



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

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ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 127

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

located at 9550 Inver Grove Trail (Dakota County Road 77), Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

RUN-OFF WATER at ORDWAY.

Much concern is felt about erosion at Ordway. The rather steep pitch toward the River - about 250 feet in less than half a mile - makes the land very vulnerable to "gullying". Whenever it rains at Ordway and also when the accumulation of winter's snows begins to liquefy under the thawing winds of early spring the ground-water begins immediately to find places to go. Of course, the River receives much of the surface water but there are a number of natural "catchments".

River Lake, perhaps 100 acres in area, is a back-water of the Mississippi. It is a natural catchment for the surface water draining downhill toward the east and one of the principal valleys conducts the run-off from the hillsides into the Lake, forming a "willow wetland" on the riparian flats - an interesting spot with water-influenced vegetation, frequented by raccoons and thirsty deer.

Higher up from the river-bottoms there are two vernal pools, vibrantly alive with amphibian life until they dry up in July. The Pond also takes a small amount of run-off which never gets to the River but is captured in the concavity left by an ancient glacier.

Just below the building there is a good example of a "perched wetland", being about one acre in extent and containing some very interesting departures from the prairie plants which surround it - western ironweed; water hemlock; wild blue flag and the Sensitive Fern.

To the south of the building is a wet meadow which catches a good part of the run-off water and remains damp for most of the year. Willows have grown at one end and the whole area - about $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres - provides nesting for the Red-winged Blackbirds and, occasionally, a haven for Wood Duck hatchlings. It is this wet meadow which has had some special attention given it during the past few years. A catch-basin has been constructed near the building which gathers the runoff flow from the hillside and parking-lot and conveys it through a culvert into the field south of the access road. By percolation this water finds its way to the wet area and replenishes its losses during the summertime. This has served to enhance this very interesting wet-spot, which during the last three or four years has begun to show improved quantities of Fairy Shrimp and plankton as well as the frogs and salamanders one would expect. The summertime landscape of this spot is frequently enhanced by a gleaming white Egret or occasionally a darker Great Blue Heron lurking in the shallow waters.

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R. J. CHRISTMAN