

The Flora and Fauna of Cedar Creek Forest

by Harvey L. Gunderson

THE Anoka Sand Plain of east central Minnesota has, since glacial times, become dotted with sand dunes, marshes, lakes and bogs. Retarded melting of large blocks of buried ice may have favored the development of the bogs, which contain many plants normally found much farther north.

One of these bogs, about thirty miles north of Minneapolis - St. Paul, has been set aside as a natural preserve called Cedar Creek Forest. Cedar Creek Forest consists only of parts of four sections of land surrounding a small lake. A "sedge mat," with a few Tamaracks growing on it encroaches upon the lake. Around the sedge mat is a belt of White Cedar, in which grow many northern plants, such as Labrador Tea, Twinflower, Bunchberry and Wintergreen. On the higher, drier land are Oak woods and on three of the highest knolls are Maple, Basswood, Birch and Ironwood, sometimes called the Maple-Basswood Climax type. There are also a few White Pines and Yellow Birches. Some Shrubs scattered among the White Cedars have rather glossy leaves and, in the fall, very attractive white berries—the berries of Poison Sumac! The shrub has the same effect as Poison Ivy.

In contrast with northern plants which reach their southern limit, Swamp Loosestrife, growing at the water's edge, is a southern plant which reaches its northern limit here. The stem arches over gracefully into the water, where the growth of a new plant begins. This is the pioneer plant at the water's edge. When its root system becomes thick enough to form a mat, other plants, such as sedges and cattails, start their growth on this mat, and gradually the Tamaracks and White Cedars follow. A bog does not fill in from the bottom as a swamp does, but mats in over the top, giving rise to the name, "floating bog."

The fauna of Cedar Creek Forest does not retain as many distinctly northern elements as the flora does. Of course, the White-throated Sparrow, a summer resident, and the Snowshoe Rabbit, present throughout the year, are associated in most minds with the north woods, as are Red-breasted Nuthatches, Black and White Warblers, and Nashville Warblers which are often seen in the area. Not so closely associated with the north woods but nevertheless interesting is the Ruffed Grouse, whose drumming can be heard each spring and sometimes even in the fall. During the nights of early summer the Whip-poor-will's song can be heard frequently and sometimes with monotonous regularity.

One of the surprising sounds heard at Cedar Creek Forest is the high-pitched yapping of the Gray Fox. This species and the Red Fox are fairly common. Raccoons are plentiful and Beavers have recently moved in, although not for the first time. Perhaps the mammal most frequently seen and heard is the Red Squirrel. The Water Shrew, which lives near the water's edge, has a fringe of hairs around its toes which help make it a good swimmer, and it is said the animal has the ability to walk on top of still water.

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Your editors join with your officers and directors in wishing each and every member and your families much health, fortitude and success during the coming year.

We would like to be able to say in all sincerity, "A Happy New Year," but with the world situation being as it is and with so many members of our families answering the call to duty, happiness in many homes will be giving place to anxiety and hopefulness. Still, we have not entirely given up hope of reaching an early settlement of our present crisis. A peaceful solution would really make the New Year a truly happy one.

We are proud of this our third quarterly issue of THE MINNESOTA NATURALIST, for it contains a wealth of original material with many articles having been written and illustrations furnished by our own members. This is as it should be. With so much talent vested in our membership, we are looking forward to more of our people sharing their travels, experiences, ideas and suggestions with our full membership, through the columns of their own publication.

We are particularly grateful to Dr. Walter J. Breckenridge for contributing the illustration gracing our front cover; to Mr. Whitney Eastman for his interesting article on the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and the splendid drawing of that bird by Leslie C. Kouba; to Mr. Harvey L. Gunderson for his description of the Flora and Fauna to be found in the Cedar Creek Forest; and to Mr. Leland J. Green, a 21-year-old University of Minnesota senior student, for relating his scientific experience in Minnesota archeology.

Our sincere thanks to all of the contributors to this issue and a warm invitation to as many as would enjoy participating in future editions.

G. V. L.

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THE FRONT COVER

Perhaps you have stopped on a birch-grown hillside to enjoy the view over the lowlands through a sparse mosaic of the last clinging yellow leaves. Suddenly a partridge, startled from farther up the slope, swings across the scene, wings set in a long, downhill glide. Such striking mental impressions are only rarely met with but they accumulate in your memory and lure you on to more and longer woodland rambles.

Donated by Dr. Walter John Breckenridge.

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