

Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens

WASHINGTON, D. C.



Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens

Adjacent to the Anacostia tidal estuary in the northeastern part of the District of Columbia are the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. These gardens are unique in containing approximately 14 acres of ponds planted with some of the most colorful waterlilies and lotuses known to man. Here also in great abundance are associated native plants and animals, typical of pond, marsh, and river habitats, and of the nearby forests of the Atlantic Coastal Plain.

History

The gardens had their beginning in 1882 when W. B. Shaw, a government clerk and Civil War veteran, brought from his native State of Maine some white waterlilies to plant on his property along the Anacostia. Eventually he acquired other species, developed new varieties, enlarged his operations, and expanded his gardens. What had begun as a hobby developed into a vocation, until Mr. Shaw found himself a recognized authority on water gardens. At one time Kenilworth was undoubtedly one of the largest commercial enterprises of its kind.

In 1912 the management was turned over to Mr. Shaw's daughter, Mrs. L. Helen Fowler. She continued and enlarged on her father's work until the area was acquired by the Federal Government in 1938. During the past 75 years many colorful and exquisite

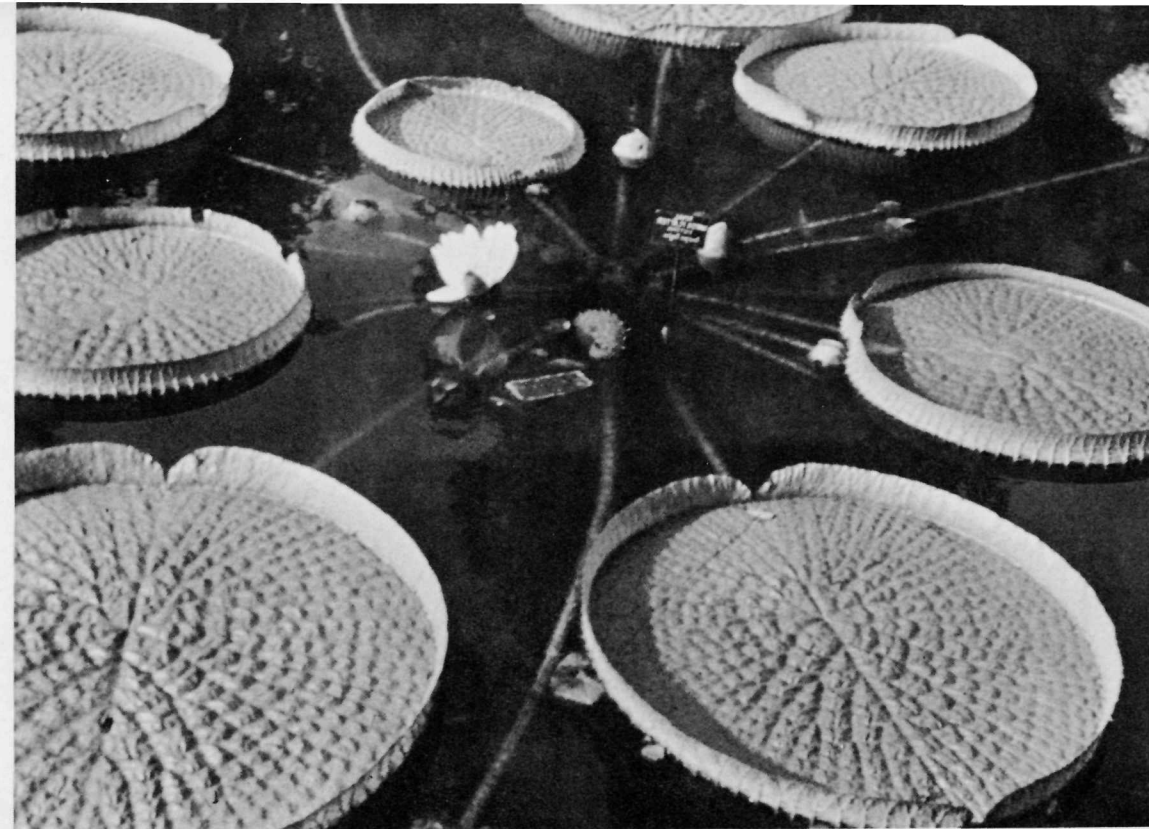
varieties have been developed, and others have been imported from around the world.

