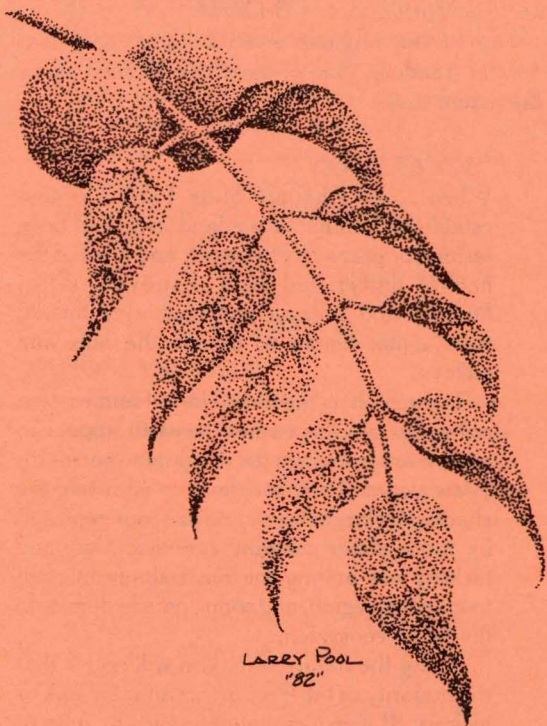


SEVEN BRIDGES INTERPRETIVE TRAIL



LARRY POOL
"82"

LAKE AHQUABI STATE PARK
R.R. #1
Indianola, Iowa 50125
Phone 515/961-7101



CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

During the mid 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corp., (C.C.C.) built this section of the park trail systems. Trail surfacing was done by young C.C.C. members carrying gravel in backpacks. Each backpack had a drawstring which, when pulled, released a load of rock on the trail.

Originally, the trail system had seven foot bridges in this area of the park. According to longtime residents, park visitors referred to the trail as "*The Trail of Seven Bridges.*"

Out of the original seven bridges, only two remain standing. One of these can be seen along the nature trail.

1. **"SUCCESSION"**

When Lake Ahquabi State Park was first established, much of the land area had been farmed or grazed by livestock and most of the natural timber had been destroyed. When farming and grazing practices were halted, trees again began to invade the hills and valleys.

Trees such as the honey locust and eastern red cedar are the earliest trees to appear in vacant areas and are the dominant species for a few years. Their seedlings cannot tolerate shading by larger trees, and are soon replaced by more shade tolerant varieties. Oak and hickory are among the most shade tolerant trees in this region, and soon come to dominate the forest ecosystem.

Along the nature trail, you will notice that the majority of the trees in this area are oak or hickory. Barring any interference by man or his domestic livestock, this area will remain an oak-hickory forest for generations to come.

2. **SHAGBARK HICKORY**

These are easy to identify because mature trees have a distinctive shaggy bark. The trees bear nuts which are edible. The wood is used for smoking meats, outdoor cooking, tool handles, and many other articles requiring a tough, light wood.

3. **BLACK CHERRY**

Small white flowers developing into tart black fruit make the black cherry tree one of the favorite trees of the forest songbirds. The tree grows from one to three feet in diameter, and from fifty to sixty feet tall. Cherry wood is used in making furniture and cabinetwork.

4. WHITE OAK

This oak is probably the most common oak in the forest. The bark is scaly and light gray in color. Leaves are lobed (rounded projections) and nuts take one year to mature. In open spaces, the crown of the tree grows broad and symmetrical, and looks majestic. It is one of the most widely used lumber trees. The wood is used for making barrels, boats, furniture, numerous other items. Indians and early settlers once used the acorns for food.

5. BLACK OAK

This oak is one of the more common oaks in the forest. It can be identified by its yellow inner bark. The black is a member of the red oak family, and reaches heights of up to 150 feet. Red oaks have pointed projections on their leaves and nuts that take two years to mature. When trees reach maturity, their height will be between sixty and ninety feet.

6. VIRGINIA CREEPER

Virginia Creeper has five leaflets and grows as a shrub or climbing vine. The tree climbing vine is often mistaken for poison ivy which has three leaflets. It has small, greenish flower clusters that bloom from June to August. As fall progresses, the leaves turn a brilliant red. The dark blue fruit ripens between August and October and is consumed by many types of birds and animals.

7. POISON IVY

Caution! This plant contains an oil that causes an irritation (blisters and swelling) on most people's skin. Poison Ivy is identified by its three leaflets. It grows either as an upright shrub or a climbing vine.

Although it is a threat to man, birds such as the bobwhite quail, pheasant, and sixty other species find them to their liking. The seeds are passed through the birds' digestive tracts undamaged, which aids in distribution of the seed.

According to folklore, Indians used the plant to open up skin sores.

8. WHISPERING FOREST

The so called "*Silent Forest*" is really quite noisy and active. The rustling of leaves may indicate a scurrying chipmunk. A glimpse of movement out of the corner of an eye might

reveal a fleeting white-tailed deer. The aroma of mint or cedar trees fills the air. All the senses are required to gain a total appreciation of forest life.

9. CORALBERRY

Local residents refer to this shrub as buck brush. The dark red, berry-like fruits appear in September and persist throughout the winter months. Songbirds, bobwhite quail, pheasants, and wild turkeys eat the fruit. It is sometimes used as an ornamental shrub. However, it is hard to keep the plant under control.

