



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

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ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 64

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

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

"DISTURBED AREAS" at ORDWAY (II)

Wherever man (intentionally or otherwise) or nature (through catastrophes such as landslides, earthquakes, tornadoes) disturbs the ordinary conditions of an environment, one can observe some exceptional things. In a previous bulletin (No. 13) we wrote about the disturbed areas in the immediate vicinity of the building at Ordway; these comments were written in the summer of 1973. The ensuing four years have brought some noticeable changes, changes which can only be viewed as improvements insofar as a natural study area is concerned.

The occurrence of Sweet Clover is much less frequent at present (1977) and in one location where it had made a densely-tangled "jungle" three or four years ago there is now virtually none of it growing (only two individual plants were there this past summer). In its stead the native grasses (Big Bluestem) and forbs (about five species of Goldenrod; also Wild Asters) have staged a most impressive comeback and we have never seen the grassland quite so beautiful as it was at the end of last summer.

Other plants have made similar adjustments. Mullein and Shepherd's Purse are much on the decline and Hoary Alyssum, after a near-alarming proliferation for several years, now seems in slight decline. The Flowering Spurge has made a strong appearance each year and it may just be that it is less of an intruder into the grassland than we had once thought; regardless of the reason, it was quite prominent, its stems and leaves turning a spectacular scarlet in early September and livening the approaching autumn scene.

In the lawn surrounding the building there persist the annoying "intruders" such as Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale), Plantain (Plantago major) and Ground Mallow (Malva neglecta). These "weeds" invade our yards and lawns because we obligingly trim the taller plants with which they must compete in the natural grassland habitat. (Look in the wild meadows for dandelions, and you will find that they are not profuse although they do grow amongst the tall native grasses.)

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