

# DEAD MAN'S LAKE

## SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

### TRAIL GUIDE AND MAP



FLOATING BOG IN DEAD MAN'S LAKE

IOWA CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
PILOT KNOB STATE PARK AND PRESERVE  
RR #1, BOX 205  
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## DEAD MAN'S LAKE

Sioux, Fox, Chippewa, Sac and Winnebago Indians once roamed these hills. They left many mementoes of their past, including a name: "Lake of the Dead Man."

An early homesteader came upon the small lake, discovering a lone Indian who permanently resided there. Patiently communicating by signs scratched on a sandy portion of the shoreline, the old Indian revealed some of the history of the lake and his tribe.

His failure to become head Shaman (medicine man) led him to quit mingling with his fellow tribesmen. Before they left, they gave a name to the small lake that would be home for their defeated tribesman, "Lake of the Dead Man."

The old Indian spent the rest of his solitary life living in a crude log hut that was standing near the lake when his tribe moved in.

The lake and surrounding area was undoubtedly much the same then as it is today. Careful preservation by man has kept this unique area unchanged for all to enjoy.

As you begin your walk, try to imagine the setting as it was when the Indians lived off this land.

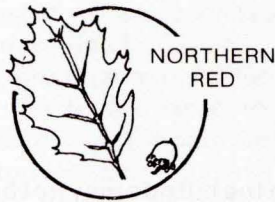


AN OLD PIONEER LOG CABIN IN THE PARK

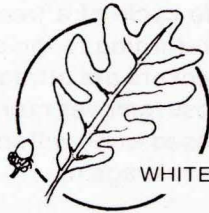
## 1 NORTHERN RED OAK

This is one of the four types of oaks found in this area. Red oak and pin oak are characterized by the pointed lobes of their leaves, where white oak and burr oak have rounded lobes. These oak trees all bear acorns which are usually too bitter to be eaten raw but are a main food source for wild turkey, squirrels, wood ducks and other wildlife. The white oak acorn has the mildest taste. Even squirrels prefer white oak acorns to red oak.

The trees you see on your walk may all look alike in the beginning. Try and distinguish different species by looking at their leaves, bark, size and shape.



NORTHERN  
RED

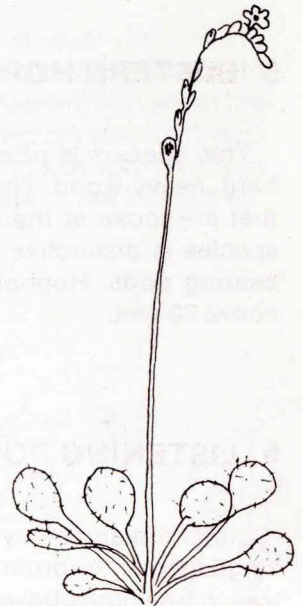


WHITE

## 2 BOG VIEW

This floating bog is the only one of its kind in Iowa. It is made up of a peaty-moss substance which is held together by the dense, entangled root system which supports the plants above. The floating bog covers about three acres of the lakes' acidic water, which is approximately five feet deep. These unique features combine to harbor a very rare specimen to Iowa, the round-leaved sundew. The sundew is a small carnivorous (flesh eating) plant that attracts, catches and eats small insects. The plant has small round leaves that appear to have a pink fringe around them covered with droplets of clear sticky gelatin that glisten in the sunlight. Enticed insects alight, become entrapped in the artificial dew and after they die the remains are digested by the plant.

The bog is so sensitive to disturbance that people are only allowed on it by special permit, principally for scientific study.



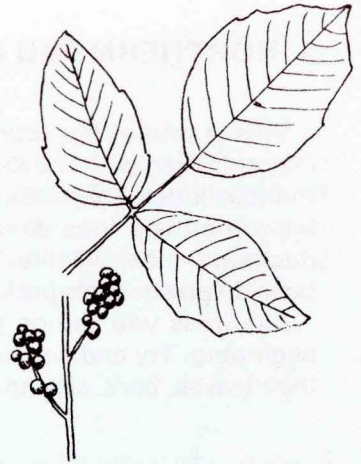
ROUND-LEAVED SUNDEW

### 3 POISON IVY

These small erect shrubs behind the post are easily recognized by their three, saw-toothed leaves. The larger plants display small white berries.

#### **DO NOT TOUCH!**

Contact with any part of these plants can result in severe dermatitis. Washing with soap and water or jewelweed juice within a few hours often prevents rashes. See if you can spot this plant again as you walk along the trail.