10. AMERICAN BASSWOOD

Sometimes called a linden, these trees with heart-shaped leaves make excellent shade trees and are sometimes planted along streets. Flowers of the basswood yield an excellent nectar for making honey. The wood is used in making woodenware, cabinetwork, and toys.

11. BITTER NUT

Sometimes this tree is dubbed "*swamp hickory*" because it prefers wet soil. A high percentage of nuts are left to develop into trees since animals and people dislike the nuts' bitter taste. The tree can be identified by its yellow buds.

12. EASTERN HOPHORNBEAM

This tree is more commonly called "Ironwood." The wood is very tough and is used to make tool handles and mallets. It receives its name (Hop Hornbeam) because of the hop-like fruits it bears. It is an understory tree and only grows to a height of twenty to thirty feet. Leaves are retained throughout the winter and do not fall until shortly before new leaves appear.

13. HACKBERRY

Hackberry is a very hardy member of the elm family. For example, it is capable of withstanding drought periods and is not susceptible to Dutch elm disease. The bark has a warty appearance and the small seeds it bears are eaten by many species of birds. It is primarily used as a shade tree, but in some instances, it has been used in making furniture and fence posts.

14. NORTHERN RED OAK

The red oak is highly regarded as a lumber

tree because of its attractive reddish-brown wood. It is also very popular as a shade tree, since it is one of the largest oaks, growing to a height of one hundred and twenty-five feet. Red oak is very common and can be found throughout Iowa. Indians used acorns from the red oak and many other oaks to make flour, which was a major food staple.

16. BLACK WALNUT

Walnut is considered one of the most valuable trees in the forest. The tree grows to a height of eighty to one hundred feet. The wood is used for veneer, paneling, gunstocks, furniture, cabinets, and decorative pieces. The husks encasing the nuts were used by pioneers to make a brown dye. The kernels inside the nuts are very tasty, creating a big demand for walnut fruits. Even the hulls of the nuts are ground up and used for blasting purposes, much like sand is used in sandblasting.

17. HONEYSUCKLE

In the wild, this shrub grows in openings in wooded areas. It is now heavily domesticated, being used for ornamental purposes as well as for windbreaks and wildlife habitat. Its fragrant flower produces a red berry that is very popular with woodland inhabitants.

18. RASPBERRY

There are several varieties of wild raspberries, which can easily be identified by the prickly stems and the fruit it bears. Raspberries are a prime food source of wildlife during the summer months. Rabbits, skunks, opossum, fox, deer, and many species of birds eat the twigs and fruit. Besides being a good food source and wildlife habitat, the raspberry has a root system which helps prevent soil erosion.

19. GOOSEBERRY

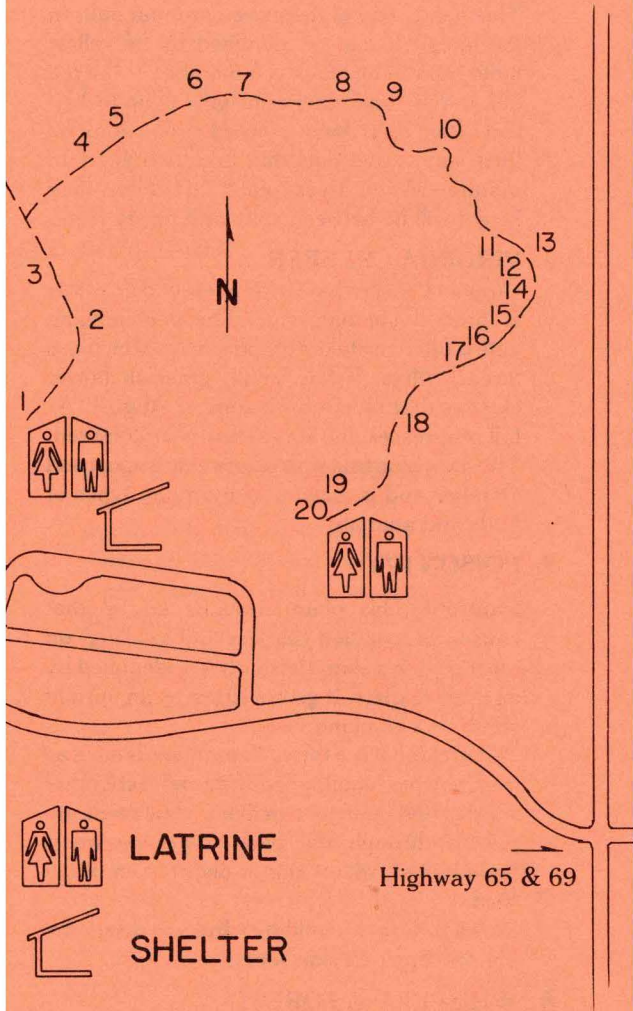
Jam, jellies, and gooseberry pie are some of the delicacies that people make from these berries. The plants have thorns at the base of the leaflets and bear a small round fruit. Wildlife feast upon the fruit. Twigs and bark are consumed by white tailed deer.

20. WILDFLOWERS

The forest carpet displays an array of small woodland members that can easily be missed by the casual observer. Climatic conditions, soil, and the amount of light determine when

wildflowers bloom. During the year, each seasonal change causes various wildflowers to bloom, some lasting only a few days.

There are numerous flowers to be found throughout the forest and surrounding area. Wildflowers are becoming endangered because of their delicacy and need for specific environmental conditions.



Length - 1/4 mile

Note: 30 minute walk