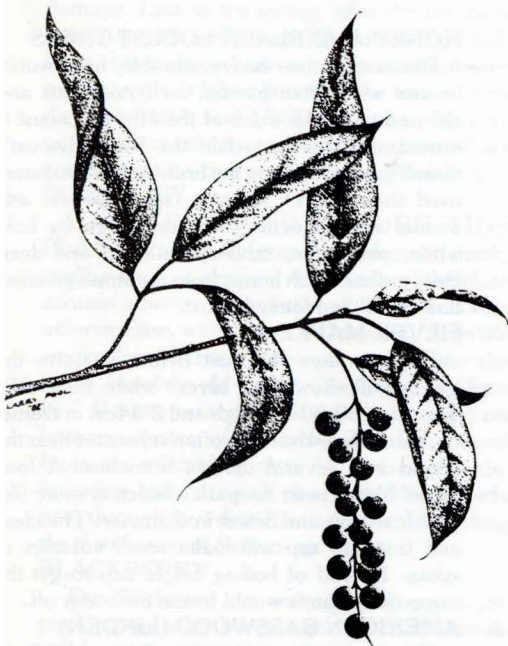


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# BOBWHITE NATURE TRAIL



*breathes there the man with soul so dead  
Who never to himself hath said:*

*"This is my own, my native land"?*

*— Sir Walter Scott*

Park Ranger:  
Bobwhite State Park  
Allerton, Iowa 50008  
Phone: 515/873-4670

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**MY NATIVE LAND:** a self-guided trail to help you learn more about common plants and animals who share our native land. The level, 19-stop trail takes about 1 hour to complete. The numbered descriptions below match marker posts along the trail.

1. **HONEY AND BLACK LOCUST TREES**

Because of their heavy, durable, hard wood, locusts were often planted for fence posts and railroad ties. The trunk of the Honey Locust is armed with thorns, while the Black Locust's thorns grow mostly on the branches. Woodsmen used these thorns for pins, spear points, and animal traps. Locust seeds are eaten by bobwhite, pheasants, rabbits, squirrels, and deer. Bees gather much honey from the small greenish flowers of the Honey Locust.

2. **SILVER MAPLE**

Folklore says that just before a storm the leaves will show their silvery white underside. This tree, 60-80 feet high and 2-3 feet in diameter, shows how the trunk often separates near the ground into several upright branches. A lone Silver Maple near the park's beach is more like 120 feet high and 5 feet in diameter. The clear and tasteless sap will make small volumes of syrup. Instead of boiling maple sap to get the syrup off, Indians would freeze the water off.

3. **AMERICAN BASSWOOD (LINDEN)**

No other tree has fruit like the Basswood. Each cluster of seeds is suspended from a glider-like leaf to catch the wind and be scattered. Basswood is light and soft and is used for novelties, patterns, excelsior and beekeepers' supplies. Beekeepers prize the Basswood for its clusters of fragrant yellow flowers, furnishing abundant nectar for some of the finest honey.

4. **BLACK CHERRY**

The largest of the cherries, this tree grows 60-80 feet high. The reddish wood, very hard and close-grained, is one of our most valuable woods for furniture making and interior finishing. The blossoms are white and bloom May-June. The fruit is blackish and bitter, but can be used for making jelly. The fruits are eaten by bobwhite, pheasant, raccoon, red fox deer, squirrel and many songbirds. Indians and early settlers made a tea of the bark and used it to cure ailments from worms to tuberculosis.

## **EASTERN COTTONWOOD**

The largest member of the Poplar and Aspen family, it grows 75-100 feet high and 3-4 feet in diameter. Cottonwoods grow rapidly and are planted for quick shade or for wind protection. They prefer moist soils and are the most common tree to find along streams. The wood is soft and is used for veneers, boxes, matches, excelsior, and paper. The fruits, when ripe, split open and release many tiny, dark brown seeds. Each seed is attached to a tuft of cottony hairs and is blown by the wind.

