

9

VIRGINIA PINE is the common evergreen found throughout the park. Its paired needles are short and the tree has a somewhat scrubby appearance. In fact, it is often called SCRUB PINE. Virginia Pine is important because it grows readily in open, abandoned places as this area was a few years ago. The pines provide shade for the seedlings of oaks and hickories which will grow to replace them.



10

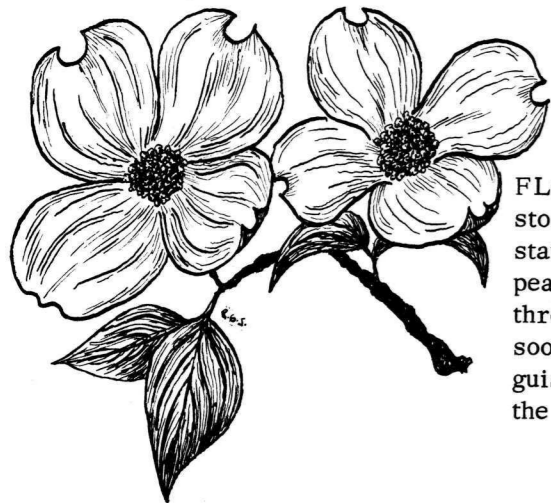
A fallen tree, such as this one, is often called a DEADFALL or BLOWDOWN. In addition to providing more growing space for younger trees, it is the home for many living things. Fungi and insects, along with other creatures, hasten the decay of the wood which contributes to the enrichment of the forest soil.

11

The YELLOW POPLAR or TULIP-TREE is easily identified by its tulip-shaped leaves. During the early summer its green and orange flowers, also shaped like tulips, will help you recognize it. The flowers give way to cone-like fruit clusters which remain on the tree during the winter. From the tall, straight trunks of the tulip-tree Indians of the area fashioned dugout canoes.



12



FLOWERING DOGWOOD, a small understory tree, borders the trail to the next station. The large, white flowers appearing in spring are a notable attraction throughout the park. Birds and animals soon eat the bright red fruit that distinguishes the flowering dogwood during the fall.

13

JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE is the vine that covers the ground on both sides of the trail. It was brought to this country from Asia many years ago and now carpets extensive areas. Where it is abundant it prevents the growth of native plants and often completely covers shrubs and small trees. Nevertheless, honeysuckle does afford shelter and a ready food supply for many animals. Its growth on steep slopes often keeps the soil from washing away.



14

Just ahead the trail returns to the Nature Center. Looking back you can see the layer of leaves and decaying wood enriching the soil, the understory trees and shrubs shading the seedlings of the forest giants, the oaks and hickories--but alas, not the chestnut--all creating the scene of the eastern hardwood forest. The Indians of old and our pioneer forefathers passed this way, perhaps through this very forest. If we are careful and thoughtful and do not abuse or destroy these woodlands, they will always be here--preserved for Americans of the future to enjoy.

I hope you have enjoyed your walk. If you have any questions stop in and see me in the Nature Center--I'd like to talk with you.....

The Park Naturalist

The National Park System, of which the National Capital Parks are a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

