

17
C755
7:V915t
1981

SEP 1 1982

VOLGA RIVER STATE RECREATION AREA

NATURE TRAIL GUIDE AND MAP



EASTERN GOLDFINCH AND MULLEIN

STATE LIBRARY OF IOWA
17 C755 7:V915t sdoc
/Volga River State Recreation Area : nat

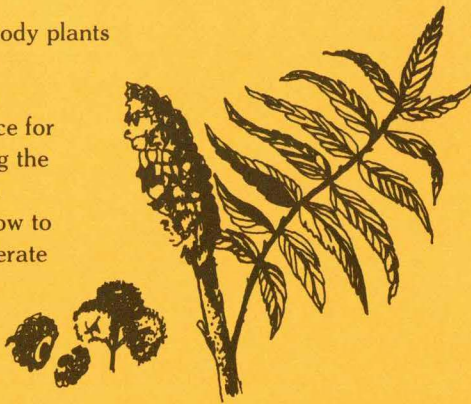
3 1723 00025 4151

IOWA CONSERVATION COMMISSION
VOLGA RIVER RECREATION AREA
RR #1
FAYETTE, IOWA 52142

STATE LIBRARY OF IOWA
Historical Building
DES MOINES, IOWA 50319

1 STAGHORN SUMAC

Sumac is one of the first woody plants to invade old fields and fence lines. Its reddish-brown fruit is very important as a food source for many birds and animals during the winter. It is usually found as a shrub or small tree but can grow to 35 feet tall. Sumac cannot tolerate much shade and you will notice how it leans toward the open area to gather more sunlight.



2 EASTERN COTTONWOOD

This tree is very common in moist soils and grows rapidly. It may attain a height of 75 to 100 feet and be three to four feet in diameter. It produces a soft wood used for pallets, boxes, matches and paper. Seeds are attached



to tufts of fluffy hairs which helps them scatter in the wind. The seeds may drift against fences and logs and resemble a layer of cotton on the ground, hence the name "Cottonwood".

3 GOOSEBERRY

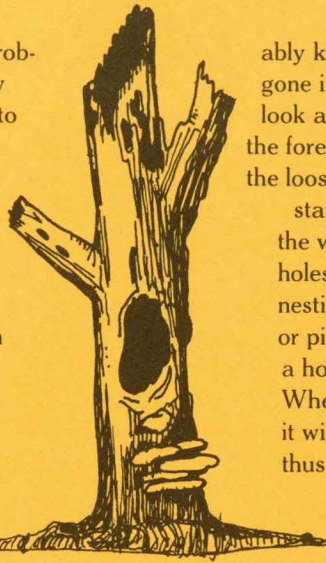
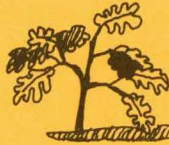
This prickly shrub is a member of the saxifrage family of plants and is closely related to the rose family. It produces a small, sour berry used in making preserves and pies. It is found throughout northern Iowa and thrives on poor soil.

4 DECAYING LOGS

On the ground near you are some trees that have died, fallen, and started to return to the soil. Beetles, termites and grubs invade the wood and help to soften it so it may decay faster. Also, the green moss removes nutrients and holds moisture which speeds decomposition. Once the wood is completely rotted, it will provide a rich humus in which a new tree can take root and start the cycle again.

5 DEAD ELMS

These Elms were probably killed by Dutch elm disease and will be completely gone in a few years. Although they are not pretty to look at, they are an important part of the cycle of life. Fungi grow on them and boring beetles, ants and woodpeckers start holes in them. Woodpeckers start holes in them for insects. These holes are enlarged by other birds and create nesting cavities for squirrels and owls. A raccoon may make holes in them. When the tree becomes too rotten and decays



ably killed by Dutch elm disease. When you look at them, they are an important part of the forest and serve a good purpose. The loose bark and carpenter ants start the decomposition. The woodpeckers search for nesting cavities for themselves or pileated woodpecker. When the tree becomes too rotten it will fall to the ground, thus enriching the soil.

6 WILD ROSE

The wild rose is only one member of a family containing a number of roses found throughout Iowa. It is the state flower. Wild roses are commonly found in thickets and road-ditches and prefer moist soils. Other common members of this family include strawberries, cherries, blackberries, plums, peaches and raspberries.

7 HAWTHORN

This is a very complex family of shrubs and small trees which are most abundant in eastern North America. Hawthorns are a member of the rose family, more than 3000 species of which are abundant in temperate regions. These thorny trees produce a small, apple-like fruit, sometimes called thornapples. The fruit tends to remain on the branches late into the winter and provides food for many birds and small animals, especially the ruffed grouse. The wood is hard and heavy, but is not commercially important. Watch out for the thorns of this tree because they are very sharp and can inflict a painful wound!

8 BEAVER DAMS AND CUTTINGS

The dams of sticks and mud found along this area of the creek were constructed by the beaver who have been cutting trees nearby. They construct these dams to hold back the creek water and create a pond. When the pond gets full, it will flood the low areas around it and allow the beaver to swim to the flooded trees. Beaver are slow and clumsy on land and vulnerable to predators, so they prefer to stay in the water whenever possible. The deep water created by the dam also ensures that they can get in and out of their dens when ice covers the pond. If the water level falls too low, they may become trapped in their dens and will not be able to reach their food supply which is stored near the bottom of the pond.