## **AMERICAN ELM**

Like the chestnut, this beloved species, valued especially for its graceful fountain shape, is rapidly being decimated by disease. Young elms, like this one, keep growing and producing seeds; but full-sized trees are becoming scarce, due to the "Dutch Elm" disease, a fungus spread by a beetle. Seeds are eaten by bobwhite, grouse and squirrels. Rabbit and deer browse the twigs.

## **GREEN ASH**

The ashes and the Ashleaf Maple, or Box-elder, are the only native trees with opposite feather-compound leaves. The great strength of ashwood makes it useful for tool handles, tennis rackets, oars, and baseball bats.

## **MULTIFLORA ROSE**

This shrub is so bushy and thorny, it can make an animal-tight fence. Multiflora Rose was once planted for snow barriers, wildlife cover and soil erosion control. Now it is considered a noxious weed in Iowa. In early summer, white roses bloom, followed by red fruits. These rose hips, a rich source of Vitamin C, have some value as winter birdfeed.

## **CRAB APPLE**

When it's springtime in Iowa, thickets of these small, shrubby trees give fragrant beauty with their pink or white flowers. Crab thickets are also excellent protection for wildlife. Crab apples are red, purple, orange, or yellow and are eaten by many birds and mammals. Preserves, jellies, and vinegar can be made from the apples.

## **BENCH**

Sit in the shade and rest awhile. If you are quiet, you can watch and listen to the many birds that use the area as a nesting and feeding site. The bobwhite quail are common here. Early in the mornings, anywhere in the park, you can hear the quail's all-familiar call, "BOB-BOB-WHITE."

To this distinct **call** of the quail goes the honor of the park's name. The park is also the home of many animals, including white-tailed deer.

This area of the park has never been plowed. It was once used as a pasture and was kept mowed and grazed down until becoming a park in 1948. Since then a few trees and shrubs have been planted, but mostly it has grown wild.

#### 1. **AUTUMN OLIVE**

This large, spreading shrub with green-gray foliage blooms in May-June with small, yellowish, fragrant flowers producing an abundance of red fruits. From the Orient, Autumn Olive is the only non-native plant in this trail guide and has been widely introduced because of its excellent food and cover for many birds and mammals.

#### 2. **QUEEN ANNE'S LACE**

One of our commonest and most abundant wild flowers, Queen Anne's Lace is a wild version of the carrot. Both belong to the parsley family which also gives us celery, parsnips, dill, caraway, and anise. Avoid experimental taste tests, however, since this same family provides the deadly hemlock poison that Socrates drank. Old stories invite us to look for the little drop of blood in the middle of the lace where England's Queen Anne is said to have pricked her finger.

#### 3. **SHINY SUMAC**

This shiny-leaved sumac forms shrublike thickets from root sprouts and is a familiar sight in moist, sunny, open locations such as roadsides and fence rows. The milky, gummy juice, rich in tannic acid, is used in the tanning of fine leather. Early settlers injected the juice into tooth cavities to ease pain. Pioneers travelling by wagon train and many Indian tribes also made a sumac bark tea to coagulate blood and to treat burns and various skin diseases.

#### 4. **RED MULBERRY**

The only native mulberry in Iowa, its leaves are sandpapery above and hairy beneath. After flowering in April-June, delicious reddish-black fruit comes on in June-July, providing food for squirrels, song and game birds, and humans. The purple-staining "fruit" is actually a cluster of fruits, each with its own seed. Mulberries are combined with other fruits in the making of jams and jellies. An old-fashioned specialty in this area is mulberry-rhubarb pie.

## **CATALPA**

This fast growing tree was once widely planted in woodlots for fence posts and fuel. Catalpa wood made a fast, but not a hot fire, and thus had a real function for the homemaker who cooked on a wood stove. The rapid growth of this tree is often counteracted by insect, storm, and frost damage. Late in the spring, after the leaves of most trees are well along, the Catalpa opens its large, heart-shaped leaves, soon after followed by pyramids of white flowers. The fruits are on the grand scale also 10-20 inch-long pods containing many tufted seeds. "Catawba worms" are common on the tree and make good fish bait.

