is a single "key" with a long narrow wing. Ash is the wood of the World Series because it is the stuff baseball bats are made of.

8. Useless Weeds or Not?

The hillsides abound with grasses such as rye, bluegrass, cheatgrass, panic grass and green foxtail. Although these grasses are often a nuisance to the local farmer when they invade cropland, they are important. These sturdy grasses provide a vital function in holding soil and preventing erosion, as well as providing food and habitat for wildlife such as the pheasant and rabbit.

9. Cedar

The eastern red cedar is abundant along the trail. It grows on poor soil and lives for about 300 years. The fruit is consumed by over 50 species of birds including bobwhite quail, pheasant and morning doves. The birds pass the seeds undigested and thus are responsible for the reproduction of the cedar tree.

10. Beaver-Muskrat

The tracks of these animals are most easily seen during the February-March thaw. The muskrat track is characterized by the imprint of the thin tail. The hind

feet of both animals are webbed and are used for oars while swimming, and the tail provides rudder action. Their homes are constructed to allow entrance from land or water.

11. Walnut

Prized for its hardwood, the black walnut is used to make beautiful furniture, cabinets and gunstocks. The nuts hoarded by squirrels every fall are also enjoyed by humans. The green husks were used by pioneers in the making of brown dye.

12. Squirrel

The squirrel establishes certain roads to and from his abiding place. This highway system may be entirely in the treetops. A squirrel will eat almost anything and is not above stealing.

The squirrel is famous for storing food in odd places and then forgetting just where he hid it. This makes the squirrel an important link in the future of the woods because the cache of walnuts that he forgot may one day become a walnut tree.

13. Black Locust

The black locust is distinctive because of a pair of small thorns at the base of each leaf. The locust is an advanced tree in the evolutionary line because the leaf is divided into tiny leaflets with thorns.

The wood, which resists rotting, makes excellent fenceposts.

14. Pheasant

The pheasant is now a popular resident at Green Valley. However, this beautiful bird has only been in the state for 80 years. The pheasant first arrived here in 1900 when an accidental stocking took place near Cedar Falls. In 1910, the state made its first efforts to formally introduce the bird to Iowa. Not until the early 1960's was there a significant population of pheasants in southwest Iowa.

15. Redbud

This small tree provides a lovely spectacle in the spring with its lavender/pink blossoms. The heart-shaped leaves turn yellow in the fall. The pinkish, flattened pods are about 2-3 inches long with several seeds. The bark is reddish/brown and scaly.

16. Waterfowl

During the fall and spring migration, the lake is alive with noise. Canada geese, mallards, teal, coot and many others have stopped to pay us a visit along their journey.

Green Valley provides waterfowl a place that is safe from man's disturbance. The upper north arm, north of the boat ramp, becomes an inviolate refuge from September 15 to December 15. Inviolate refuge means that the posted area will be secure from trespass; therefore, allowing the waterfowl peaceful feeding.

17. Colors

No matter in what season you find yourself at Green Valley the colors of nature are playing an important role. During spring and summer, the colors of the various flowers advertise their supply of pollen and nectar to attract birds, butterflies and bees. For example, honeybees prefer the color blue and hummingbirds prefer yellow.

As the seasons change, so does the plumage of many birds. The birds use bright colors in spring to attract a mate and molted plumage in summer and fall to allow them to fade into the landscape.

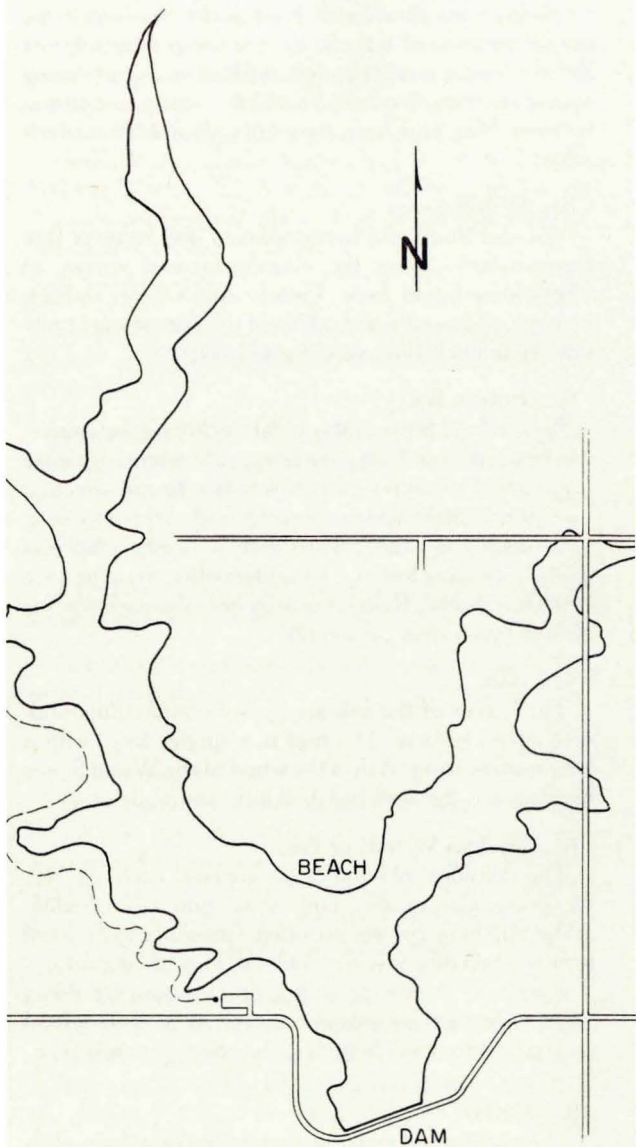
18. "Chicken-Hawks"

The red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks, often seen soaring over Green Valley, have borne the burden of being misnamed "chicken-hawks." A recent survey from the Department of Agriculture pointed out that "red-hawks" much prefer mice, rodents, snakes, frogs and grasshoppers over chickens. They are, in fact, responsible for the extermination of 90% of the creatures that injure crops. Less than 1½% of their food supply comes from poultry or other game. Perhaps an apology is in order?

19. Quest for Supper?

Visitors are always welcome at Green Valley. It is no longer unusual to see signs of deer — bark stripped from trees, tracks, perhaps even the fleeting glimpse of a white-tail along the trails. Coyotes and osprey have also paid us a visit or two, although neither seems to want to stay long. Our most esteemed visitors have been the magnificent eagle and you.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact any park personnel.



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