About Your Visit

To adequately view this immense display of waterplants, you should plan two trips. In mid-June the hardy day-blooming lilies are at their peak, and you may expect to see several thousand blooms representing about 70 varieties. In the latter part of July or in August the day-blooming and night-blooming tropical waterlilies open. There are about 12 varieties of the former and 25 of the latter. The colorful blossoms range from white through purple, and the delicate pastel shadings combined with the size of the blossoms and the exquisite perfume create an impression of incomparable beauty.

Since many of the blooms close in the heat of the day, you should plan your trip as early as possible. It is recommended that you plan your visit between 8 a. m. and noon. The tropical lilies are located in two areas in the garden—in two of the open pools and in two concrete tanks behind the office. The latter are set out in wooden boxes 30" x 30" x 12". These boxes are filled with manure and rich soil. During the cold months the tubers are stored in wet sand in the greenhouses to avoid winter frost kill. The hardy lilies are left out the year around. You may visit the greenhouses.

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



Victoria waterlily.

Unusual Species

Apart from the beauty of the flowers, several plants are of interest for other reasons. From the Amazon basin comes the renowned *Victoria Cruziana*, a tropical waterlily with immense leaves up to 6 feet in diameter, capable of floating a small child. Because of peculiar drainage holes in the pan-shaped leaves, they will not fill up with rain water. The underside of the leaf has numerous sharp prickles, and in the larger leaves there is a fascinating trusswork of reinforcing veins to support the delicate leaf.

In two tanks behind the greenhouses are the progeny of a most remarkable plant, the Ancient Lotus. In 1951 two lotus seeds,

Marginal Plants and Trees

Besides the lotuses and waterlilies, there are some 40 other species of pond and marginal plants, both exotic and native. They include the yellow-blossomed water poppy (July), bamboo, umbrella-plant, elephant ear or taro, and the water-hyacinth, the control of which has become such a problem in the warmer waters of the South.

