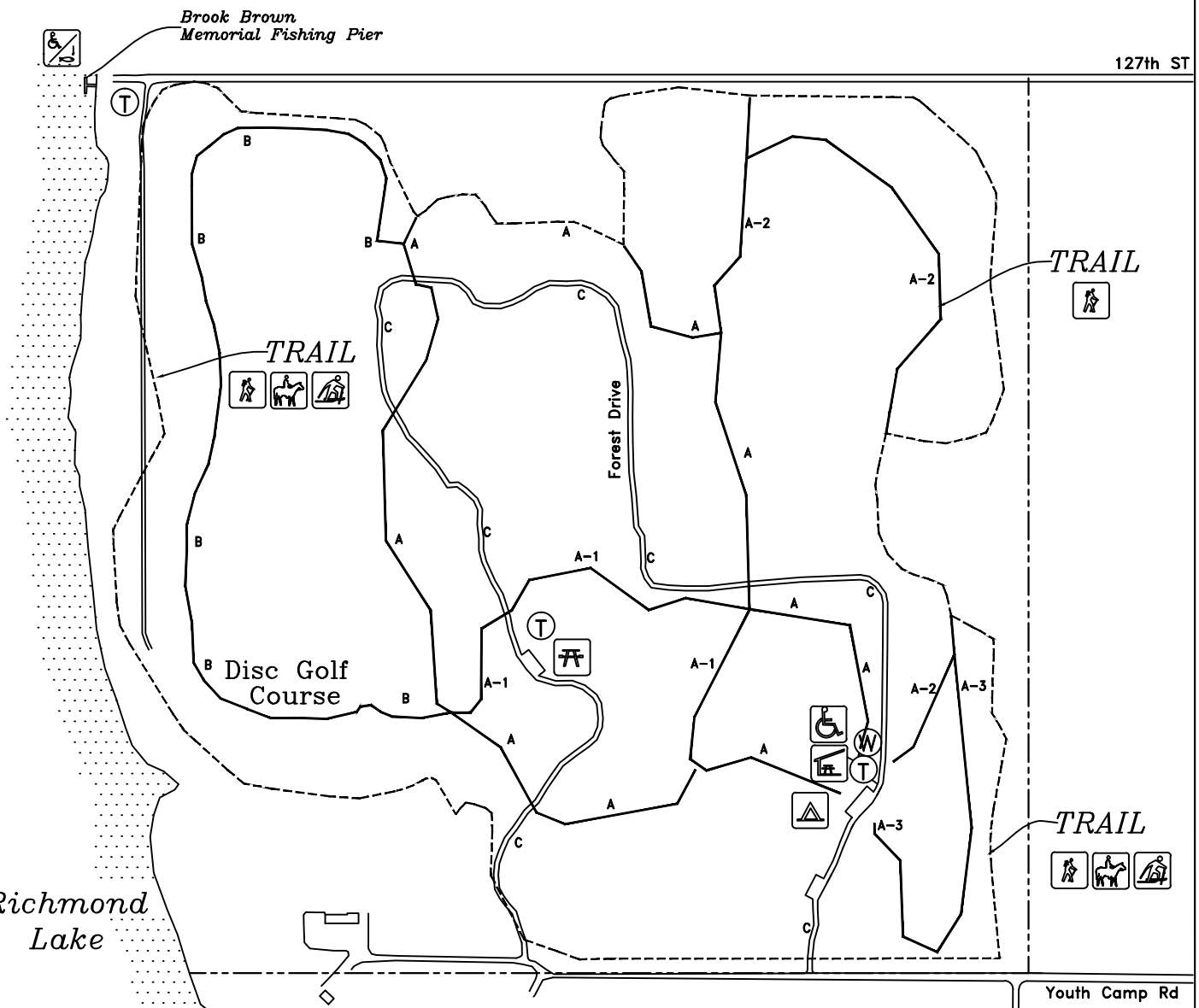
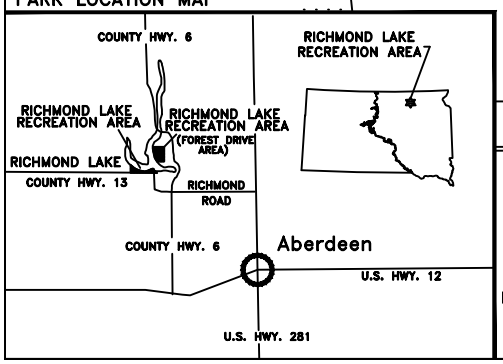
Richmond Lake Recreation Area
Trail System

