The Seasons at Rice Creek Field Station

Rice Creek Field Station is gifted with a wide variety of cover types and therefore is richly endowed with interesting species of plants and animals. A visitor who walks the trails in proper season may see woodland flowers, migrating waterfowl or the well-marked paths of deer and cottontail.

Those who are not able to visit in every season, however, will miss a great deal. These panels are designed to show visitors at any time of the year how the field conditions they find relate to conditions in other seasons.

The Panels Show Actual Rice Creek Settings

The scenes are fairly accurate portrayals of two settings that could be seen looking south and west from the gallery windows of the original building during the mid-1980's. That building was located about fifty feet closer to the water than the current building. Time changes the landscape. Of the four trees featured in the panels, the ash, black cherry and beech trees are no longer standing. The portion of each panel to the left of the sugar maple tree can be seen looking south from that tree. The portion of each panel to the right of the sugar maple tree can be seen by looking westward from that tree.

How the Panels Reveal Seasonal Sequence

Individual species of plants are always shown in the same location in each panel so that seasonal development can be followed from panel to panel. The plants illustrated are only a small representative sample of all the species found at Rice Creek.

Birds and animals shown are also representative of the many species which may be seen at Rice Creek. Resident (year-round) species appear in at least two of the four panels. Migratory species appear either in the spring or fall panel. All those found in the summer panel are species which nest or den at Rice Creek.

A Summary of the Yearly Cycle at Rice Creek

The sequence starts with spring when the snow melts and spring flowers appear. Many of the woodland flowers will bloom, set fruit and disappear during the spring. Others which bloom in spring will produce fruit through the summer and some will even linger into the fall. A few species of woodland flowers do not bloom until summer. Some of these are through flowering well before leaves fall while others continue to bloom until the first killing frost.

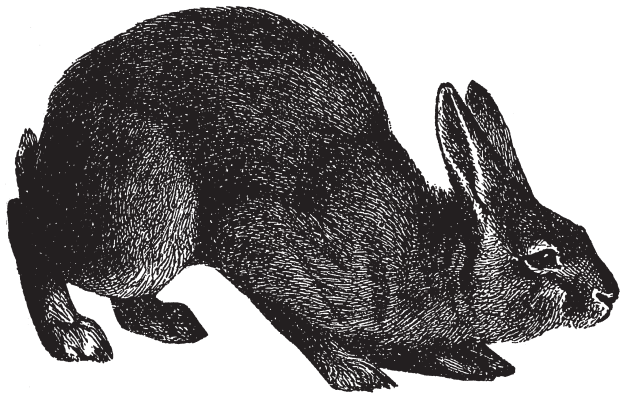
Most of the trees and shrubs shown in the panels also bloom early in the growing season, but some precede and some follow leaf emergence. Those that precede leaf emergence are illustrated in the spring panel; those which follow leaf emergence are illustrated in the summer panel.

With few exceptions, the wetland plants do not begin to bloom until late May or early June, so the flowering state is illustrated in the summer panel.

An early frost in autumn may bring an end to flowering of herbs, causing leaves to lose their green color or to shrivel up leaving only clusters or fruits.

Summer resident birds gradually disappear as they migrate southward. They are followed by transient species which nest to the north and stop by on their way to southern wintering grounds.

Mammals may change their diets in autumn to adjust to changes in the condition of plant and animal life. Some begin more elaborate preparations for winter, such as heavy feeding prior to hibernation or the construction of winter homes. Winter conditions are harsh. Most plants are dormant and only the hardiest bird and animal species will be seen. They will be joined by birds which have nested far to the north but find satisfactory wintering conditions at Rice Creek.



Season By Season Details

Spring:

Conditions shown in this panel are those which are initiated before the closing of the forest canopy (full emergence of tree leaves). Characterizing the beginning of the season, tree buds have begun to swell and the forest floor is covered with colorful spring flowers. Shown in the panel are: 1 hepatica, 2 3 trilliums, 4 trout lily, 5 false solomon's seal, 6 may apple, 7 wild ginger, 8 false lily-of-the-valley, 9 partridge berry, 10 spring beauty, 11 Dutchman's breeches, 12 snakeroot (shoot), 13 jack-in-the-pulpit, 14 white baneberry or doll's eyes, 15 red baneberry, 16 solomon's seal, 17 bigleaf aster (not blooming), fiddleheads of 18 spinulose shield fern (mid background), 19 Christmas fern (left foreground) and 20 sensitive fern, also appear. 21 Sugar maple, 22 trembling aspen, 23 shadbush, and 24 apple are in full bloom. Dark green 25 spruce show light green tips produced by new growth. Buds of 26 alder and 27 cornel are opening casting a light yellow-green veil over the shrubs. Greening clumps of 28 arrow arum emerge as do the still unidentifiable shoots of other aquatic plants.

