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**12. FOOD PLOTS**

Just down the short trail on your right, you will find a small field of cultivated farm crops such as corn, milo or alfalfa. Crops provide an important supplement to the wild food we have seen along this trail. Both unharvested and waste grains in these food plots are used by birds and mammals alike during the winter months when other sources of wild food may be covered by snow or missing from the forest.

**13. ROUGHLEAF DOGWOOD**

Low growing woody trees such as this rough leaf dogwood seem to provide preferred nesting sites for some bird species such as the American robin. Green branches of this plant grow low enough to provide an important food source for deer.



**14. EASTERN REDCEDAR**

The small cedar trees are the only plants along this trail which retain their green foliage throughout the year. Cedars are favored nesting and perching sites for many species of birds including mourning doves and robins.

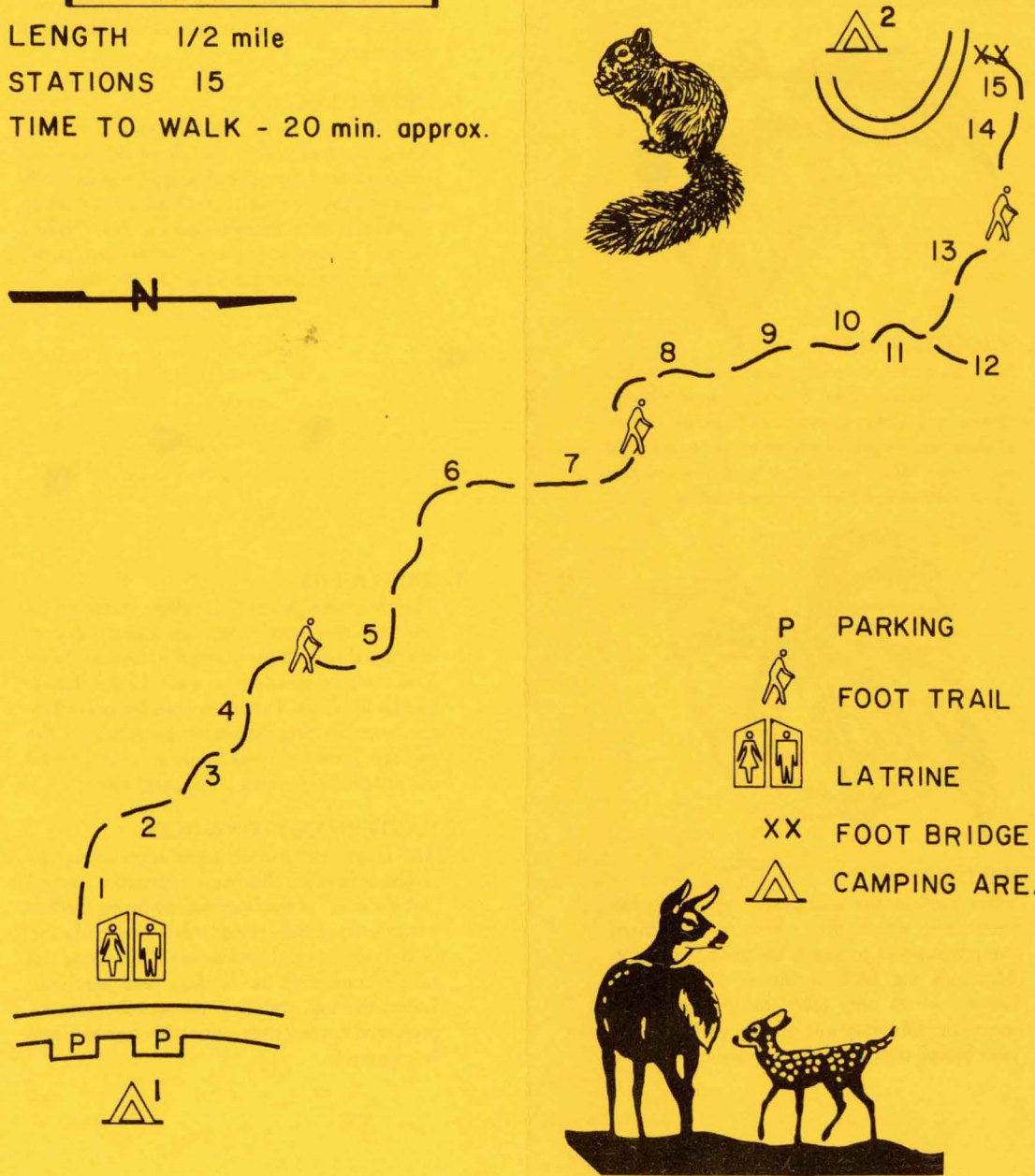
**15. POISON IVY**

Poison ivy with its characteristic three leaflets is the most abundant ground cover plant along this trail. Although it may be used as food by some animals, you should make every effort to avoid this plant which can produce a severe skin rash when touched by people.

Along this trail, we have observed just a few of the many plants and animals which make up the forest community. Like a human community with its many complex ties and relationships, the forest community is held together by a web of dependent relationships between plants and animals. By using our senses of sight, touch, sound, smell and taste, we can gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the Missouri River bottomland forest community.

**INTERPRETIVE TRAIL**

LENGTH 1/2 mile  
STATIONS 15  
TIME TO WALK - 20 min. approx.



**WILSON ISLAND INTERPRETIVE TRAIL**



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**PARK RANGER'S ADDRESS**  
Wilson Island  
