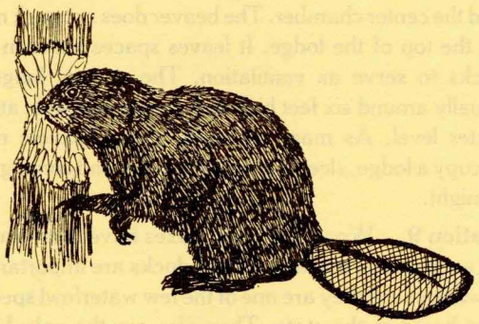
Station 10. Here is a red cedar, the ony native evergreen in this area. The leaves or needles are small and overlapping and the fruit is a pea-sized blue berry. The bark is reddish-brown and shreddy. This evergreen is a source of shingles, pencils and fenceposts. It is also called juniper and there are many ornamental varieties.

Station 11. You can observe the blending in of lake and marsh communities. Both communities contain their own types of plant and animal species. There is an area between which contains some of both.

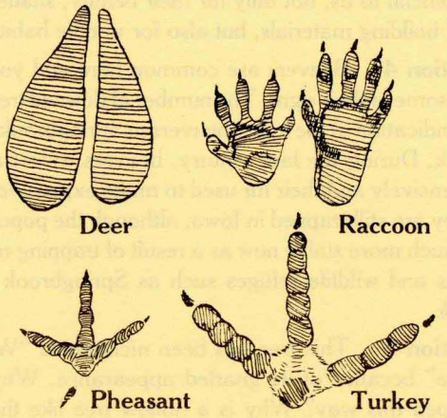
A marsh is an extremely productive area. The plant and animal matter that is produced yearly is over four times that produced in a cornfield of equal size. Plants grow in three layers: those that float on the surface, those that are rooted in the bottom and emerge from the water, and underwater vegetation that is rooted in the bottom and does not emerge.

Station 12. At least two beaver dams can be seen here. Since they have been established here for a long time, they are covered over with grasses and weeds. Beavers construct dams to create favorable environments for themselves. The dam will deepen the water for safe cover, storage of food and freedom from a completely frozen ice condition. About six feet of water is usually sufficient for the beaver. Beavers make their dams by piling sticks across the channel and shoving mud into them from above. They keep the process going until there is a huge ridge of sticks with an upper sloping surface of mud.



Station 13. Several trees in this area died when the area was flooded. These "snags" are very valuable to wildlife. They are used for food and nesting sites by woodpeckers, wrens, flying squirrels, wood ducks and raccoons. Woodpeckers are very abundant in Springbrook and it's not too hard to guess why.

Station 14. This is a good spot to find animal tracks. If you do find tracks, see how many you can identify. Some of the animals found here are deer, raccoon, pheasant and turkey. Here are some sketches to aid you in identifying the tracks.

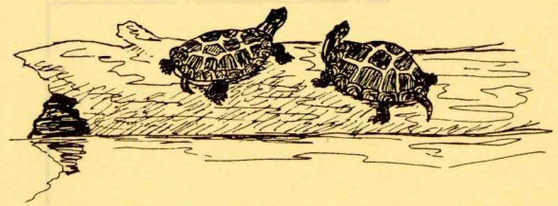


Station 15. Muskrats are found in Springbrook State Park. Look for their cone-shaped lodges out in the lake. The muskrat is active all hours and helps keep waterways clear of water plants. Sometimes they can become a nuisance by burrowing into levees, dams and elsewhere. The muskrat builds its lodge up to five feet in diameter at the base, rising as much as three feet above the water. Cattails, bulrushes and mud are used in lodge construction. Muskrats will also dig bank dens.

Station 16. Springbrook is located in the Middle Raccoon River Valley which once flooded due to meltwater of the last glacial period over 10,000 years ago. Sandstone is the most common exposed rock in this area. The sand and gravel-size sediments found in the flooded valley bottom were compacted to form the sandstone that you now see.

