

MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55101

■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

Ordway Bulletin No. 8

Subject: The OAKS at ORDWAY.

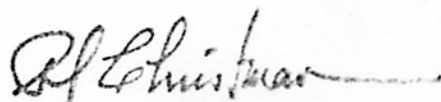
In the autumn the hillsides leading down to the river are a blaze of color, the yellow-greens of the aspens, the yellows and reds of the elms, birches and maples mingling with the reds and browns of the oaks. Underneath it all, spreading over the forest edges, lies the rich red carpet of the sumacs.

Now - in the first week of November - many of the leaves are gone, stripped from their trees by the fall rains and the increased action of the chill winds. The oak leaves, however, stay on and splash their colors across the hillsides. They will continue well into the winter and some of them will cling with tenacity throughout the winter, offering a haven of protection for the squirrels and also the few crows and jays which still eke out an existence during the harsh weather.

Most of the forestland at Ordway consists of oak climax forest. Generally-speaking, the trees of the White Oak Group have round-lobed leaves, pale or grey bark and produce a crop of acorns each year whereas those of the Black Oak Group have sharp-pointed lobed leaves, dark bark and require two seasons to produce their acorns. Our oaks are principally of three species, two in the White Oak Group: the White Oak (Quercus alba) and the Bur Oak (Q. macrocarpa); and one in the Black Oak Group: the Northern Pin Oak (Q. borealis). These are the dominant plants in our very interesting forest; they grow slowly and their silhouettes are sturdy and rugged, giving the true impression of their great strength.

Apparently there was a period of logging about 1885-'90 which removed the primeval oaks and hardwoods; we occasionally happen across a very old, rotting stump of a good-sized oak. Consequently the current stand of second-growth oak is relatively new but we know from comparison with aerial photographs of about thirty years ago that the oak growth is spreading. One large Bur Oak alongside the foot-trail as it enters the forest shows in its annual rings that it is 74 years old; this would coincide rather well with the logging operations at the close of the last century.

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