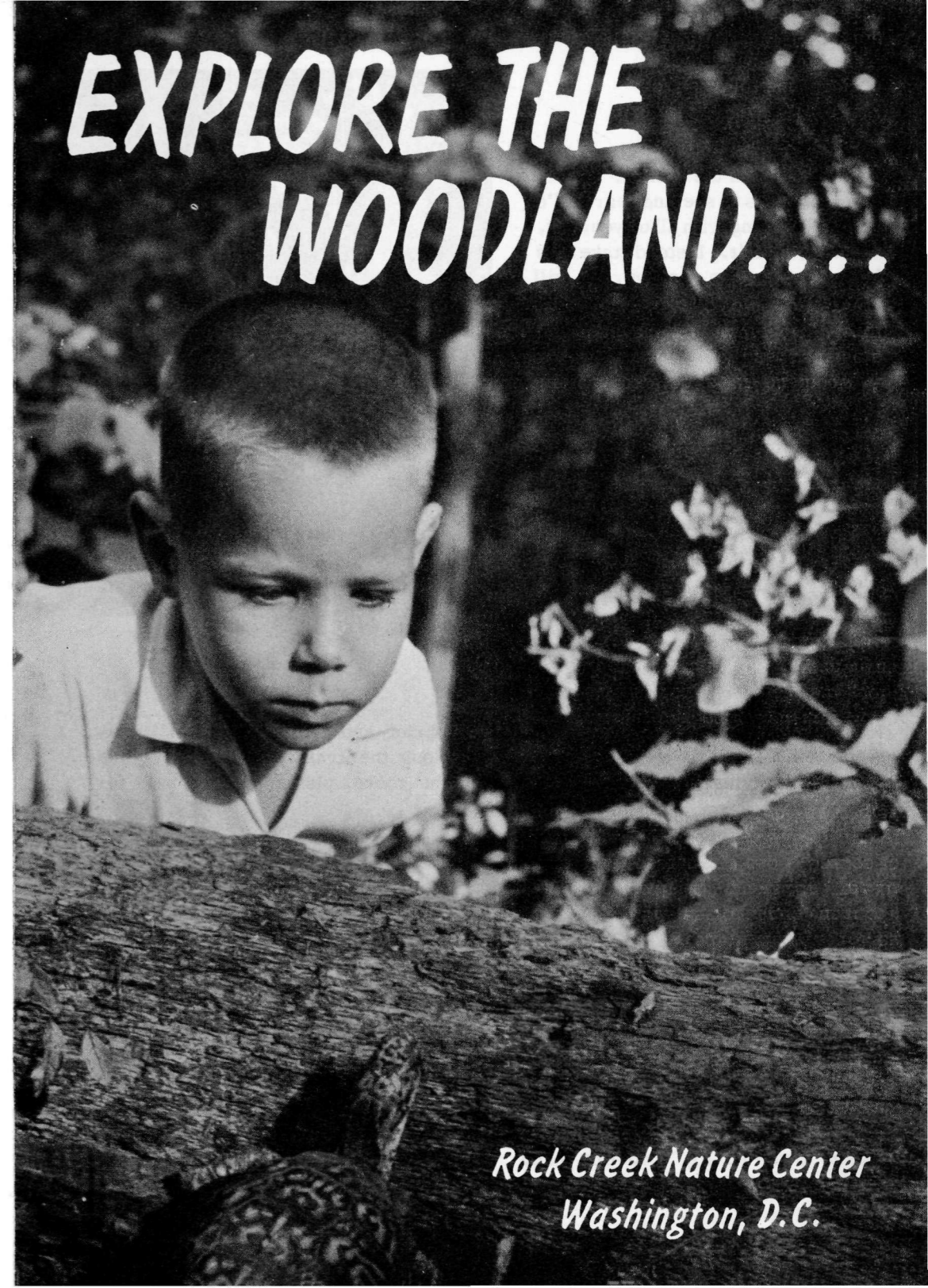


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS



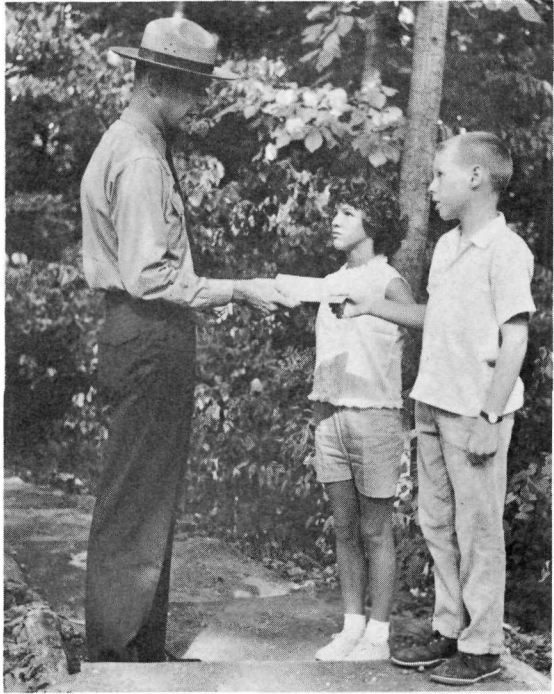
INT.DUP., D.C.62-16450

EXPLORE THE WOODLAND.....



Rock Creek Nature Center
Washington, D.C.