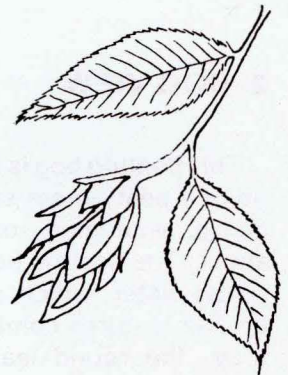


### 4 DECAYING LOGS

The fallen trees that lie on the hillside may not be appealing to the eye, though they do play an important role in the life cycle of a tree. These trees have died from disease, lightning, or wind and are now returning to the soil. Insects invade the dead wood and begin to soften it. Soon woodpeckers are attracted by the insects and the breakdown process is evident. The green moss removes nutrients and holds moisture which speeds up decomposition. The decomposed wood will soon provide a rich humus in which a new tree can take root and start the cycle again.

### 5 EASTERN HOPHORNBEAM

This species is often called "ironwood" because of its very hard, heavy wood. The bark is broken into many narrow scales that are loose at the ends, giving a shaggy appearance. This species is distinctive for having clusters of bladder-like, seed bearing pods. Hophornbeams are small trees, rarely growing above 30 feet.

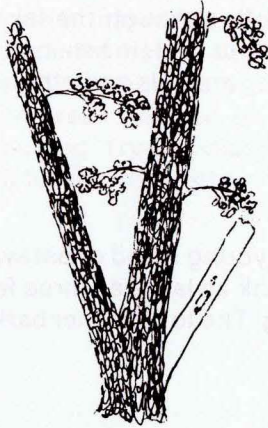


### 6 LISTENING POST

Stop here and enjoy the sounds of the forest. Can you hear the loud rattling call of a kingfisher, or the drum of a nearby woodpecker? Do you see a gray squirrel jumping from tree to tree high above? Close your eyes and let your nose detect the damp forest floor and decaying vegetation. Use all your senses to discover and appreciate.

## 7 BLACK CHERRY

This species produces a white flower in the spring, which in late summer turns to a small, dark purple cherry. A mature black cherry will show dark, heavy scales of bark and stand as high as 60 feet. Cherries are a main food source for birds, and were once used by the Indians, probably as jams and jellies. Though this fruit is edible, a word of caution, as always, when exploring the outdoors. The fresh seeds contain cyanide and should not be eaten.



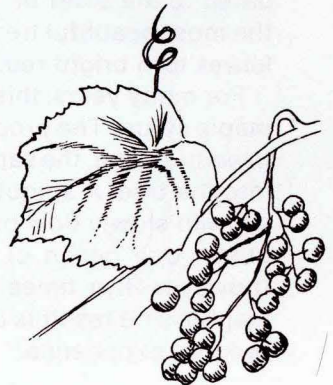
Notice the multiple trunks coming from the base of this tree. A forester might conclude that the tree was harvested years ago for its satin, reddish-brown wood, prized for fine furniture. A tree cut off at the base will often produce many shoots or suckers which grow well due to the large root system below. Usually several of these shoots survive the growth period and develop into a tree such as this.

## 8 EASTERN COTTONWOOD

Cottonwood is a model example of the distribution of species. Each seed is attached to a tuft of cottony hair which enables these seeds to travel for miles through the wind in hopes of finding seed growing conditions. This is nature's way of ensuring survival of the species. The cottonwood is Iowa's largest tree, growing up to 100 feet tall with a trunk as large as four feet in diameter. The leaves are roughly triangular, with a deeply furrowed gray bark. The upper branches resemble the smooth, yellowish bark of the aspen tree.

## 9 WILD GRAPE

The vines you see growing over the underbrush are wild grape plants. The fruit of the wild grape is an important food source for birds and small animals, and also makes excellent jelly and grape juice. In thickets such as these, wild grapes will often overgrow small trees to attain more sunlight, thus overshadowing and killing the tree.



## 10 LAKE VIEW

As you can see on your trail map, Dead Man's Lake is shaped slightly like a figure eight. The lake covers about six acres, one loop being open water and the other containing the floating bog. Dead Man's Lake is elevated high above other natural lakes with unusually abrupt banks which leave no outlets for the water to run off, although the lake still maintains a very constant water level. The water is too acidic to sustain fish, but other animals use the lake including tadpoles, waterfowl, furbearing animals and others.

## 11 AMERICAN BASSWOOD

Note the large leaves and smooth bark on the trees in this young stand of basswood. These trees may eventually grow up to 80 feet tall with a trunk as large as three feet in diameter. The wood is unique as it is light but also very strong. The tough inner bark was used by the Indians to make cordage or rope.