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Wilson Island State Recreation Area lies entirely within the Missouri River bottomlands. The wide Missouri River floodplain has a well-deserved reputation as one of the most fertile agricultural areas in the world, but the river bottoms also support a varied and abundant community of wild plants and animals. The wildlife along this trail is so well adapted to the forest environment that it is often difficult to observe. Trees, shrubs and ground level plants provide virtually all the requirements wild animals need for food, shelter and escape cover.

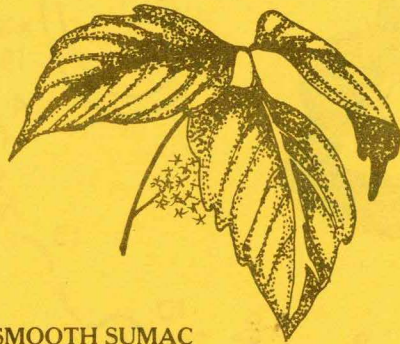
As you walk along this trail, you may observe the forest inhabitants not only by actually seeing them but by using your other senses as well. Perhaps you will be able to use each of your five senses to detect different types of wildlife. Consider the following examples: SEEING the raised white tail of a deer when it bounds away as you approach, HEARING a woodpecker drilling a hole far off in the woods, SMELLING a striped skunk which crossed this path recently, TOUCHING a tree frog clinging to the bark of a cottonwood tree, TASTING a wild mulberry which has ripened in the spring sunlight and which may be used as food by many of the more than 200 species of birds observed at Wilson Island State Park.



Try counting the number of senses you can put to use "observing" different types of wildlife. As you walk this half-mile nature trail, numbered markers will indicate a few of the many plants to be found in the park and the variety of wildlife which the forest environment supports. Many species of wildlife depend on the relatively undisturbed surroundings found along this trail. Please help us preserve this delicate natural balance by removing nothing from and adding nothing to the forest as you find it.

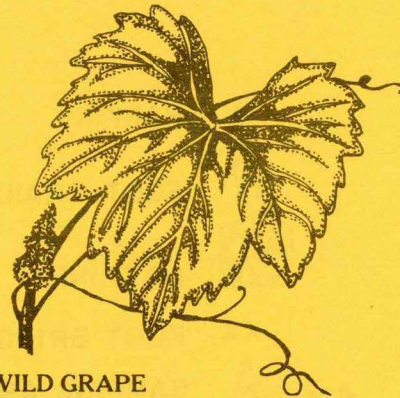
### 1. POISON IVY

"Leaflets three; let it be," may be a prudent statement when man encounters this common vine. Poison ivy also grows as a low shrub which you will see growing nearly everywhere along this trail. Although poison ivy is well known because of the severe skin rash it causes in man, it is actually eaten by many birds without serious side effects.



