

JOPPA RIDGE MOTOR TRAIL



Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky



2 MILES ONE-WAY 10 MPH



This is the beginning of a two-mile, one way motor nature trail. Please keep your speed under 10 miles per hour and do not block the roadway at any time. If you wish to wander about on foot, use caution and be alert for poisonous snakes and wood ticks.

Take your time, enjoy the surroundings. Imagine what the land looked like in the first half of this century. Appreciate nature's way of restoring what once was hers.

Farmers lived here and used this road until the early 1940's. In 1941 Mammoth Cave National Park was established.

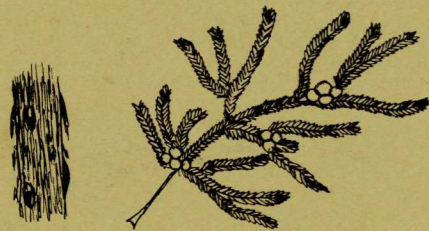
Station 1 is your signal to watch for other numbered stations. Observe nature between the stations - a tree, a special plant, an old homestead, a deer trap, maybe a whitetail deer.

After you read the description look for the objects described.

STATION 1 EASTERN RED CEDAR OR JUNIPER

(*Juniperus virginiana*)

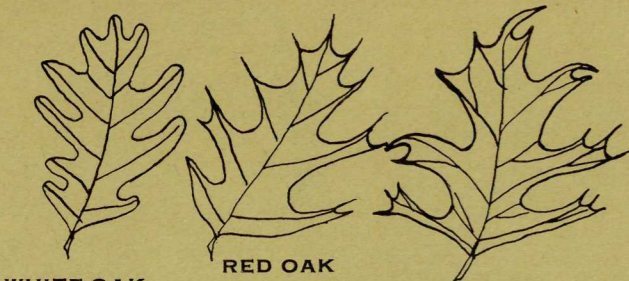
Junipers found in this particular area are rather large evergreens. The juniper is more typically found in open fields, where it is the first tree to populate abandoned meadows and other areas once under cultivation. You will recognize it by its knotty appearance and scaly bark. Many of the lower limbs are usually dead. It has a fragrant wood, highly prized for linen chests and jewelry boxes. Sometimes it is used as a Christmas tree. Have you found it?



TREE TRUNK CEDAR BRANCH

BETWEEN STATIONS 2 AND 3 OAK TREES

Can you identify some of the oaks that grow along the road? White oak is the most plentiful. Fourteen species of oak have been recorded, so recognizing individual oaks is difficult. Some of the more common are the white oak, southern red oak and black oak.

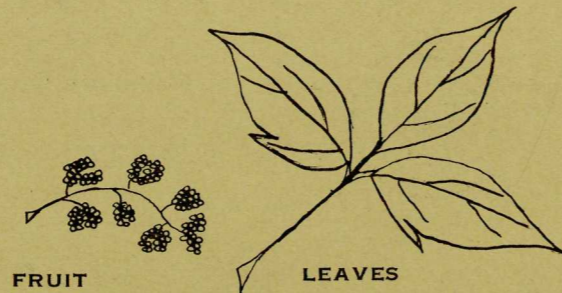


WHITE OAK *Quercus alba* RED OAK *Quercus rubra* BLACK OAK *Quercus velutina*

POISON IVY (*Rhus radicans*)

You will see poison ivy climbing up many of the oak trees. In summer the vines bear whitish berries, that will remain until winter approaches, and provide food for the myrtle warbler. Poison ivy can cause a

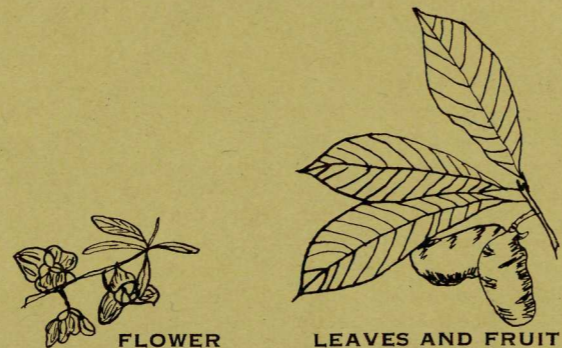
severe skin irritation on some people because of toxic oil produced by the plant. This vine may climb to the top of a large tree or grow on the forest floor as a stemmed plant.



FRUIT LEAVES

STATION 3 PAWPAW TREE (*Asimina triloba*)

This small tree, usually no more than 25 feet tall, grows in groves and produces a fruit comparable in taste to a banana. It is good to eat, but only after the frost activates its sugar content. The leaf is about 6 to 10 inches long and the bark is very smooth.



FLOWER LEAVES AND FRUIT

Indians who lived in this area approximately 2400 years ago stripped the bark from this tree and wove it into clothing, moccasins and twine. You can see some of these items in the museum and on the Historic Cave Tour.

STATION 4 TULIP-TREE (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

Normally you can spot this tree in the forest quite easily. Also known as yellow poplar, here it grows straight and tall, with very few lower limbs. In the open it tends to grow wide and spreading with long, heavy lower limbs. The tulip-tree is the state tree of Kentucky and several other states.



LEAVES AND FLOWER FRUIT

The straight trunks were hollowed out by hand and used as pipes to transport water into Mammoth Cave for the nitrate mining operations during the War of 1812. You will see these pipes when you take the Historic Cave Tour.

BETWEEN STATIONS 5 and 6

(*Lespedeza sericea*)

Imported from Japan in 1924, lespediza is a legume that was planted along the road to control soil erosion during early conservation work in Kentucky. You may have recognized the plant since it resembles a leafy alfalfa. Left undisturbed, it grows in carpet-like profusion. Birds relish the seeds.

STATION 6 DEER TRAP

The boxlike wooden structure is a deer trap. Once extinct in the park, Virginia whitetail deer were reintroduced in 1947, and today number around 2500. Under National Park Service protection, they prospered so well that there are now too many for their food supply. Cooperating with the park to control the size of the herd, men from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources trap deer from November to March, and release the animals in surrounding counties.

STATION 7 AN OLD HOMESITE

Look for large maple trees where the house stood. Do you see the shrubs, flower beds and yucca plants in the front yard? Look on the left side of the road. Can you see evidence of other homesites as you drive along?

BETWEEN STATIONS 8 AND 9 WILDLIFE

What you observe along this part of the trail is pure chance. In the hot summer, you might see one of the seven species of lizards, or maybe one of the park's twenty-three species of snakes. A rabbit or squirrel may suddenly appear, or a whitetail deer. You cannot miss seeing one of the 203 species of birds, regardless of weather conditions or time of year.

STATION 10 HONEYLOCUST (*Prunus serotina*) WILD CHERRY (*Gleditsia triacanthos*)

You will probably see the honeylocust first. It's easier to identify. Look in the immediate vicinity of Station 10. The trunk of the tree is heavily laden with thorns that at times grow to a foot in length. They are very sharp and rigid so it would be difficult to climb such a tree.

A cultivated variety of the honeylocust that has no thorns, is often planted in large cities because of its beauty and resistance to air pollution.



HONEYLOCUST WILD CHERRY

The wild cherry tree you are trying to find is in back and to the left of the locust tree. Look closely - it has very scaly bark which is light in color. The leaves are similar to those of an apple tree. On this tree many of the lower limbs are dead. The fruit is much smaller than the cultivated cherry, but birds use

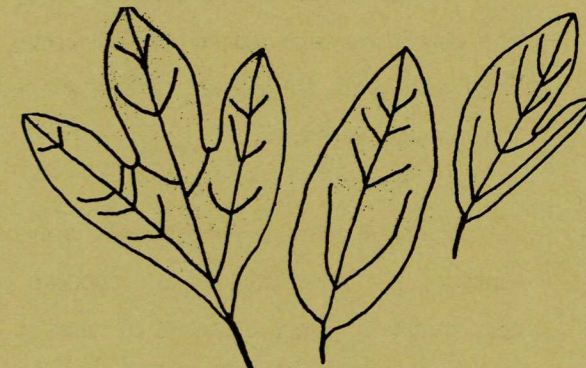
it for food. Man makes wide use of the wood from wild cherry. Some of our most elegant early american furnishings are made from it.

