

MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55105

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

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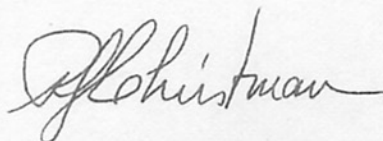
Subject: PIG'S EYE LAKE'S INFLUENCE at ORDWAY.

Upstream from Ordway about 11 kilometers and within the City of St. Paul lies Pig's Eye Lake. This lake, similar to River Lake, though more extensive, is the most northerly-situated complete flood-plain habitat in this hemisphere, a most interesting biome which is self-sustaining. In the natural development of the Mississippi River Valley the Falls of St. Anthony form a northernmost natural barrier in the River. However, this account is not about Pig's Eye Lake for that body of water and its almost-unique ecosystem have been the subject of much debate and controversy in the St. Paul City Council and elsewhere. What is of interest, however, is the influence of this habitat on Ordway.

In about the fourth week of May one can depend upon seeing one or two snowy-white Great Egrets (Casmerodius albus) in the waters of River Lake, usually on the far shore. However, as summer progresses - usually in the second week of July - something happens which increases the number and occurrence of this beautiful bird in the Ordway area. At about this time the young Egrets have hatched in the rookery at Pig's Eye Lake and the parent birds, intent upon feeding their growing family, extend their range to include other food sources. River Lake is particularly good habitat for frogs and fish which the graceful white herons require for themselves and their nestlings. On a hot July evening it is not unusual to spot as many as twenty of them on the opposite shore of River Lake, some standing nearly motionless in the shallow waters, others perched in trees lining the shore. The roundtrip flight to Pig's Eye Lake is not unreasonably long and they very likely negotiate the distance two or more times a day, regurgitating their intake for the satiation of their young.

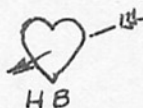
This interesting connection between Ordway and the heron rookery is an important link in the chain of life of this and similar creatures, for there are several other types of fish-eating birds which also nest in the Pig's Eye Lake locality. So far as is presently known there are no herons' nests at Ordway although the past two years there appeared early what might have been "scouts" of the Great Heron (Ardea herodias) but these did not seek out nor occupy any nesting sites.

Someone put it very well: We are inextricably intricated with almost everything else in the universe.....



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