## **POISON-IVY**

**DANGER: DO NOT TOUCH THIS PLANT!** Poison-ivy grows as an erect shrub, trailing vine, or climber. **ALL** parts of the plant contain a heavy nonvolatile oil that causes skin inflammation, with blisters and swelling. Even the smoke from burning Poison-ivy can blister the lungs. Heed the old saying, "Leaflets three, let it be." Despite poisonous effects of the plant on humans, clusters of the small, white, ball-shaped fruits are relished by over 60 species of birds, including bobwhite and pheasant. Many seeds pass through their digestive systems, thus aiding the distribution of Poison-ivy

## **BLACKBERRY**

The Blackberry, an arching shrub with stout prickles and juicy berries, gives valuable cover and food to wildlife. Over 150 kinds of birds and mammals have been recorded as blackberry-eaters, yet this good food grows even on barren soils, reproducing both by seeds and by rooting branches. New canes (stems) are produced each year. Each cane lives a year and a half or so, flowering white and fruiting in its second season. The roots live on from year to year. Because of high pectin content, blackberry juice or tea made from roots or bark has from early times been a reliable diarrhea medicine.

## **ROUGHLEAF DOGWOOD**

This is **not** the ornamental Flowering Dogwood, although its bright red fruiting stems and bunches of white berries make it very attractive in the winter. Its leaves, rasping to the touch, are red to bronze in the autumn; its small flowers are white to yellow and bloom April-June. Songbirds, pheasant and bobwhite eat the berries; deer and rabbits eat the twigs.

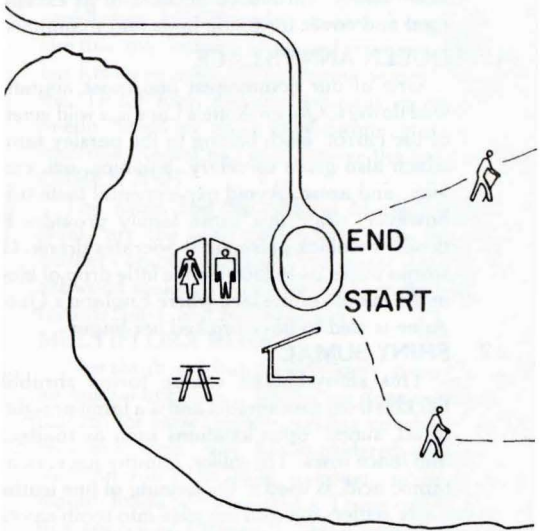
## 9. WILD PLUM

These small, 15 foot trees form thickets by spreading root suckers. Notice the miniature trails that run through this thicket, evidence of safe cover. Wild plums are purple or red-yellow, and wild plum jelly is the color of an exquisite jewel. Growing in fence rows, borders of woodlands, and waste places, Wild Plum trees should be preserved because of their white beauty when flowering, their attraction for birds, and their purplish-red coloring in winter.

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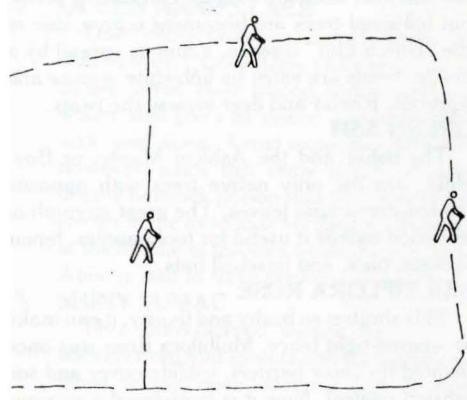
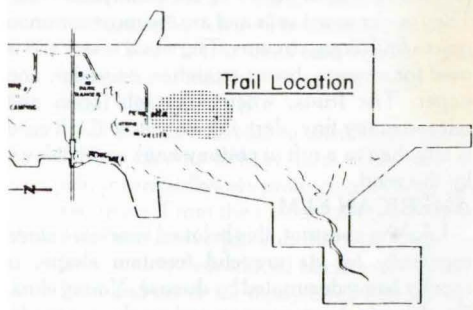


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