



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

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ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 122

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

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

WINTER DEER at ORDWAY.

I often see their tracks in the deep snow, interlacing the meadowland, coursing up into the woods, leading down toward the spring by the Lake. On a relatively mild morning after a snowfall or after several days of bone-chilling weather they present a graphic record of the activities of the deer herd at Ordway.

To begin with, the herd consists ordinarily of four animals. Several times I have seen three of them together - a full-grown doe with two smaller companions, probably her most recent fawns or yearlings. Also I have seen the male, especially during the summer just past when the construction-work of a nearby realty development caused him to constrict his activities more and more to our property. A splendid specimen - now a "five-pointer" - he always appears alone.

In the wintertime the herd enlarges considerably and just this week I observed nine deer one late afternoon browsing amongst aspen and sumac in the lower meadow. It was at some distance and it is just possible that the buck was amongst them. I was not able to make out any "button" antler-growth but one deer was considerably larger and heavier in build. This survival herding brings the local deer together into larger groups, bedding down communally against the harsh winter weather elements.

Sometimes the relative protection of Ordway is intruded upon by dogs - possibly feral - who can make things miserable for the cervine residents as well as for this observer. Since the deer have mated in early winter (November or December) the does will now be carrying their unborn fawns and the unusual and excessive exertion of floundering through heavy snowdrifts when harassed by dogs is often reason enough to cause a female to abort. Therefore I have been resolute in discouraging dogs from our property especially during the snow-covered season when they tend to run in packs and seem to "have fun" in chasing animals of the forest.

It is a frustrating feeling to observe such things happening while powerless to plow through deep snow in order to rectify matters. Dogs should be kept under control lest they offend the natural scene; feral dogs should be shot lest they offend the natural scene.

R. J. CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist

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rjc/fwc