Station 17. This marsh habitat provides many wildlife benefits. Numerous species, such as frogs and waterbirds, depend on wetlands throughout their entire life cycle. Others depend on it for part of their lives. Marshes are fish-spawning grounds. Migrating birds use them for courting, feeding and nesting in the winter and spring. White-tailed deer and pheasants may depend on them to raise their young. Human values include their aesthetic beauty and the feeling of kinship that we sense from the wild creatures.

Station 18. When the sun is bright and the weather warm, turtles as well as people like to bask in the sun. The fallen log below is a popular sunning spot for painted turtles. You will have to move slowly and quietly to avoid scaring them. The painted turtle is the most common and widespread of turtles. They spend much of their time in the water, feeding on water plants, insects and other small animals.



Station 19. Springbrook Lake has a variety of fish. This cove is a popular fishing spot. Here, when the water is clear, the grass carp and perhaps large mouth bass, bluegills or sunfish can be seen. Grass carp were introduced into the lake to help control aquatic vegetation. They can eat four times their body weight each day.

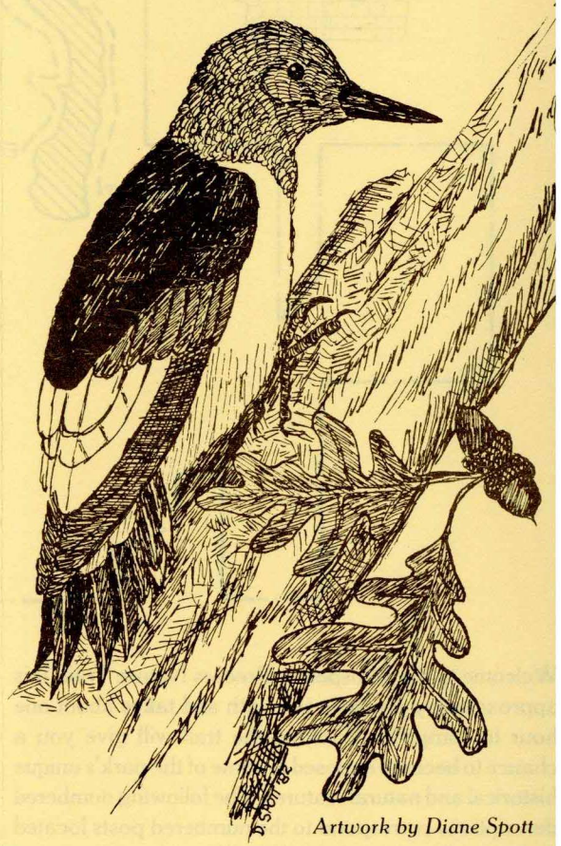
Other fish found in the lake include, white and black crappies, bullheads, channel catfish and red-ear sunfish. This lake is frequently surveyed by fisheries personnel of the Conservation Commission who reports an excellent population of bass and catfish.

Station 20. Many parks throughout the county had their buildings, trails and other structures constructed by the CCC. Springbrook has several structures built by the CCC. These include this bathhouse and concession building, the group camp where they lived during their work here, ranger's house, shop, shower buildings, stone toilets, fireplaces and the picnic area shelter. Also, many stone walkways and foot bridges were put in by these men.

You have reached the end of your hike. We hope you have enjoyed the trail and have learned a little more about nature and our park. Please plan to visit the trail again. You may wish to return in other seasons and see the many changes that have taken place.

