



TREE CAVITIES

Many mammals and birds stay active during the winter and need a cozy place as a retreat from the cold. Tree cavities, both natural and those whittled by woodpeckers, shelter gray squirrels, raccoons, flying squirrels, owls—even a wild bee hive!



POISON IVY VINES

Although poison ivy is a summer scourge, it can pose just as much of a threat during the winter.

Without leaves, poison ivy vines look like fuzzy ropes entwining the trunks of large trees. All parts of the vines are toxic and should not be touched!



WINTER BIRDS

Birds may be the most visible fauna along the trail in winter. Woodpeckers, from the tiny downy to the impressive pileated,

announce their presence with a resounding tapping. Nuthatches and creepers cavort up and down the tree trunks, while chickadees and titmice chatter incessantly on trips to and from the feeder. Ask for our bird checklist at the information counter.



TRACKS

Most of the larger animals in the swamp are nocturnal, but if you look carefully, you can find traces of their activities. Raccoons,

digging for crayfish, leave hand-like prints in the mud. Muskrats and deer also leave tracks, especially if there is fresh snow on the ground.



DID YOU KNOW?

Bald Cypress trees have female cones that are round with a wrinkled surface and much smaller male cones. Early in spring the male cones will release copious quantities of pollen to fertilize the female cones which will, in turn, produce seeds, providing food for wild turkeys, wood ducks and other wildlife.



SQUIRREL NESTS

With trees bare, it is easy to spot these nests. About the size of a basketball, each nest is made of packed twigs and leaves, and is lined with shredded bark (commonly cypress) and hair. Great horned owls have been known to crash into the nests feet-first to knock the squirrels out into the open.



SAPSUCKER HOLES

Many trees are ringed with row-upon-row of tiny holes - the work of the yellow-bellied sapsucker, a small woodpecker. The sapsuckers, and several other birds, feed on both the sap oozing from the holes and the insects attracted to it.

BATTLE CREEK CYPRESS SWAMP CYPRESS KNEE TRAIL

Winter



Welcome to **BATTLE CREEK CYPRESS SWAMP**

Stop for a moment and look up. Towering 50 to 100 feet above you is the majestic bald cypress, the most abundant tree in this swamp. Its flared base is distinctive, and its feathery needles (leaves) are shed in the fall. Peculiar knobby projections poking through the mud (called "knees") are extensions of the root system. They help brace the tree, store carbohydrates, and may help provide oxygen to the submerged roots.

In the shade of these towering giants, it is easy to abandon the stress of daily living for the intimate struggle of a spider with a fly or a crayfish with mud.

Remember: Stop frequently. The trail can be walked in 15 minutes, but pause to absorb the sights and sounds, and to enrich your memory of the cypress swamp.

Look with your eyes, but see with your brain. Try to think like the animal you seek, then look for movement; you may be rewarded by the bobbing of a waterthrush at your feet or by the barred owl's quiet stare.

Listen for every little sound. Many elusive creatures reveal themselves with sound. Woodpeckers can often be spotted by following their tappings.

Enjoy your visit, but please remember to stay on the trail and leave everything as you found it for others.