Beaver prefer soft wood such as aspen, cottonwood or willow, but will utilize other species of trees if needed.

9 WILD RASPBERRIES



Wild raspberries are found throughout this part of the state and were probably started many years ago by birds and small animals carrying the seeds from tame plants to wooded areas where they took root. They

prefer moist soils, but will grow almost anywhere. They are

an important wildlife food source and are also prized by many humans.

10 BLACK WILLOW



The dense thicket of small trees directly in front of the signpost is a stand of young black willow. There are more than 325 species of willows in the world, but most occur in the northern hemisphere. The black willow roots easily and usually forms dense thickets along waterways. This is the only willow important for lumber and is used for boxes, pallets, or similar purposes not requiring strength.

11 EASTERN HOPHORNBEAM

This tree species is commonly called "Ironwood" because of its very hard, heavy wood and the grey color of its trunk. Hophornbeams are usually small trees, growing only to 20 to 30 feet tall and 1 to 1.5 feet in diameter. They are found in small stands and have little or no commercial value.

12 OVERLOOK

Here on your way up the hill, you may want to stop and look out over the old beaver pond below you. You can still see the outline of the old dam and the area that was once covered with water when the beaver pond was full. You may notice how mud-covered the area looks. This is because the dam slowed the water flow of the creek and allowed the silt to drop out.

13 EASTERN RED CEDAR

These trees are probably quite old, but because of the poor soil conditions they grow very slowly. Red cedars are common in areas where the principle rock structure is limestone. Many birds and small animals use the stringy bark for nest material and also eat the small blue cones. Notice how dense the branches are on these trees. This provides shelter from severe weather for many bird species. Because of its fragrance, the wood is used to line cedar chests and closets.



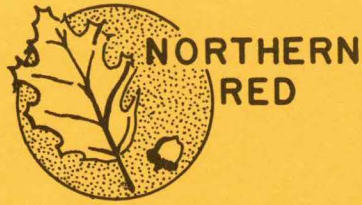
14 NORTHERN RED OAK

The red oak has pointed leaf lobes with bristles at the tips. Its leaves usually turn red in the fall. The acorns mature in two years and are bitter to the taste. This species of oak grows 50 to 70 feet tall and 1 to 3 feet in diameter. It is a popular wood in industry and is also important as firewood.

15 PRICKLY ASH

This section of the trail is bordered by many small prickly ash trees. You can easily identify them by noticing the thorns on the branches. This produces tree bark, leaves, and buds that were once used for curing toothaches. This is the origin of the common name, "Toothache Tree". This species is not a true ash and, in fact, belongs to the citrus family and is the only member of this group found in Iowa.

16 WHITE OAK



Oaks are widely distributed in North America. Many of the 60 oak species are divided into two groups: White oaks and red oaks. Most white oaks have leaves with rounded tips and do not have bristles on the ends. The acorns of the white oak mature in one year and are not bitter. They are very important as a food for wildlife, especially white-tailed deer and wild turkey. This species grows 80 to 100 feet tall and 3 to 4 feet in diameter. White oak wood is very popular and demands a high price on the lumber market.

17 LISTENING POST

Stop here and listen to the sounds of the forest. Can you hear a bluejay or a squirrel? If you close your eyes, can you hear the wind in the trees or the wood thrush as he hunts food in the dead leaves? Your nose may detect the smell of the forest floor and the decaying vegetation or the mud of the beaver pond as it dries in the sun. Use all your senses to enjoy and appreciate.

18 VALLEY VIEW

Rest here for a few minutes and enjoy the view of the valley. You can see the different tree types as you move your eyesight down the hillsides and into the marsh at the valley floor. Notice how the conifers and hardwoods give way to the aspens and softwoods as you get closer to the moist soil. You can see the shape of the valley itself as it was formed when the glaciers melted their way north.

19 QUAKING ASPEN

This stand of young aspens is only one of about 15 species native to North America. They are a member of the poplar family and prefer the poorer, moist soil types. The foliage quivers and quakes in the slightest breeze, hence its common name. The soft wood is similar to cottonwood and is used for boxes, matches and paper.

20 BOX ELDER



This tree is a member of the maple family which contains nearly 150 species. The winged seeds are usually in pairs and the leaves are opposite on the branches. It prefers moist soils and does well on poor sites. Although it is a rapid growing tree, it is usually short-lived and may never attain its maximum height of 50 to 70 feet and diameter of 2 to 4 feet. The wood is fairly soft and has little commercial value.

21 MEADOW VEGETATION

As you complete the trail route you may notice, in the open area to your right, many of the typical meadow plants. Wild carrot or queen anne's lace, milkweed, mullein, goldenrod, and bergamot are just a few that you may see. These plants live in the open and have adapted to protect themselves from the hot sun by having reduced leaf areas, a thick milky juice, and hairy or hard coverings on stems and leaves.

22 WILD GRAPE

The large vine you see climbing this small tree is a wild grape plant. It is an important source of food for birds and small animals but may grow too large and shade out the tree it uses for support, thus killing it.



23 AMERICAN ELM

The elm was once the dominant tree species of the bottom lands, but has been greatly thinned out by Dutch elm disease, caused by a fungus which is spread by a burrowing beetle. The fungus rubs off the insect as it burrows into the wood. It then grows rapidly under the bark, blocking the flow of liquid between the leaves and roots which starves the tree until it dies.



TRAIL MAP

