



The Katharine Ordway  
Natural History Study Area

Box 216  
Inver Grove Heights, Minn. 55075  
(612) 455-6204

ORDWAY BULLETIN

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MACALESTER  
COLLEGE

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

### The DEATH of a POND at ORDWAY: A PROGNOSIS.

The small pond and its environs are an outstanding habitat for much of our students' attention. The entire pond community is not only a delightful sight and a restful place to sit and enjoy quietly; it is much more than that. It is a vibrant bio-community and most valuable for studies of pond-life. It is visited by our students almost as much as any other portion of the property and never fails to impress them and to enrich them all with the lessons of environmental biology.

The very first impression of the Pond on me was an enduring one, becoming even more gripping with each experience and with the passing of each season. Concomitant with this impression there was a nagging premonition concerning the ultimate fate of this gem of bio-ecology. One cannot look at any inland body of water without contemplating the ultimate fate of the lake or pond.

The process of eutrophy is ineffable, primeval, relentless and it applies to all bodies of water although the larger bodies (e.g. Lake Superior, Wille Lacs) are so large as to cause one to think in terms of millenia. However, the more limited water areas come within the finite grasp of the observer and it is not hard to pick up from one season to the next the persisting changes taking place to re-shape our Pond, all these things combining to the ultimate, viz. the filling-in and choking-off of the pond's characteristics. Each year's growth of grasses and water-plants dies in autumn and deposits its mass of decaying vegetation on the pond's bottom; each shower and each spring run-off adds a small but perceptible quantity of sand and silt to alter the depth and margin of the Pond; each wind deposits floating seeds of poplar, elm and willow; it goes on and on ... endlessly. In the past dozen years this change in our Pond has been quite evident although there are some setbacks as, e.g. when unusual summer rains may raise the water level and thus drown out some of the soft maples which have taken root on the shore-line. There used to be several muskrat lodges on the Pond each autumn but last season produced only one and the previous season had been free of any over-wintering muskrats. Yes, changes are taking place.

However, in the case of our own Pond it was another, a legal fact which disturbed me right from the beginning. The property-line of our ownership ran through the center of the Pond and the southerly portion was not really 'our pond'. So, in truth, we had only "a half-pond" or more correctly "half a pond" since "half-ponds" do not exist. No! A pond is an integral community; it exists with its environs and just as it influences its surroundings it also is influenced by them. It can no more persist separately than a human skeleton can survive without its surrounding flesh. "Half-a-pond" is not "better than no pond at all". In fact, it is virtually useless as a study area unless the entire community is under control. Late last spring ('82) a survey crew appeared and ran a survey of the legal property-line. Blue-tagged stakes delineated a line near the mid-section of the Pond. Early

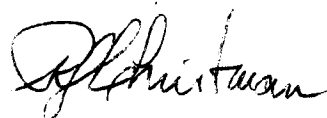
summer of '83 brought the roar of power-saws in a prelude to the appearance of a great gap in the tree-covered ridge south of us - the clearing for the road system for a new residential development.

On the south shore of the Pond is a growth of tall water-grasses and cat-tail rushes and a little further south is a close-packed marsh of cat-tails of perhaps three acres in extent. Through this wet-meadow and marsh system water runoff enters slowly into the Pond, an integral portion of the entire community. All these and similar processes which contribute naturally to the eutrophication of the place - silting (from run-off, particularly from new excavations and unstabilized hillsides); leaching of fertilizer nutrients and herbicides (from newly-placed lawns and gardens) causing abnormal growth of water-plants - have now been aggravated at an exponential rate. It is not unreasonable to predict that each succeeding year will produce a change in the Pond which is the equivalent of half-a-century or more by natural processes.

Yes, the Pond is dying! It has been doing that for hundreds of years - for it had its birth at the end of the Wisconsinian Glacier about 10,000 years ago. The receding glacial ice left this gouged-out three-acre depression to collect the seasonal waters - and to foster the breeding and nurturing of many forms of amphibian and planktonian life. One might be more correct to say "The Pond is dead!"

It was a very nice pond .....

Aug. 15, 1983  
/ave



R J CHRISTMAN,  
Naturalist