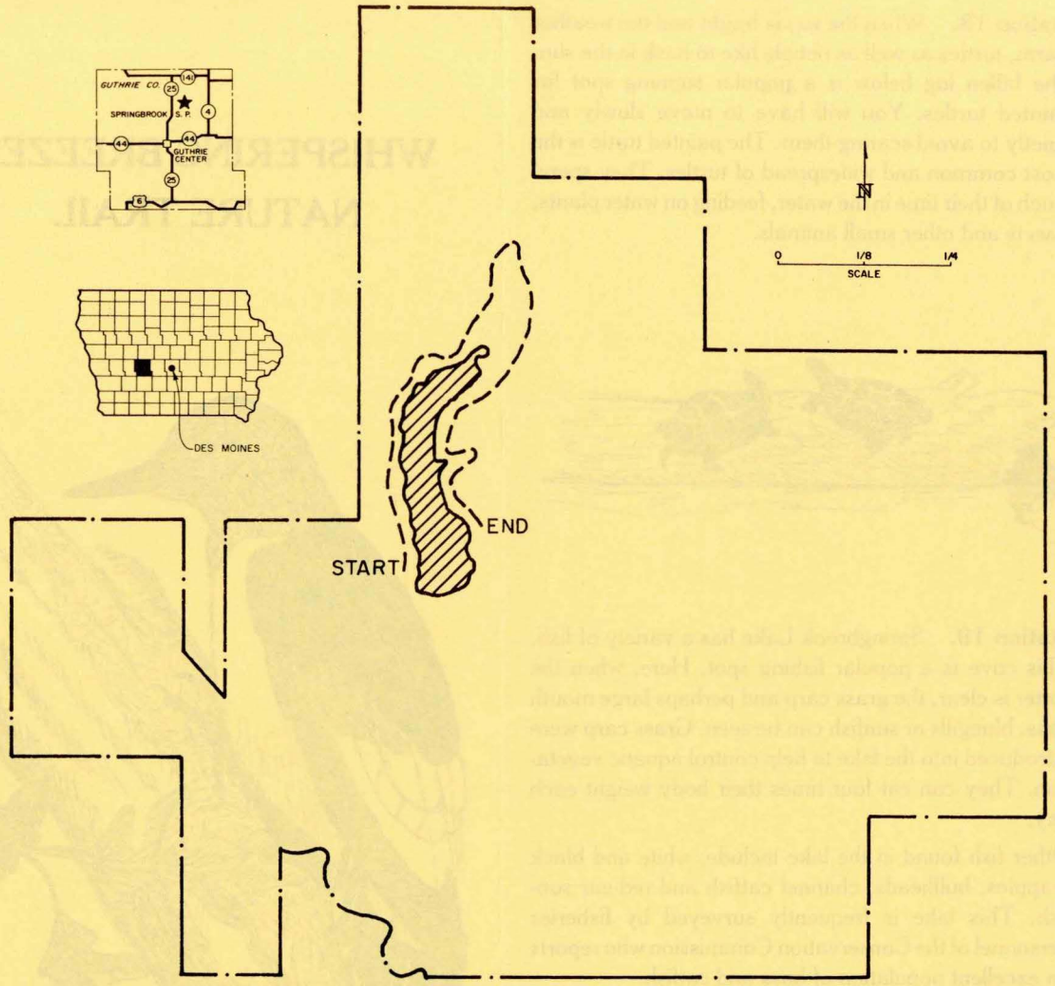
CPE-18821

WHISPERING BREEZES NATURE TRAIL



Artwork by Diane Spott

SPRINGBROOK STATE PARK
RR 1
GUTHRIE CENTER, IOWA 50115



Welcome to the Whispering Breezes Nature Trail. It is approximately one mile in length and takes about one hour to complete. Walking the trail will give you a chance to become exposed to some of the park's unique historical and natural features. The following numbered descriptions correspond to the numbered posts located at points of interest along the trail.

Station 1. Springbrook State Park was acquired in 1926 from the King family and was, in fact, originally called King's Park. It was used for picnicking by local families before it was purchased by the State of Iowa. It is named for the small spring-fed stream which flowed through the park.

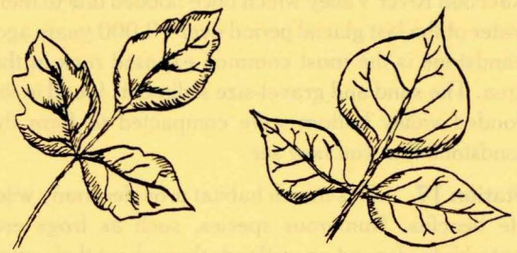
Station 2. The stream was dammed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's to create the lake. The CCC was a government work force of young men who engaged in a variety of conservation-related projects throughout the country during the Great Depression. The dam was constructed without the aid of mechanical equipment, using only manpower, shovels and horses with scoops dragged behind them. The lake is 17 acres in size and about 17 feet deep.