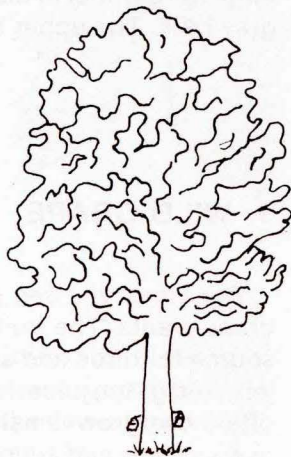
## 12 GAME TRAIL

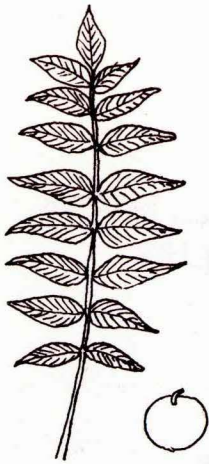
Note the small, well established animal trail in front of you. This is a water access for many animals. It is probably used mostly by furbearers, such as raccoon and mink. These animals search the waters edge at night in hopes of finding small mammals and reptiles. Can you find any tracks on the trail?

## 13 SUGAR MAPLE

About 20 feet behind the sign are several large, broad trees. These are sugar maples, also called "hard maples" as compared to the silver or "soft maple." The sugar maple is one of the most beautiful trees in Iowa, especially in the fall when its leaves turn bright red.

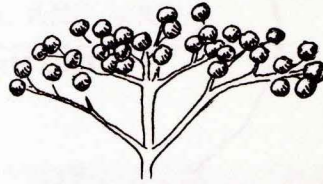
For many years, this species has been used to make natural maple syrup. The process is quite simple but time consuming. In early spring, the sap may be obtained by boring a small hole into the tree. A spigot can then be inserted into the hole and sap will slowly flow out. It will take 30 to 40 gallons of sap to obtain one gallon of syrup through a slow boiling process (however, five times that is needed when tapping a silver maple). The result is delicious maple syrup and an enjoyable outdoor experience.





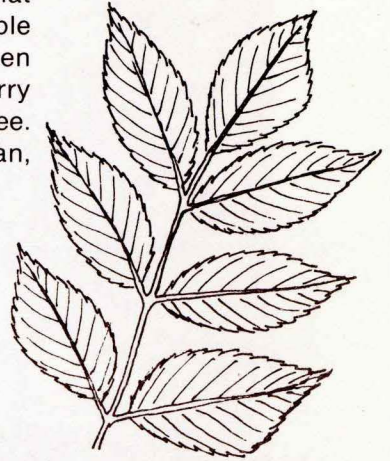
## 14 BLACK WALNUT

The leaves of a walnut are 12 to 24 inches long and have 15 to 23 leaflets on each leaf. This resourceful species is a great asset to man and wildlife alike. Often used as veneer, this dark-grained wood demands a high price on the lumber market. In late fall, the walnuts drop to the ground for all to harvest. As you may know, the husk of a walnut contains a very dark stain. This is often used by trappers to stain steel traps for camouflage. Trappers boil the traps and husks together.



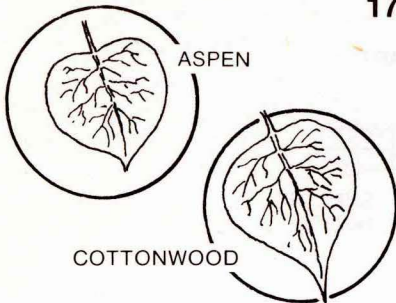
## 15 AMERICAN ELDERBERRY

A common shrub of this area is characterized by its flat topped clusters of white flowers, followed by juicy purple berries in the fall. Birds enjoy elderberries, as do humans when prepared as jelly or a cold drink. A branch from the elderberry serves well as a spigot for draining sap from the maple tree. Pushing out the soft pith of the branch leaves you with a clean, hollow pipe for sap extraction.



## 16 PRICKLY ASH

At first glance, this spiny patch of underbrush may seem of little value to nature or man. However, this species serves well as a natural barrier, as it is nearly impossible to pass through. Prickly ash was also used long ago as a cure for toothaches. The small red buds create a numbing affect similar to novocaine when placed in the mouth.



## 17 QUAKING ASPEN

This species is easily recognized by its smooth, yellowish white bark. The leaves turn golden yellow in the fall similar to cottonwood, although they are smaller and more rounded. The leaves are attached by long, slender, flattened stems which allow them to flutter in the slightest breeze, hence the name: "quaking aspen."

# TRAIL MAP

