

**STATION 11.**            Listening Post

Have a seat and enjoy the sounds, sights, and smells of the woods. Many woodland birds are proclaiming their nesting and feeding territories. Listen for the “*pee-o-wee*” of the eastern wood peewee, the “*chickadee-dee-dee*” of the black-capped chickadee, the “*peter-peter-peter*” of the tufted titmouse, and many more. Many animals are dependent on the habitat provided by the woods. As our woodlands decrease, so do those species.



Wood Peewee



Chickadee



Titmouse

**STATION 12.**            Bridge

Built by the Youth Conservation Corps in 1994, this bridge allows us to cross the waterway which has eroded down to bedrock. At times the water may roar down the hill. Other times it will form small pools. Many other parts of this trail were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's.

**STATION 13.**            Lichens

How does a plant get nutrients from solid rock? Fungi and algae grow on the rocks which together form an organism called lichen. Seen as green crusty material on rocks, the lichens break the rock down by chemical means to get minerals they need for growth. Following the lichens will come mosses, ferns, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees.

**STATION 14.**            New Growth—Logging

Compare the woodland in front of you with the one behind you. Did you notice the trees in front are smaller and more numerous, with no large trees? The woodland behind contains fewer trees, but some are quite large. The reason for this is the woodland behind you was logged in the late 1980's.

Woodlands can be used like a garden, where we grow plants to harvest their fruits. Trees can be grown then selectively harvested so another crop can be produced. Unlike a garden that is harvested annually, a woodland takes many years to produce a crop. The job of a forester is protect the health of a woodland. Foresters can identify trees that are near the end of their lives and need to be harvested as well as make woodlands a better home for wildlife.



Deer



Coyote



Raccoon



Squirrel



Human



This woodland is a habitat for a variety of wildlife. Turkeys, coyotes, white-tailed deer, and bobcats are just a few. Look closely in wet or muddy areas. In these areas the tracks of the animals inhabiting this woodland can be more easily seen. Can you tell what the animals were doing?

You have seen many different types of trees and plants, some of which have been pointed out along the way. Now is your chance to identify many more. Identification may be based on such things as leaves, fruit, bark, location, and general shape of the tree or plant.

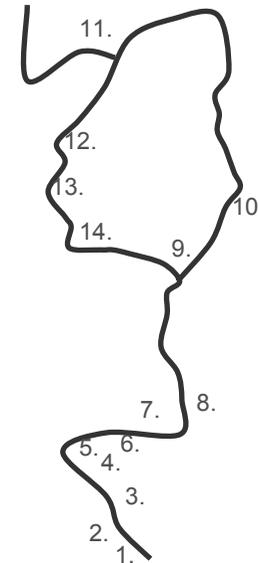
# OAKLAND MILLS

## SELF GUIDED

## NATURE TRAIL



To Cabins



This self-guided nature trail is dedicated in memory of Alice and Harry Bryant to help others find what they discovered many years ago.



Notice as you move along this trail, the marker posts are either yellow or red. The reason for this is the area was two pioneer farms before becoming a park. The Willets and the Lazenby were the last names of the pioneer families. The yellow markers show you the land of the Willets family and the red markers the Lazenby family.

**STATION 1.** Introduction to the Forest

What is a forest? A forest is more than an area covered with trees. It is a community populated with an enormous variety of plants and animals-all interacting, interrelated, and inter-dependent. As you walk along this trail, please do not pick plants or disturb the wildlife. We ask that you stay on the trails-taking only memories and leaving only footprints.

**STATION 2.** Spring Ephemerals (Flowers)

Spring is possibly the most delightful time of the year to visit the forest. Soon the tree leaves will open, casting shadows on the forest floor. Spring flowers must reproduce quickly because they are competing for sunlight. As soon as the snow melts, the tiny delicate flower species appear, followed by taller and larger plants. Please leave them undisturbed for future generations.

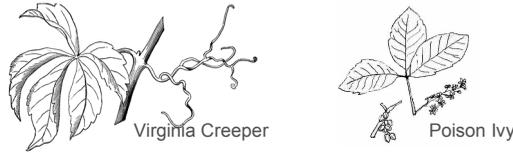


Spring is also the time for making maple syrup. The buildings represent a maple syrup camp of the past. Watch our website for more information on our maple syrup making demonstrations.

**STATION 3.** Poison Ivy/Virginia Creeper

Before proceeding into the forest any farther, it is important to point out the difference between poison ivy and virginia creeper. Poison ivy may be an erect plant or a vine, and has groups of three dark green leaves which turn red in the fall. The pink flower in July gives rise to berries.

Virginia creeper is a harmless vine recognized by five leaflets, like spokes of a wheel. All parts provide tasty meals for birds, deer, mice, and skunks.



**STATION 4.** Litter Layer

Reach off the trail and feel the forest floor. It feels spongy doesn't it? This spongy material is part of what is called the litter layer. This layer preserves the soil moisture; protects wintering seeds, bulbs, and insects; and prevents erosion. It consists of leaves, limbs, and other dead vegetation. At the very top of the litter layer is the latest level, which covers the material called "humus." This humus is what the forest draws its nutrients from. What process breaks these leaves down? Proceed to the next station to find out.

**STATION 5.** Nutrient Cycles

If there were no methods for nature to provide nutrients to the soil, the plants would soon deplete the soil and growth of the forest would stop. However, decomposers, like bacteria, fungus, insects, and worms recycle the nutrients by breaking down the dead plant and animal material which falls on the forest floor. The decomposers profit by using the energy stored in these materials and the entire forest benefits by having nutrients made available again.

**STATION 6.** Sugar Maple

The sugar maple is a handsome tree usually growing 60-80 feet high and 2-3 feet in diameter. It has a very distinctive leaf of bright green on top and more pale on the bottom. These leaves turn red, orange, and gold in the fall.



When the seeds fall, their shape makes them spin like helicopters. They are more shade tolerant so you will see more of them at lower levels than you will of oak or hickory. In the spring, many species of maple trees are "tapped" to gather sap to make syrup or sugar.

**STATION 7.** White Oak

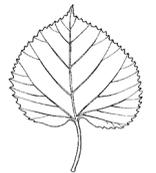
The large tree in front of you is a white oak (the state tree of Iowa). Notice that the bark is moderately rough, but also has patchy areas that are smoother. The leaves are lobed with rounded edges rather than the pointed ones of the red oak. The seeds of the oak tree are acorns.



These acorns of the white oak are oblong with a thick warty scaled top. The meat of the acorn is an important food source for wildlife.

**STATION 8.** American Basswood

The assortment of trees that seem to grow from the same base are basswood. It is very adapted to growing in upland ravines. The leaves are coarsely serrated and resemble an unequal heart shape. The bark is dark gray and furrowed with scaly ridges. The wood is soft with few knots, making it popular with wood carvers. Bees produce high quality honey from its nectar and pollen



**STATION 9.** Contrast

Here is an interesting contrast between the areas on your left and right. Can you see there is a heavy canopy on one side and an abundance of grasses and small trees on the other? Is it because of the sunlight? The answer can be found at Station 14.

**STATION 10.** Berry Plants

These clumps of bushes are Gooseberries. Many plants expend energy to produce seeds that taste good so wildlife will eat them and spread the seeds to other suitable areas. Other seeds may be spread by the wind.