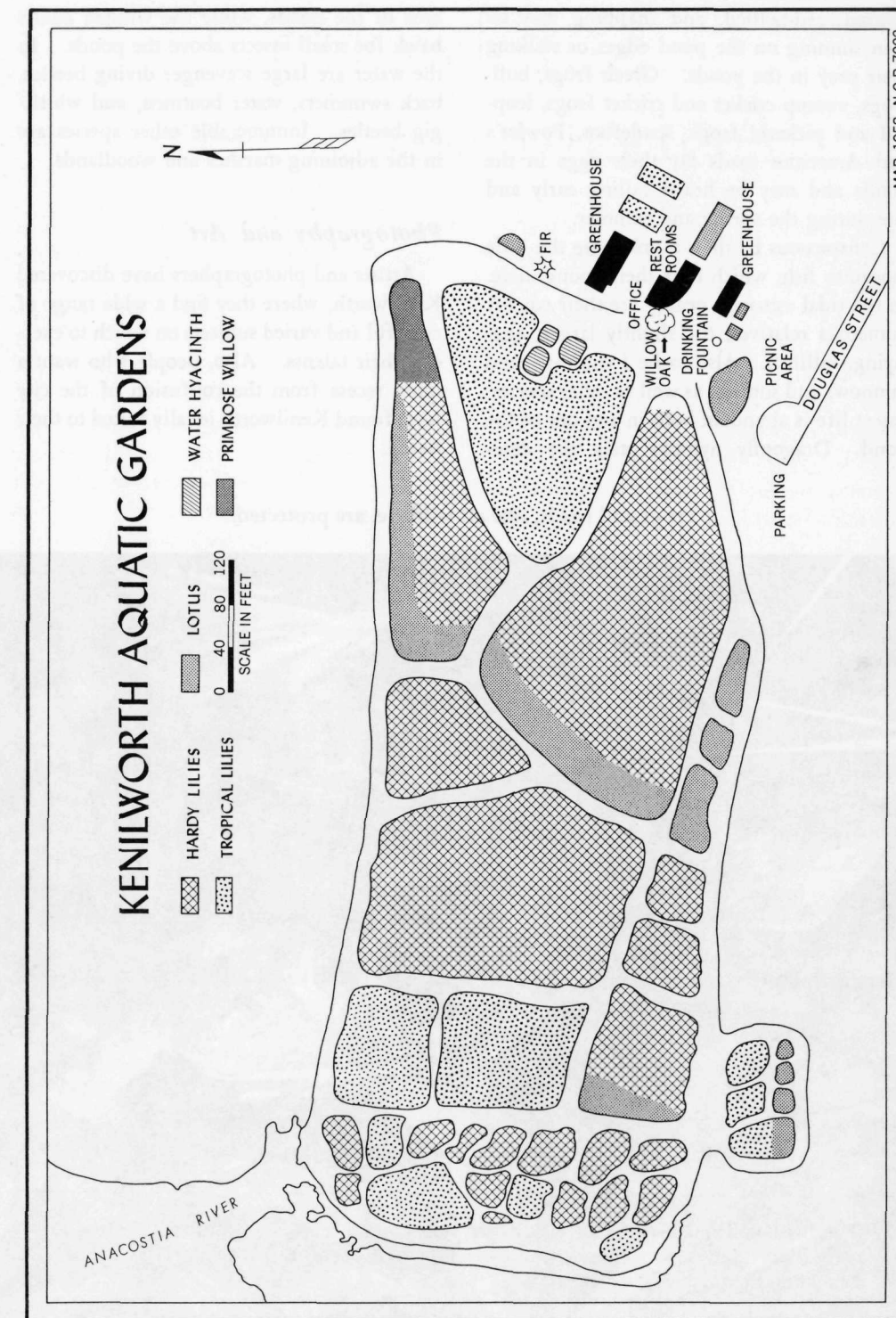
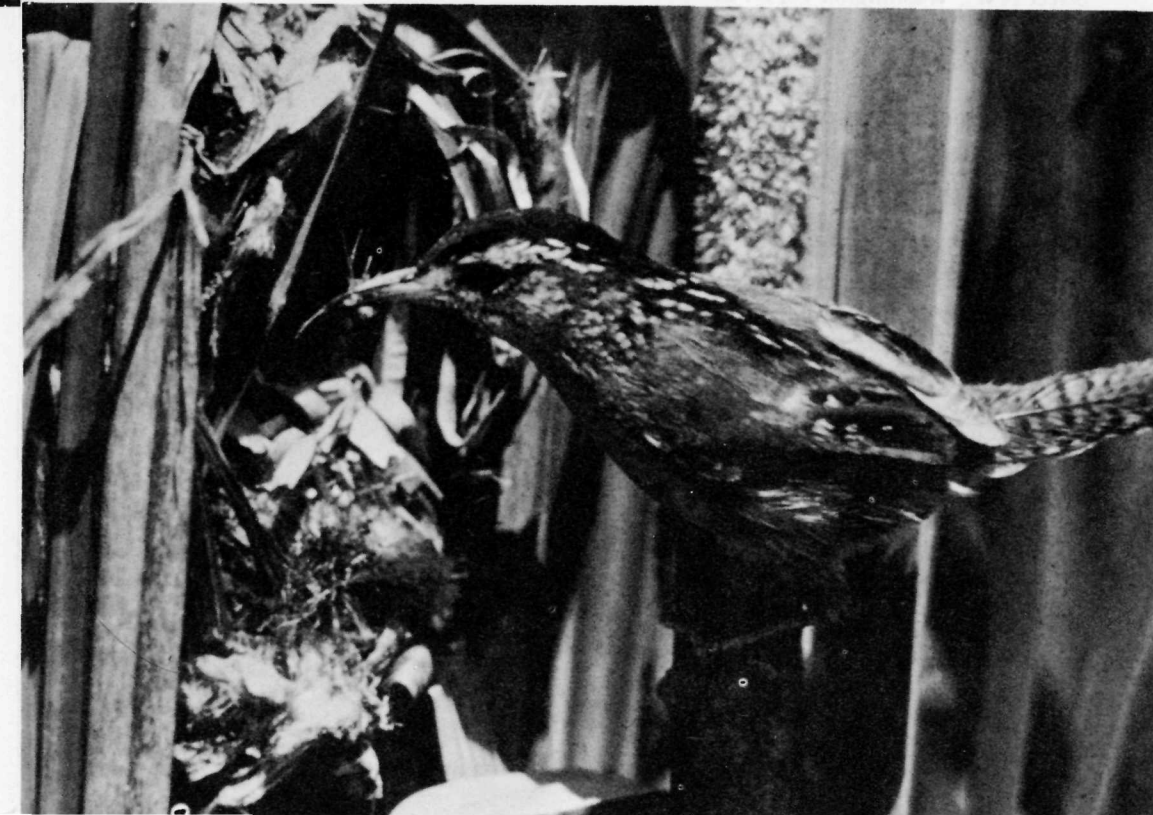
Also in the gardens are such interesting plants as goldenclub, pickerelweed, arrowhead, cardinalflower, hibiscus, loosestrife, waterprimrose, turtlehead, buttonbush, wild-rice, and cattails. Many native trees grow around the pools, including an immense willow oak at the corner of the office. Several other species of oak are present as well as river birch, willows, red maples, elms, ashes, sweet and black gums, sweetbay magnolias, and sycamores. These trees not only create a forest setting for the pools but provide welcome shade during the summer as well.

