

# THE BIG WOODS: A (NEARLY) LOST NATURAL HERITAGE



## GO BACK IN TIME

Look around and you can glimpse what Minnetonka looked like before settlement. A **restored black-ash swamp** lies in front of you. Beyond this soggy swath, a small stand of the **"Big Woods" survives**—a remnant of what was once a vast old-growth forest. Here, individual basswood and maple **trees over 150 years old** tower above the site.

## A WILD HOME

Many birds prefer these old stands of forest. The mature trees are irresistible to **Downy Woodpeckers**. You could also see a **Scarlet Tanager** darting out from the forest canopy or an **Eastern Bluebird** on the woods' outskirts.

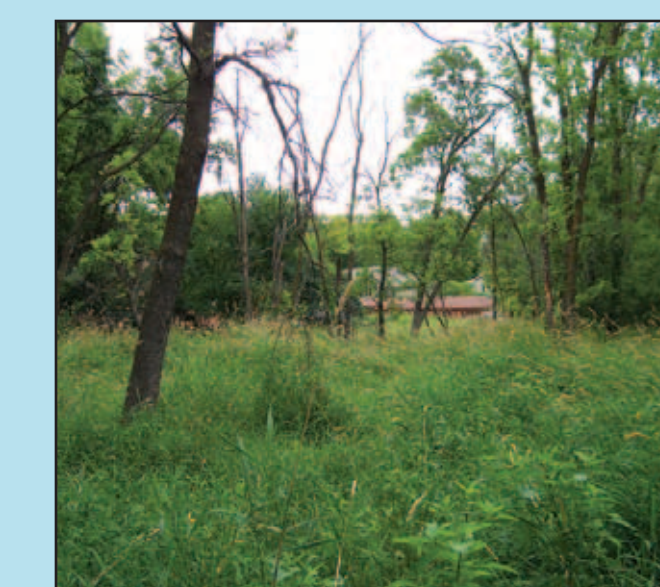
A diversity of plants harbor a multitude of **butterflies** and **dragonflies**. It is a paradise for **amphibians** at water's edge, while **waterfowl** of all kinds come here to find food, shelter and nesting spots.

## A RELATIVE RARITY

The Big Woods have all but disappeared in Minnesota. Since settlement, roughly **98 percent** of this deciduous forest community has been **cut down**. Today, mostly just small fragments like this one still exist. It is a reason why Gideon Glen is a place that is worth protecting.

## RESTORING THE PAST

Nearby development degraded the wetland and imperiled the forest. To reverse the trend, the City of Shorewood and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District **restored the glen to a healthy condition**.



BEFORE



DURING CONSTRUCTION



NEWLY PLANTED