A A ruffed grouse has located its nest at the base of the ash tree, while a B newborn fawn hides among the trilliums. The C chipmunk, her young in an underground burrow, searches for food. E Kingfisher and D1 wood duck have returned to nest here. F1 Osprey, G Canada geese and D2 green-winged teal stop by on their way to northern nesting grounds. The H beaver has cut an aspen to obtain succulent twigs and bark. Her young are in a lodge in another part of the pond. Floating logs or spits of land support I basking turtles or, perhaps a J bull frog.

Summer:

Summer starts with the closing of the forest canopy. Now the forest floor is in full shade. 2 3 Trillium, 4 trout lily, 10 spring beauty, and 11 Dutchman's breeches have disappeared. 12 Snakeroot and 17 bigleaf aster are in full bloom along with 30 purple loosestrife, 31 joe-pye weed, 32 arrow head, 33 pickerel weed, 34 Indian pipe, 35 cardinal flower, and 36 spotted jewel weed. 20 Sensitive fern provides cover in the shallows. Clumps of 28 arrow arum and banks of 37 burreed, 38 bulrush and 39 cattails are dense enough to provide screening and nesting cover. 29 Wintergreen and 9 partridge berry have already produced bright red fruit.

A K weasel surveys the forest floor where L gray squirrel, A a ruffed grouse with its young and an M ovenbird with its arched egg-filled nest and a young N cottontail forage for food. A D3 drake mallard loafs at the shoreline while his mate escorts a small brood of ducklings. The O muskrat forages for algae and succulent greens in the shallows while a P great-blue heron fishes for minnows, tadpoles or frogs. A B doe with twin fawns is momentarily distracted by leaping Q pickerel. A F2 red-tailed hawk surveys the wetland from a high perch. A brilliant male R scarlet tanager and his somber mate have located their nest in the beech tree while the S cardinal has chosen a shrub at water's edge.

Rice Creek
FIELD STATION

STATE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW YORK AT OSWEGO

Autumn:

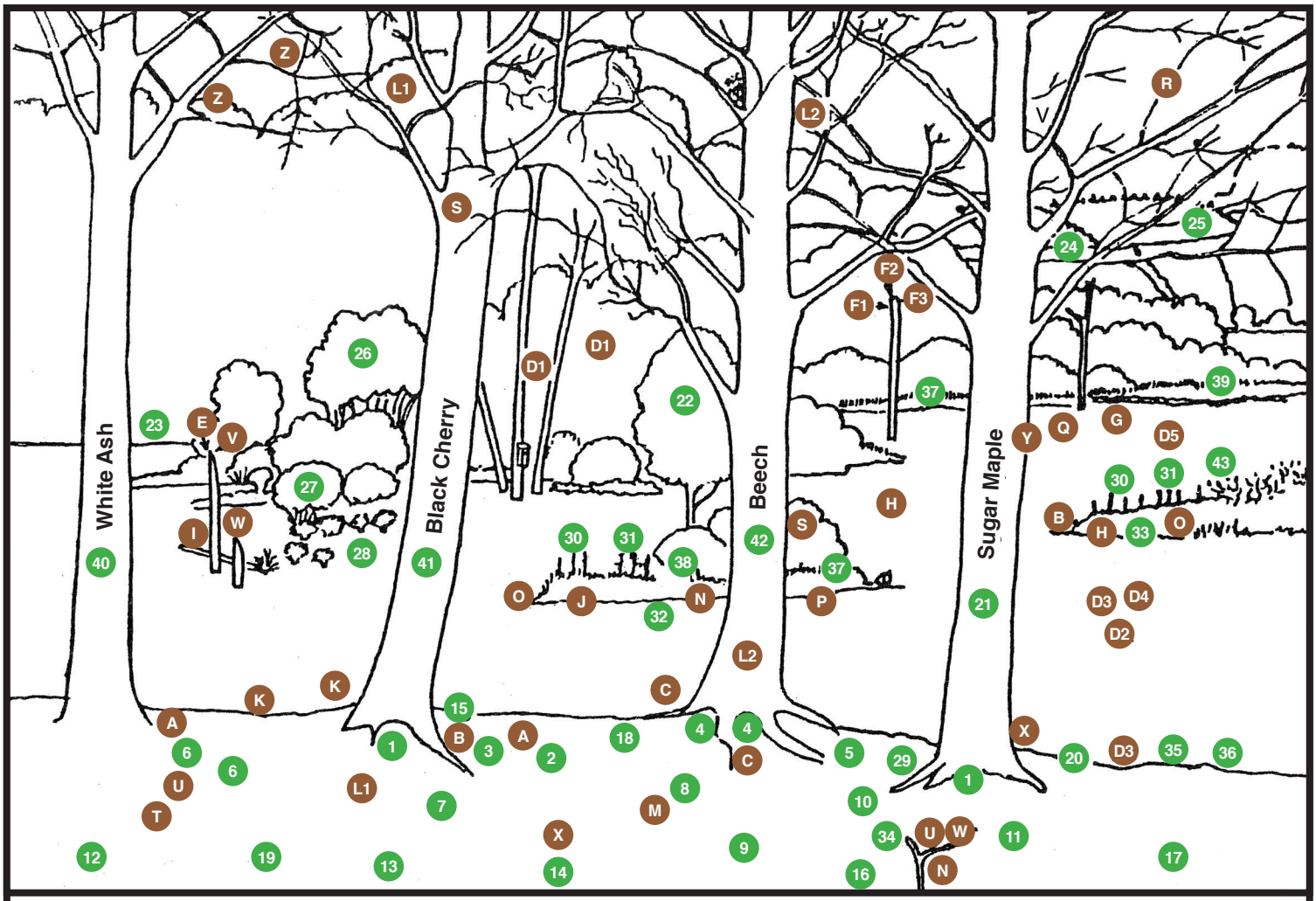
Autumn is initiated by the change in leaf color. 40 White ash leaves turn maroon while 41 black cherry, 42 beech, and 22 aspen turn yellow. The 21 sugar maple displays varying shades of gold, orange and scarlet. Most of the flowering plants have disappeared but several 5 6 8 9 13 14 15 16 29 have showy fruits, many of which attract wildlife.