STATION 11 ROCK OUTCROP

You have been driving along a ridge composed of a rock cover called sandstone, underlain with layers of limestone. Sandstone is very resistant to weathering, but when it becomes cracked, water seeps down into the underlying layers of limestone. Unlike sandstone, limestone is gradually dissolved and eroded by the water seeping through its layers on its way to the Green River. This is how caves are formed in limestone areas.

STATION 12 SASSAFRAS (*Sassafras officinale*)

Along the roadway you should be able to identify this small tree, usually less than thirty feet high. Twigs are bright green, while older parts such as the trunk are thick, deeply furrowed and reddish-brown. The aromatic roots of the tree are sometimes collected and dried to make a tasty tea. Leaves occur in three different shapes - normal, one-thumb mitten and double-thumb mitten.



SASSAFRAS LEAVES

STATION 13 OLD FIELD

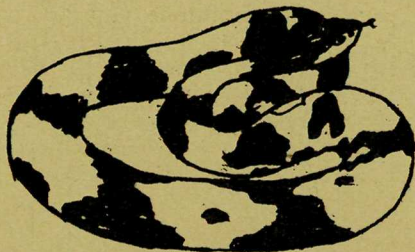
Many years have passed since hay was last mowed in this 10 acre field. Now blackberry bushes are taking over. Sassafras saplings are slowly creeping in from the forest edge and a field-to-forest stage of development is in progress. Close observation may reveal deer tracks criss-crossing the open field. Deer are the only large mammals remaining in the park.

Wildflowers growing here attract butterflies and honeybees. Grasshoppers leap among the weeds. Meadow mice forage on the grasses and wildflowers and in turn become food for hawks. In the evening watch for rabbits, racoons and deer.

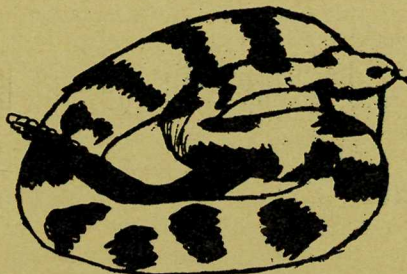
We hope you have enjoyed this drive along a country road. Perhaps you will find a similar road back home for a leisurely drive.

When you reach Kentucky 70 you may turn left to return to the Visitor Center, or turn right to the parking areas for Cedar Sink Trail on Route 422, or Turnhole Bend Trail on Kentucky 70 West.

The Cedar Sink Trail leads to a large sinkhole in a field that was once planted to corn and tobacco. Round trip distance is 1½ miles. The Turnhole Bend Trail offers a panoramic view of the Green River and its deep valley. Round trip distance is 1 mile.



COPPERHEAD



EASTERN TIMBER RATTLESNAKE

Copperheads are abundant. They vary in length from 8 to 53 inches. During the day they are usually coiled under a rock or a log waiting until nightfall, when they will start their hunt. Mice are their principal food, but small birds, frogs and insects are also eaten.

Eastern timber rattlesnakes are not as plentiful as copperheads, but are more dangerous. These snakes are capable of inflicting a more serious bite because they can inject a larger amount of venom. They reach lengths of over 6 feet, however, the average size of those in the park are between 35-54 inches.

Even though poisonous, they serve a definite purpose in nature. The rattlesnakes eat many rats, mice and rabbits for food. Without snakes we would have an over-abundance of rodents and the ecological balance of nature could be upset. All animal life in the park is protected.

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