Long-billed Marsh wren. Copyright: A. A. Allen

Wildlife

To the student of natural history, Kenilworth is of particular interest because of its diverse habitat groupings. The ponds have been created from the original Anacostia swamps and marshes, significant segments of which remain unaltered, providing a refuge for fast-disappearing marsh plants and the animal life associated with them. Least bitterns, long-billed marsh wrens, green herons, and red-winged blackbirds nest in the marsh, and muskrat, raccoon, and opossum are active residents although seldom seen. From the time the waterfowl begin their spring migration in early February until the last of the warblers pass in early June, Kenilworth is a favorite haunt of local ornithologists. Bird walks led by naturalists are scheduled in the spring, and are very popular.

In such a habitat as just described, life reaches a high point of abundance and variety. Several kinds of turtles: Musk, mud, painted,



spotted, red-bellied, and snapping may be seen sunning on the pond edges or stalking their prey in the ponds. Green frogs, bullfrogs, swamp cricket and cricket frogs, leopard and pickerel frogs, spadefoot, Fowler's and American toads lay their eggs in the ponds and may be heard calling early and late during the spring and summer.

Conspicuous by their number are the little mosquito fish, which bear their young alive. In the tidal estuaries nearby are their equally numerous relatives, the slightly larger, egg-laying, killifish. Also to be found are mud minnows and sunfish, as well as other species. Insect life is abundant both in and out of the pond. Dragonfly nymphs stalk the deni-

zens of the ponds, while the winged adults hawk for small insects above the ponds. In the water are large scavenger diving beetles, back swimmers, water boatmen, and whirligig beetles. Innumerable other species are in the adjoining marshes and woodlands.

Photography and Art

Artists and photographers have discovered Kenilworth, where they find a wide range of colorful and varied subjects on which to exercise their talents. Also, people who want a quiet recess from the confusion of the city have found Kenilworth ideally suited to their needs.

Frogs and toads, like all wildlife, are protected.



How To Get There

Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens are in northeast Washington in the vicinity of Kenilworth and Eastern Avenues. From there signs will assist you in locating the gardens at the end of Douglas Street NE. (See location map for details.)

Facilities

A park naturalist is assigned on summer weekends, as scheduled in the annual OUTDOOR PROGRAM, to conduct interpretive bird walks and flower walks. For details call the Naturalist's Office, REpublic 7-1820, Extension 2557.

An office, maintained in conjunction with the greenhouses, usually contains limited displays of aquatic life during the summer. A picnic ground is also found near the parking area and may be reserved by permit through the D. C. Recreation Department, 3149 16th Street NW., Washington 10, D. C.

