

Natural History Abounds at Proud Lk.

By LYDIA KING FREHSE
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

It is a day to remember. We are early on our way to the Proud Lake recreation area near Highland where the Detroit Botany club and the Audubon society are to join forces for a field trip.

The roadsides are winnowed with the ripened seeds of maple and elm. The yellow bloom of field mustard blankets the meadows. In the hedgerows the song sparrow broods her clutch of tiny speckled eggs and the orioles sing once more in the apple orchards all adrift with bloom.

There are 3,296 acres in the Proud Lake area, comprising many types of habitats.

High hills to the west overlook the valley of the Huron river which widens to form the Proud Lake chain of lakes. Here are varied waters, wide marshes,

WILD MEADOWS, hillside hedgerows and thickets make ideal ground-cover for birds and small animals. The marshes and d bogs hide some of Michigan's rarest orchids and here our only poisonous snake—the muskunauger rattler, lives his secluded life.

We enter by driving through a large plantation of pine. Such a deeply shaded area precludes any ground cover except the primitive lichens, mosses and fungi which are not demanding of sunlight.



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Here in autumn we have seen mushroom collectors gathering bushels of Boletus much prized by the gourmet. This is also a favorite habitat for amanita muscaria, a poisonous species with a large yellow cap covered with white warts.

OUR TODAY'S assignment is to lead a group of "primitive plants," those ancient spore-bearers such as mosses, horsetails and fern. They have been valuable oil makers and water retainers since the days of their dominance in the coal age swamps. We found an abundance of material at the edge of a cattail marsh bordering a low woods of mixed hardwoods.

However, when afield with an informal group, your scribe is not one to divide nature into compartments. Her conviction arrived at through many years of nature guiding, is that the life of a newly emerged from its chrysalis,

ITS LARGE black and yellow wings were still damp and the blue border just above the black "swallow tails" matched the eyes of the young girl who held it poised so briefly on her trembling finger.

In like manner, while we were admiring an ancient tulip tree which sent a three-part trunk some 40 feet up into the air, a small white-footed mouse scampered by. When the first French explorers discovered our Michigan wilderness the tulip was abundant in the rich moist soil of the bottom lands. Now it is fast becoming extinct in our state.

Together with such trees as sycamore, magnolia and laurel, it made up our first wide-spread hardwood forests some sixty million years ago.

AND A YOUNG wood frog, his mouth outlined with a golden rim was caught in a "waiting hand." He was soon identified by the characteristic dark brown streak joining his eye on each side of his head. He, too, is inseparable from the life of the marsh which is clothed in the primitive plants we have come to note.

As we move on into higher ground a variety of trees makes the upper forest layer. These include maple, beech, ash, linden, wild cherry, oak and hickory.

A second layer of vegetation is comprised of tree seedlings and

shrubs including dogwood, elderberry, prickly ash, honeysuckle and wild currant.

Under these grow a low herb layer of wild flowers and creeping vines. May apples have flowered under their full-spread "umbrellas," phlox, baneberry, spikenard, Solomon's seal and sarsaparilla are in bloom.

A few evergreen plants remain remnants of a more primitive glacial flora. These include partridge vine, gold thread and wingreeen.

BUT THE morning hours in the sun-dappled woods are all too short and soon it is time for all to meet for lunch and pool the morning's experiences.

"We saw a beautiful scarlet tanager." "We saw a blue racer as thick as my arm but it escaped into a juniper bush." "We saw a nutchatch gathering fibers for its nest."

And so in mid-May nature attests her abundant fertility in flower and egg and early seed pod. Everywhere is the freshness of life newly clothed, before the slow stain of summer's heat falls on the land.

"The day outdid itself in loveliness."

Grand Opera Committee Entertained

Mr. and Mrs. Leslie C. Allman entertained at dinner in their Cranbrook road home recently, the executive committee of the Detroit Grand Opera association and guests from New York.

Guests were Julius Rudel, musical director of New York City Opera company, and his wife, and Donald Gramin, baritone of the same.

Allman, president of the Detroit association, informally discussed the approaching opera season which will begin on Monday, Nov. 14, at the Masonic temple. The New York City Co. will present nine operas during the season.

Rudel, in detail, informed the group that five operas would be presented in English, one in French and three in Italian. Opening night, patrons will hear "The Marriage of Figaro" in English. Gramin sang two arias from same at the Allman's dinner party.

Mrs. Walker A. Williams spoke about the Women's Community activities and that the group had been entertained by Mrs. David T. Marantette in Grosse Pointe in the afternoon to launch the Women's work.

Assisting Mrs. Allman were Mrs. A. J. Lang and Mrs. Arthur B. Tilton. Spring flowers were used throughout the home and on the buffet dinner table.

Guests from the area among the 30 were Mr. and Mrs. Walker A. Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Paul V. Engstrom, Mrs. Gunnar Karlstrom, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur B. Tilton, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Ginnell and Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Lang.

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Named to WYERN
Andrea Snyder, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Myron Snyder of Kenwood court was recently named to Wyvern at the University of Michigan. A Junior Honorary society, she was named for scholarship, leadership and character, and was one of the 19 chosen from the Society. Society deadline is 3 p.m. each Tuesday.

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