

Natural History at Carleton

The above is the title of a publication just released by the natural history department. It describes in detail the opportunities and facilities for nature study available here. Because of the inauguration of the natural history program, The Carletonian has asked Drs. Stork and Pettingill to contribute articles on the arboretum. It is unique in the Midwest, and will be the focal point for the whole natural history program.

History . . .

By DR. HARVEY STORK.

Carleton students of twenty-five years ago recall that the view north-eastward from the campus presented unsightly pasture land with a weedy stream winding through it and beyond this a tumble-down farmstead. Later generations of students saw the old buildings replaced by the modern college farm plant.

President Cowling, realizing the force of the immediate environment upon the educative process, planned that Carleton students should be surrounded with beauty in the landscape. His plan grew into the present extensive campus with the George Huntington Lyman Lakes replacing the weedy pasture slough of earlier day.

Carleton Creek, fed by perennial springs that keep the water flowing through the cold of winter and the drought of summer, is a most valuable landscaping asset. It flows into the Cannon River which is bordered by flood plains that are in turn flanked by oak knolls above which the terrain levels off into fertile fields and wooded areas. Along this river, parcels of land were acquired by the college at different times since 1917 until college property now extends down stream for three miles. Three hundred sixty acres of this land are set aside as the Carleton Arboretum. Much of it is wooded and the native trees and shrubs have been preserved while other desirable species are being inter-planted. Two miles north of the college is a natural stand of the black walnut, the most northerly known station for this species. Nearer reaches of the Arboretum have been given over to trial and demonstration of species of trees and shrubs that are valuable in the practice of landscape art.

The Arboretum is a museum of trees and shrubs. As such it vitalizes the teaching of plant science. It is also a proving ground for new materials of landscape gardening. A plant-introductions garden across the road below the lower lake contains specimens recently introduced from Asia and other parts of the world. Carleton college receives from the Bureau of Plant Industry in Washington the results of the collecting by their foreign scouts for the enrichment of our all too meager variety of landscape material in these northwestern states.

Of greatest importance to students of today is the use of the Arboretum as an out-door laboratory for the study of natural history in all its branches. Its foot trails and bridle paths are open to all students who desire understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of nature.

Bird Life . . .

By DR. O. S. PETTINGILL, JR.

The Carleton college Arboretum contains approximately 350 acres,—a mere atom of land as compared to the State of Minnesota. And yet, in this relatively small area, there may be seen at least 150 of the 250 kinds of birds occurring regularly in Minnesota. Why?

It is obvious to the most casual observer that birds, like all types of animal life, prefer certain environments and are associated with them. Some stay close to the water, others frequent the deep woods, still others the open fields. The Arboretum possesses a variety of environments. Very naturally, therefore, these environments bring a variety of birdlife.

But the Arboretum birdlife is famous for more reasons than variety.

Probably there is no better place in the Midwest to witness a spring warbler migration. During this present month hundreds, perhaps thousands, have been passing through each day. A few, such as Redstarts, Yellow Warblers and Northern Yellowthroats have remained to nest, but the majority have passed on to the North. They were clad in their gay and multi-colored spring plumage—some were wearing black and white and orange-red, others were displaying yellow and green, black and yellow, blue and white. In fact, among the different species nearly every conceivable color combination could be found with yellow the predominating color. Apparently the Arboretum offers to these birds the concealment while they stop for food and rest during their arduous migration.

Few places have birds nesting in greater abundance. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Goldfinches, Baltimore Orioles, and Redstarts—the most brilliantly colored of birds—are commonly seen constructing their nests and caring for their young. Where most wooded areas possess a few pairs of these beautiful creatures, the Arboretum has dozens of them. The one hundred or more bird houses scattered through the Arboretum show a remarkably high percentage of occupancy.

The abundance of birdlife is due to several factors. In the first place, complete protection is granted each individual. There is no hunting and general molestation. In the second place, the proper type of cover is present. Sufficient underbrush, for instance, is present, giving the birds living on the forest floor necessary nesting places. In the third place, feeding stations are maintained by the college, particularly during the winter months. These devices encourage birds to remain in the vicinity the

New Major . . .

Next fall the Carleton curriculum will contain a new and interesting "major" field for students who are interested in the various phases of natural history. The natural history major will require at least sixty semester hours of work, chosen from the departments of Geology and Geography, Botany, and Zoology.

The teaching staff of the natural history program will include Dr. Harvey E. Stork, professor of botany and chairman of the natural history program, Dr. Roy A. Waggener, professor of zoology, Dr. Laurence M. Gould, Dr. George R. Gibson, instructor in geology, Dr. Arthur J. Gatz, instructor in zoology, Miss Elizabeth S. Oliver, instructor in botany, Dr. Olin S. Pettingill, instructor in zoology, and Dr. Leonard S. Wilson, instructor in geography.

This new program in natural history is designed by the college to meet the requirements for a broad cultural education and to give preparation to those who look forward to a career in this field. The program is planned for three groups of students.

The first and foremost group includes those students who do not plan to engage in any phase of natural history professionally, but who desire a knowledge of nature and the methods of studying nature for their own pleasure and background. The second group combines with the training for leisure a preparation to use knowledge of nature in activities such as summer camp work, nature-guiding, general science in schools, etc. The third group of students will consist of those interested in a career in an industrial or conservation field which presupposes a thorough college training based on a natural history program.

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