



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

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ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 71

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

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

ARBOREAL HAVEN at ORDWAY.

The trees have been there since the beginning - a clump consisting of three Red Oaks and one American Elm. It is obvious they clustered together at the base of the hill on the east side of the building before it was built. Some of the earthen spoil removed for the foundation has consolidated around the base of the trees causing them to look somewhat shorter than they actually are. Furthermore, the position of the building is such that it looks outward into the upper branches of the trees rather than up at them. This makes it easier to observe the many avian visitors which come daily to the place.

This constant use by the birds is the most interesting aspect of the small grove. Whether it be during the seasonal migrations or not there is frequent perching in the branches, whether they be foliated or barren, as in winter. Each year sees at least one nesting in the trees - the past summer it was a Robin's nest and also a late nesting of a Mourning Dove. Mostly, though, it is a stopover, a haven - sometimes from danger, sometimes from the elements, sometimes for some sort of social activity understood only by the birds.

If one wished to confine himself to a single viewing-point for birds the grove would be very good. Each spring I see the first Eastern Meadowlark there, sitting high in the newly-clothed branches and swaying with the restive spring breezes while singing its thin, sweet call - which one often hears first before catching the initial glimpse of the bird. Others, too, sit high in the branches - the Brown Thrasher; the early Red-wings; the newly-arrived Bluebirds, chortling their so-gentle call. The lower branches provide a furtive, shaded location for the activities of the smaller birds - the Warblers in season; the Goldfinches and Chickadees and the scudding Nuthatches.

Things change but that is inescapable in the world of both nature and man. The Elm member of "the trees" is undergoing its demise - slowly but surely. I observed the decline of one major branch of the tree two seasons ago and now perhaps 60% of it is no longer foliated. The obvious results are beginning to take place with the Woodpeckers apparently finding more grubs and other food-worthy substances to make their visits more than just rest-stops. Hawks, too, make more frequent visits to the tree since the decline in foliage has lessened the visual obstruction to their ground search from its heights. The clump of oaks, soon to be joined by a pair of sapling Box Elders nearby, will continue to be a real haven for our bird inhabitants.

R J CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist,
Katharine Ordway Natural
History Study Area.

31 Oct. 1978
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