



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

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ORDWAY BULLETIN
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MACALESTER
COLLEGE

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

FUNGI on the TREES at ORDWAY.

Every year some of the trees die, a natural process which takes place everywhere in Nature but is often overlooked when it occurs in the plant world. Of course, the widespread death of the American elms has been quite dramatic, blotching our woods and parkways with the deadened stalks of these magnificent giants, so beautifully-shaped but tragically stark when they have given in to the inroads of the Dutch elm beetles.

Less dramatic but commonplace is the death of some of the smaller trees, particularly the White Birch and also the Quaking Aspen, from the effects of shelf-like fungus growths. In fact, one of the principal causes of death in our woods seems to be the omnipresent fungi, which sap the strength of the living plants and ultimately bring about their demise.

An increase in the number of incidents of this sort resulted in smaller trees being toppled by wind and showing fungus growths along their trunks and larger branches. With the necessary assistance of the State Forester some of the fungi were identified - Daedaleia unicolor, most prominently; also Polyporus dichrous, which is most frequently found on fallen logs and old stumps. Interestingly enough these fungus growths, which had been so "obviously" the cause of the death of the trees were, in fact, saprophytic fungi and as such were only significant after the trees had died from some other cause.

We are still seeking the "culprit" which brings about the death of these members of our forest community. Very likely they are other species of fungi. This is not to overlook the fact that there are other factors, such as insect-boring, bird activity, gnawing of animals and the like which could be individual causes of death of the trees. However, fungi are undoubtedly a major factor in this decadence of our woods.

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Naturalist