



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.

The RIP-OFF SYNDROME at ORDWAY.

"Leave things the way you found them" is good advice no matter where one goes or what one does. This is especially applicable to a natural history study area like Ordway, where one seeks to observe what is happening in natural situations removed from human influence.

Of course, there are some very practical limitations to such advice and it is sometimes a test of our judgement and common sense. We are, willy-nilly, creatures of the earth and since we walk on the earth it is not sensible to think that we will not have some effect on the ground on which we walk. However, with a little consideration we can reduce our effects upon the environment to a practical minimum. We can keep to the trails; we can leave things untouched in their places to be admired or observed by those who follow us.

We should stifle the urge which many of us have for taking things away. Sometimes there is an attitude that one should not come away empty-handed from a visit - and so we frequently have visitors who do not restrain themselves from carrying away some "souvenir" of their visit. Such souvenirs are often tossed away in the parking-lot - a handful of wilted wild flowers; a shelf fungus from an old tree; a frond of fern beginning to curl up. On one occasion a family brought along a bucket which they filled with black humus from the forest floor ("for their window-boxes") and I had to ask them to return the soil. Frequently I am asked (and perhaps more frequently not asked) for permission to pick the wild grapes or the raspberries; such questioners sometimes do not understand my reply that we want to leave the "food" which nature has provided for the birds and beasts of the area.

Perhaps it is a syndrome of man's philosophy which causes us to consider most things as items "to be used". Usually "used" means consumed or put to some "useful" purpose, such as income or decoration. I think it is not too much to say that such things at Ordway are best left untouched.....are best "enjoyed but not destroyed".

R J CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist

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