Hi! I'm the Park Naturalist. Let's go for a walk in the woods. There are many things to see and learn. I'd like to walk along with all of you, but, of course, I can't. Instead, take this folder I've written for you. It will help you discover how interesting the woodland can be.



Look for the numbered markers along the trail. Match the numbers on them with the numbered statements in this folder. Allow about 20 minutes to walk the trail. It will bring you back to the Nature Center.

1

A woodland is a delicate community of plants and animals. It is easily disturbed and destroyed. As you walk along the trail, help preserve this forest by staying on the path and leaving the rocks, plants, and animals for others to enjoy.

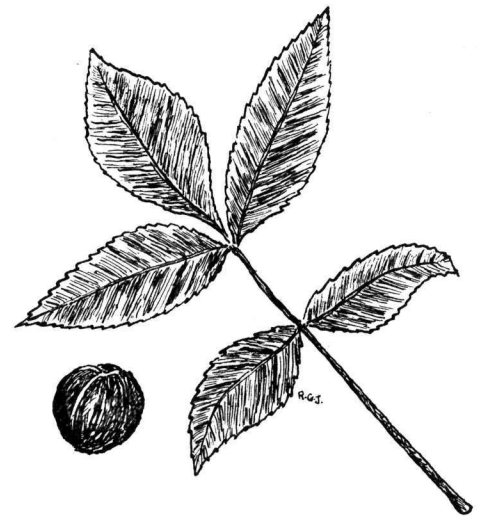
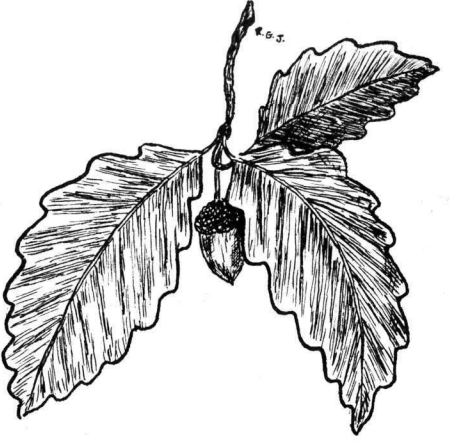
2

This WHITE OAK is one of the largest and oldest trees along the trail. It began growing well before the Civil War. The light-colored bark gives the trees its name. The oaks are valuable forest trees, their acorns providing food for many woodland animals.



3

The big trees around you with the deeply furrowed, rough-looking bark are CHESTNUT NUT OAKS. This is the most common oak found in the woods nearby. The leaves are shaped like the leaves of the chestnut tree. Its large acorns are eagerly sought by squirrels. These animals store nuts for winter use, often burying them. In this way they help produce new trees.



4

Hickory trees are plentiful through these woods. This is a SHAGBARK HICKORY, a good name for a tree with loose, shaggy bark. Like the oaks, there are several different kinds of hickories along the trail. Hickory nuts, too, are an important food for animals in the park.

5

AMERICAN HOLLY is one of the easiest trees to identify. The spiny, stiff leaves remain on the tree all year around and are often used as a decoration at Christmas. Because holly remains rather small, growing under larger trees, it forms a part of the forest called the "understory."



6

POISON IVY is a plant to avoid! Contact with it often produces a severe rash. Notice the vine clinging tightly to the bark of this tree. The numerous brown, hairy rootlets identify it as poison ivy. On each side of the trail poison ivy is also found as a low-growing shrub. Learn to recognize it by the three leaflets.



7

This old CHESTNUT STUMP reveals a distressing story about the eastern woodlands. American chestnut trees were once a prominent and valuable member of the forest community. In the early 1900's a chestnut disease was brought to this country from Asia. It spread rapidly through the forest and in a few short years killed almost every chestnut tree. Attempts to halt the disease by cutting down the infected trees failed, as did all other efforts to save the chestnut. Today, all that remains in Rock Creek Park of this once abundant tree are a few sawed stumps such as this and a few small sprouts growing from still living roots.



8

MOUNTAIN LAUREL may be recognized all through the year by its rather leathery, dark green leaves and its shrubby growth. It, too, is an understory plant growing on hillsides in the shade of other trees. Mountain laurel is especially attractive when it is blooming in the spring.