### 2. SMOOTH SUMAC

Smooth Sumac is a harmless relative of poison ivy. Sumac often "invades" newly abandoned farm fields or pastures in dense stands of short woody plants whose leaves turn bright red in the fall. The foliage and fruits of this plant are browsed by deer and turkey.



### 3. WILD GRAPE

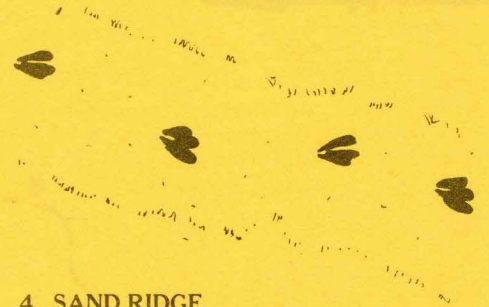
Vines such as the wild grape depend on the trees upon which they climb to lend them enough support to reach life giving sunlight. Although the fruit of the wild grape will become sweet only after the first fall frost, some animals may eat grapes earlier in the year before they are fully ripened.

### 5. LICHEN

On this tree trunk, fungi and algae have formed layers of living matter called lichens where there is sufficient moisture. Fungi provide the support base and algae provide the necessary energy for growth by converting sunlight to food in this unique relationship. Lichens, in turn, break down rocks and other substances on which they grow to form soil which is the basis for all life in the forest community.

### 6. DEER TRAIL

You may not have actually seen any deer along the trail today, but there is abundant evidence that deer use this area regularly. A deer trail crosses the nature trail in front of this marker. There should also be deer "rubs" (where bucks rub their antlers on small saplings) and deer tracks along the trail.



### 4. SAND RIDGE

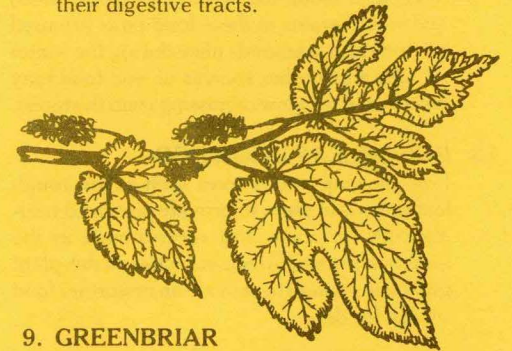
The Missouri River has often changed its course in this vicinity, depositing and redepositing sand and silt each time the channel shifts. You are now standing on a sand ridge deposited by the river. The fertile soils left behind by the ever shifting Missouri give rise to the rapidly growing trees, shrubs and ground cover species growing all around you.

### 7. EASTERN COTTONWOOD

The large cottonwood trees seen along the entire length of this trail support a virtual "who's who" of the bottomland forest wildlife community. Each spring, a procession of song birds migrate up the Missouri River using the tall cottonwoods for feeding and perching. Later, the tall, stately cottonwoods serve as preferred nesting sites for northern orioles and fox squirrels.

### 8. RED MULBERRY

If you stand by this tree after its small delicious berries have ripened in the late summer, you may be amazed at the number of birds which stop to sample its tasty fruits. Birds and mulberry trees actually have a mutually beneficial relationship which both parties are not conscious of. The birds benefit from the fruit they eat and the mulberries benefit because the birds dispense the seed as it passes through their digestive tracts.



### 9. GREENBRIAR

Where dense thickets of greenbriars are found, both man and animals will have to detour to avoid the tangled, prickly stems or else suffer the consequences! Plants with spines or thorns effectively protect themselves from being eaten by most of the larger animals.



### 10. WHITE ASH

This tree is highly thought of as a producer of high quality lumber and wood products. See if you can discover through your observations how this tree is used by different types of wildlife.

### 11. GOOSEBERRY

The berries of this plant are eaten by many species of wildlife when they ripen in the late summer. The sharp thorns on the gooseberry bush prevent the plant from being over-browsed by deer or other species which might otherwise destroy the plant.