D4 Widgeon and D5 gadwall ducks drop in for food and rest before continuing southward. A T woodchuck prepares a new burrow for his winter sleep while, O muskrat and H beaver are busy working on their winter shelters. The C chipmunk scurries to escape the aggressive L2 red squirrel. Both are normally gathering winter food. S Cardinal and U chickadee have completed their nesting. A young V great horned owl has ventured from cover too early in the day and is being harassed by W blue jays. A X red fox watches the widgeon, hoping perhaps, that they will wander within striking distance.

Winter:

Winter begins with the fall of leaves. The snowy cover at mid-winter obscures most of the plant life but the dormant 30 white ash, 32 beech, and 43 sumac provide food sources and home sites for many species of animals. The L2 red squirrel and the L1 gray squirrel find shelter in leaf nests or cavities in trees. T Woodchuck and C chipmunk are in hibernation.

X Red fox and K weasel hunting during the daylight hours may be interested in cottontail or small rodents. U Chickadee and W blue jay must also be aware of these mammalian predators and also the F3 goshawk. When the carpenter ants and the other insects are scarce, the Y pileated woodpecker may focus his attention on 43 sumac, wild grape or other fruits. Z Evening grosbeaks, winter visitants from the North, may dine on ash or maple fruits, but are more likely to seek out the abundant supply of sunflower seeds in the field station feeders.



Animals Portrayed on Panels

A	Ruffed Grouse	F1	Osprey	L2	Red Squirrel	U	Chickadee
B	Deer	F2	Red-Tailed Hawk	M	Ovenbird	V	Great Horned Owl
C	Chipmunk	F3	Goshawk	N	Cottontail	W	Blue Jay
D1	Wood Duck	G	Canada Goose	O	Muskrat	X	Red Fox
D2	Green-Winged Teal	H	Beaver	P	Great Blue Heron	Y	Pileated Woodpecker
D3	Mallard Duck	I	Painted Turtle	Q	Pickerel	Z	Evening Grosbeak
D4	American Widgeon	J	Bull Frog	R	Scarlet Tanager		
D5	Gadwell Duck	K	Weasel	S	Cardinal		
E	Kingfisher	L1	Gray Squirrel	T	Wood Chuck		

Plants Portrayed on Panels

1	Hepatica	12	White Snakeroot	23	Shadbush	34	Indian Pipe
2	White Trillium	13	Jack-In-The-Pulpit	24	Apple	35	Cardinal Flower
3	Red Trillium	14	Doll's Eyes	25	Spruce	36	Jewelweed
4	Trout Lily	15	Red Baneberry	26	Alder	37	Burreed
5	False Solomon's Seal	16	Solomon's Seal	27	Cornel	38	Bulrush
6	May Apple	17	Bigleaf Aster	28	Arrow Arum	39	Cattail
7	Wild Ginger	18	Spinulose Shield	29	Wintergreen	40	White Ash
8	False Lily-of-the-Valley	19	Christmas Fern	30	Purple Loosestrife	41	Black Cherry
9	Partridge Berry	20	Sensitive Fern	31	Joe-Pye Weed	42	Beech
10	Spring Beauty	21	Sugar Maple	32	Arrow Leaf	43	Sumac
11	Dutchman's Breeches	22	Trembling Aspen	33	Pickerel Weed		

OSWEGO
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK