

Newspaper Articles about Cedar Bog 1980s

Resource: Champaign County Library

Newspaper Article: Dayton Daily News and Journal Herald

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Cold waters spawn glacial relic on Ohio, Cedar Bog

Our Natural World

Paul Knoop

As we drive up the valley of the Mad River north of Springfield, I notice the low-lying hills on either side. At this point the valley is perhaps a mile across and it seems strange that the small Mad River could have cut such a massive trough.

To understand how this valley was carved, one must go back about 15,000 years, when the Wisconsin glacier was receding from this part of Ohio. Two lobes of the great glacier had pushed in from the east and west and almost—but not quite—came together in this area. With the melt water from these two glacial lobes spilling into the Mad River, massive flood waters, for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, cut the long, wide valley. At the same time the valley was being cut, large amounts of gravel were carried by the melt water and deposited along the valley sides and within the valley itself.

Today, these deep layers of gravel are saturated with cold ground water. This water seeping to the surface and into the Mad River creates the coldest river in the state. These cold waters support trout and other fish of clear, cold streams.

At one place just east of the Mad River and south of Urbana, the cold waters have created a wetland area called Cedar Bog State Memorial. Cedar Bog is a true glacial relic; plants occurring here are normally found much farther north. The most conspicuous plant, and the one that gives the area its name, is the Northern white cedar or arbor vitae. Walking down the newly constructed boardwalk and I into the cedar grove is like entering another world. These trees grow in dense stands and darkness pervades the interior of a cedar copse. Some trees stand straight and tall while others are leaning or have fallen into the soggy ground. Decomposition of cedar logs is extremely slow, so there is an accumulation of cedar logs up and down Cedar Run. The flowing water is crystal clear and "ice cold" to the touch. There is a primeval aspect here, and as I look out through an opening into the sedge meadow I almost expect to see a mastodon sloshing through the gray marl.

Passing through the some of white cedars, we enter the swamp forest. Here hardwood trees predominate, trees such as tall tulips, black ashes, red maples and basswoods. The floor of this woodland is very wet and an ideal place for skunk cabbage. A recent letter from Mr. Russell Tussing of Dayton laments the fact that, even though he has been an outdoorsman for 80 years, he has never seen the skunk cabbage to recognize it. Skunk cabbage is perhaps one of the most intriguing of our native wildflowers. To find it, one must head for the nearest swamp, marsh or wet woodland. It is here that this famous plant makes its appearance, usually in February and early March. The skunk cabbage is related to the Jack-in-the-pulpit and like "jack" the flowers of the skunk cabbage are surrounded by a hood-like arrangement called a spathe. This spathe is actually a fleshy, modified leaf two to six inches high, mottled with yellow-green and purple-red. This spathe is what one notices while walking in the wet woodland. The actual flowers are located down inside the spathe on a 1 ¼ -inch-high structure called the spadix. The true flowers are small and cream colored. Once pollinated they will form a six-inch diameter spongy mass with spherical seeds inside. As the spathe withers in late spring, large cabbage-like leaves emerge from the base of each plant. These leaves stand 2 to 4 feet high, are deep

green in color and when crushed have a decidedly skunky odor. The abundance of these tall leaves in Cedar Bog in the summer presents a tropical aspect to this woodland.

Passing through the swamp woodland we suddenly break out into the open "marl flats." These marl flats present a decidedly different habitat, where lime from ground water has been deposited over all. Living here are rare plants and animals such as orchids, swamp birch, sundew, spotted turtles, and massasauga rattlesnakes. The turtle and rattlesnake are endangered in Ohio and it is here that they find one of their last strongholds.

To visit Cedar Bog, contact the Department of Natural History, the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio 43211; phone (614) 466-1500.

Resource: Champaign County Library

Newspaper Article: Daily Citizen

Date: April 17, 1987

Them Toads, they are a trillin'

By Stephen Huba

Citizen Staff Writer

"Twas the night of the toads.

A spooky haze settled over Cedar Bog as a light drizzle ensured that only true toad enthusiast would turn out for the first toad trilling of the season.

For the 20 or 0 people who braved the chill, it was worth it to hear the chorus of male American toads trilling for a mate and warning other males to stay away.

"The toads have been more quiet this year," said Terry Jaworski, naturalist for the bog. "But they've been more melodious."

An unusually cold spring and snow has kept the toad activity down until two nights ago when the trilling started again, Jaworski said.

When that happens, Jaworski's "hotline" goes into effect. It was set up two years ago to gather people who are interested in the yearly phenomena.

"I was at some board meeting one evening being extremely bored, when, as I was leaving, two women who were there asked me where I was going. I said, 'I'm going down to the bog. The toads have started trilling again.'

"Well, they expressed interest, so I said, 'Go home, get your families and I'll meet you down there.' And that's how the program got started—just some normal people wanting to see what it was all about.

Since then, Jaworski has advertised and has built up a network of people who are contacted by him when it first turns 60 degrees and the toads come out of hibernation to pursue mating activity.

Once a male attracts a female by his trilling, she allows him to get on her back, and the process begins. The male hooks his "superthumbs" under the female's arms and they begin emitting sperm and egg respectively. "We are hopeful that the two genetic parts find each other," Jaworski said.

"This is a good biological lesson on how a species uses en masse reproductive activity as a strategy for security," he added.

During the 24-hour period that the toads are locked together, 100s of eggs are produced. The state the toads reach as they mate is called amplexus. Thursday night there were 10 amplexan couples in the pond.

Jaworski picked one up and explained to the crowd, "This is what all the music is about tonight." After giving a brief talk on the process of amplexus, he returned the couple to the water. "We'll let them get back to their romantic evening.

"The real excitement here tonight is that this is the only time the toads return to the pond," he said. The trilling continues for about two weeks.

Cedar Bog, on Woodburn Rd., is a nature preserve of the Ohio Historical Society, of which Jaworski is a curator.