Mission 66

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Administration

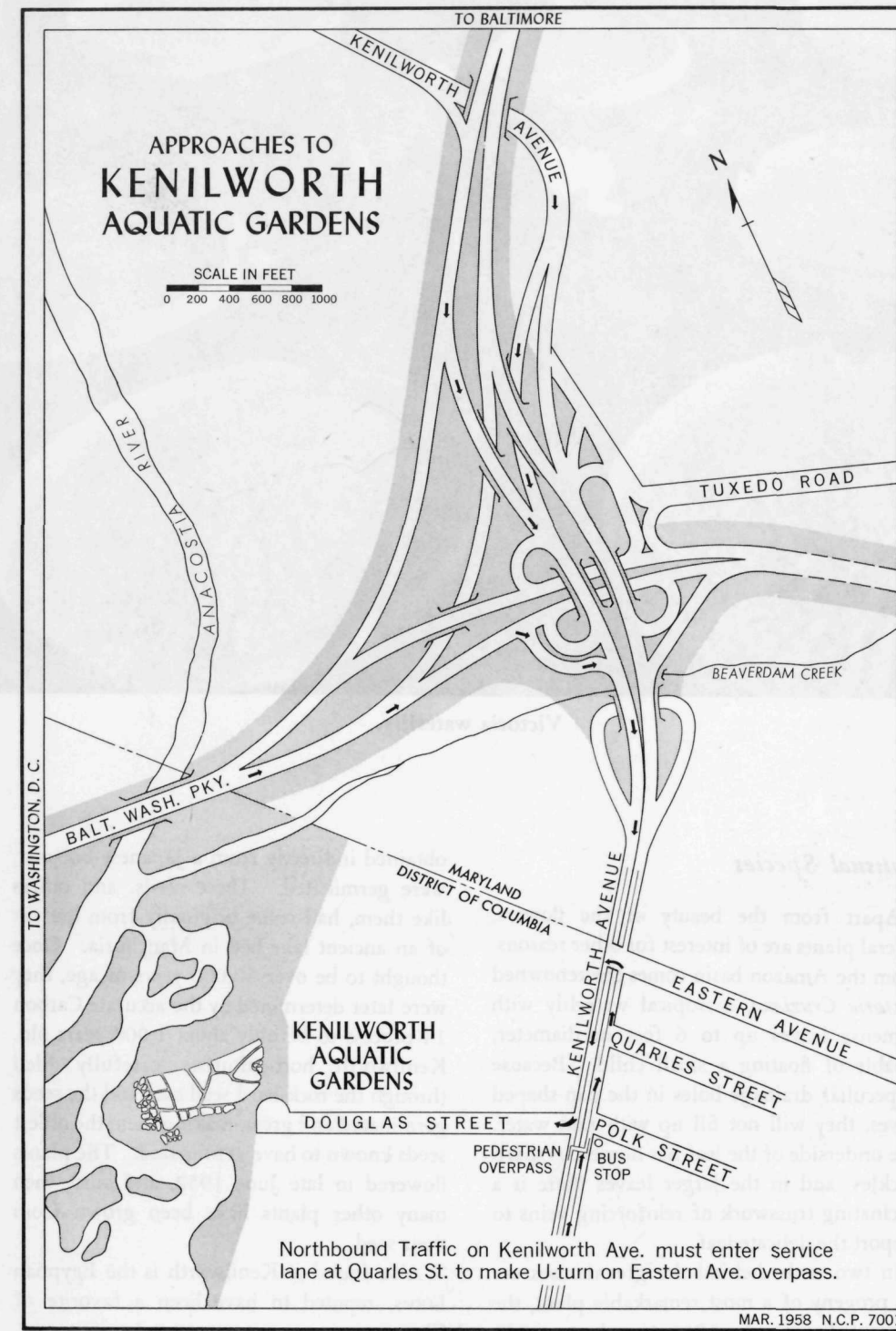
Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens are part of the National Capital Parks administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Inquiries should be addressed to the Regional Director, National Capital Region, National Park Service, Washington 25, D.C., or call REpublic 7-1820, Extension 2095.



Bird walk.



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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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