Station 3. Forests in Iowa are classified as being predominantly an oak/hickory mix. Springbrook's trees are what would be commonly expected in such a forest. Here you can see the white oak with its round-lobed leaves and gray, scaly bark, as well as the shagbark hickory, with its distinctive shaggy bark. Iowa's forests are shrinking at an alarming rate. Total acres of forested areas have decreased from about 6.5 million to less than 2 million acres. Trees are very beneficial to us, not only for their beauty, shade, fruit and building materials, but also for wildlife habitat.

Station 4. Beavers are common here and you can see some of their signs. The number of downed trees are an indication of the many beavers in Springbrook State Park. During the last century, beavers were trapped extensively and their fur used to make expensive hats. They are still trapped in Iowa, although the population is much more stable now as a result of trapping regulations and wildlife refuges such as Springbrook State Park.

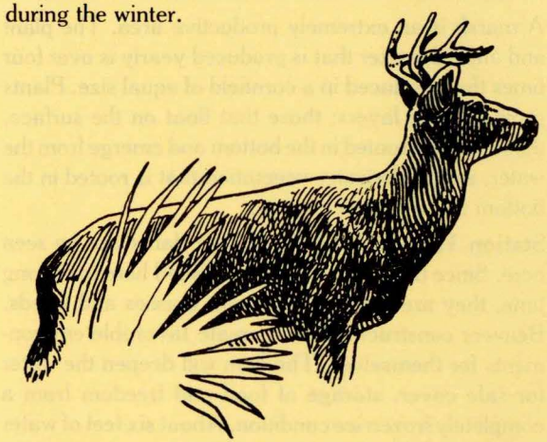
Station 5. This tree has been nicknamed "Witch's Tree" because of its gnarled appearance. Why is it shaped this way? Why is a hollow tree like this still alive? Take a look inside and see if you can identify some of the things found and how they might have gotten there. You may find any number of things here, such as droppings, nuts or even fish scales. Disease caused the tree's abnormal growth. The tree still lives because life is sustained in the second layer of the bark.

Station 6. BEWARE—POISON IVY! The only way to be safe from the poison ivy which grows abundantly in Springbrook State Park is to recognize and AVOID IT! Poison ivy can be confused with tick trefoil which also grows in abundance and also have similar shaped leaflets in clusters of three. However, the leaf edges of the trefoil are smooth, whereas poison ivy usually shows some notching.



Poison Ivy **Tick Trefoil**

Station 7. Here is a good example of deer browse. Deer are browsers, which mean they feed on tender twigs and leaves of shrubs and trees. Notice how the deer have chewed on the tops of this plant which will stunt its growth or may even kill it. The deer are very numerous in this park because it is one of the few sheltered areas around here. Their number in Springbrook State Park has been estimated to be around 200 during the summer and to as high as 700-800 when severe weather forces them here for food and shelter during the winter.



Station 8. Look for the beaver lodge across the lake. A lodge is constructed by laying sticks horizontally to form a pile, with a mixture of mud which stops a foot or so short of the top of the pile. The beaver then chews its way in to make the two underwater entrance tunnels and the center chamber. The beaver does not pack mud on the top of the lodge. It leaves spaces between the sticks to serve as ventilation. The normal lodge is usually around six feet high and twenty feet wide at the water level. As many as eight to ten beavers may occupy a lodge, sleeping during the day and coming out at night.

Station 9. Wood duck nest boxes have been placed on each side of the lake. Wood ducks are important in Iowa because they are one of the few waterfowl species that breed in the state. They also are the only Iowa waterfowl that nest in tree cavities. However, they can suffer heavy predation in their natural nesting sites, especially from raccoon and fox squirrels. Installing nest boxes of proper design can eliminate both raccoon and squirrel predation and the production of young wood ducks can be increased.