Forest Drive Area



PARK LOCATION MAP



TRAIL	DISTANCE (MILE)
A	1.03
A–1	.36
A–2	.59
A–3	.26
B	.67
C	1.10
HORSE TRAIL	1.86

HIKING TRAIL
SKI TRAIL
HORSE TRAIL
ENTRANCE STATION
GROUP AREA CAMPING
PICNIC SHELTER
PICNIC AREA
ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES
ACCESSIBLE FISHING PIER
NORTH
VAULT TOILET
DRINKING WATER

Richmond Lake Recreation Area

Cross-Country Ski Trail

Type of trail: Cross-country skiing/Hiking

Trail surface: Grass/Dirt

Rated: Flat except for Forest Drive Trail, some hills

Fee required: Park Entrance Fee

Length of trail in miles: Three miles

Location of the trailhead: Forest Drive warming shelter

Facilities at or near the trailhead: Toilet, water, enclosed picnic shelter, fireplace

Facilities along the trail: None

Will there be interpretive information available: Trail map at warming shelter

What lodging opportunities are provided IN the park: Tent camping, electrical and non-electrical campsites, wheelchair accessible campsite, camping cabin

Does this trail connect with any other trails: Horse Trail, Disc Golf Course

Nearest facilities for purchasing snacks, sunscreen etc.: In Aberdeen -11 miles

Nearest motels/restaurants OUTSIDE the park: In Aberdeen -11 miles

Nearest Chamber of Commerce:
Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce, 516 S. Main St., Aberdeen, SD 57401, (605) 225-2860

Emergency phone numbers:
Ambulance – 911
Sheriff – 911
Fire Department – 911

Do most cell phones work on this trail: Yes

Richmond Lake Recreation Area

Disc Golf Trail

Type of trail: Disc Golf Course

Trail surface: Grass

Rated: Flat

Fee required: Park Entrance Fee

Length of trail in miles: Approximately two miles

Location of the trailhead: .75 miles from Forest Drive entrance (third parking lot)

Facilities at or near the trailhead: Picnic tables, fireplace

Facilities along the trail: None

Will there be interpretive information available: Information sign at trailhead

What lodging opportunities are provided IN the park: Tent camping, electrical and non-electrical campsites, wheelchair accessible campsite, camping cabin

Does this trail connect with any other trails: Passes through Hiking Trail

Nearest facilities for purchasing snacks, sunscreen etc.: In Aberdeen - 11 miles

Nearest motels/restaurants OUTSIDE the park: In Aberdeen - 11 miles

Name, address, and phone numbers of nearest Chamber of Commerce:
Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce, 516 S. Main St., Aberdeen, SD 57401, (605) 225-2860

Emergency phone numbers:
Ambulance – 911
Sheriff – 911
Fire Department – 911

Do most cell phones work on this trail: Yes

Richmond Lake Recreation Area

Forest Drive Trail

Type of trail: Hiking and biking

Trail surface: grass

Rated: Moderate, somewhat hilly, even trail surface

Fee required: Park Entrance Fee

Length of trail in miles: 4.3 miles

Location of the trailhead: Forest Drive warming shelter

Facilities at or near the trailhead: Drinking water, toilet, parking, swim beach

Facilities along the trail: None

Will there be interpretive information available: No, only at trailhead

What lodging opportunities are provided IN the park: Tent camping, electrical and non-electrical campsites, wheelchair accessible campsite, camping cabin

Does this trail connect with any other trails: Horse Trail, Cross-Country Ski Trail and Disc Golf Trail

Nearest facilities for purchasing snacks, sunscreen etc.: In Aberdeen - 11 miles

Nearest motels/restaurants OUTSIDE the park: In Aberdeen - 11 miles

Nearest Chamber of Commerce:
Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce, 516 S. Main St., Aberdeen, SD 57401, (605) 225-2860

Emergency phone numbers:
Ambulance – 911
Sheriff – 911
Fire Department – 911

Do most cell phones work on this trail: No

Richmond Lake Recreation Area

HorseTrail

Type of trail: Horse

Trail surface: Grass/Dirt

Rated: Flat

Fee required: Park Entrance Fee

Length of trail in miles: Three miles

Location of the trailhead: Forest Drive warming shelter

Facilities at or near the trailhead: Toilet, water, picnic shelter, fireplace

Facilities along the trail: None

Will there be interpretive information available: No

What lodging opportunities are provided IN the park: Tent camping, electrical and non-electrical campsites, wheelchair accessible campsite, camping cabin

Does this trail connect with any other trails: Hiking and Cross-Country Ski Trail

Nearest facilities for purchasing snacks, sunscreen etc.: In Aberdeen - 11 miles

Nearest motels/restaurants OUTSIDE the park: In Aberdeen - 11 miles

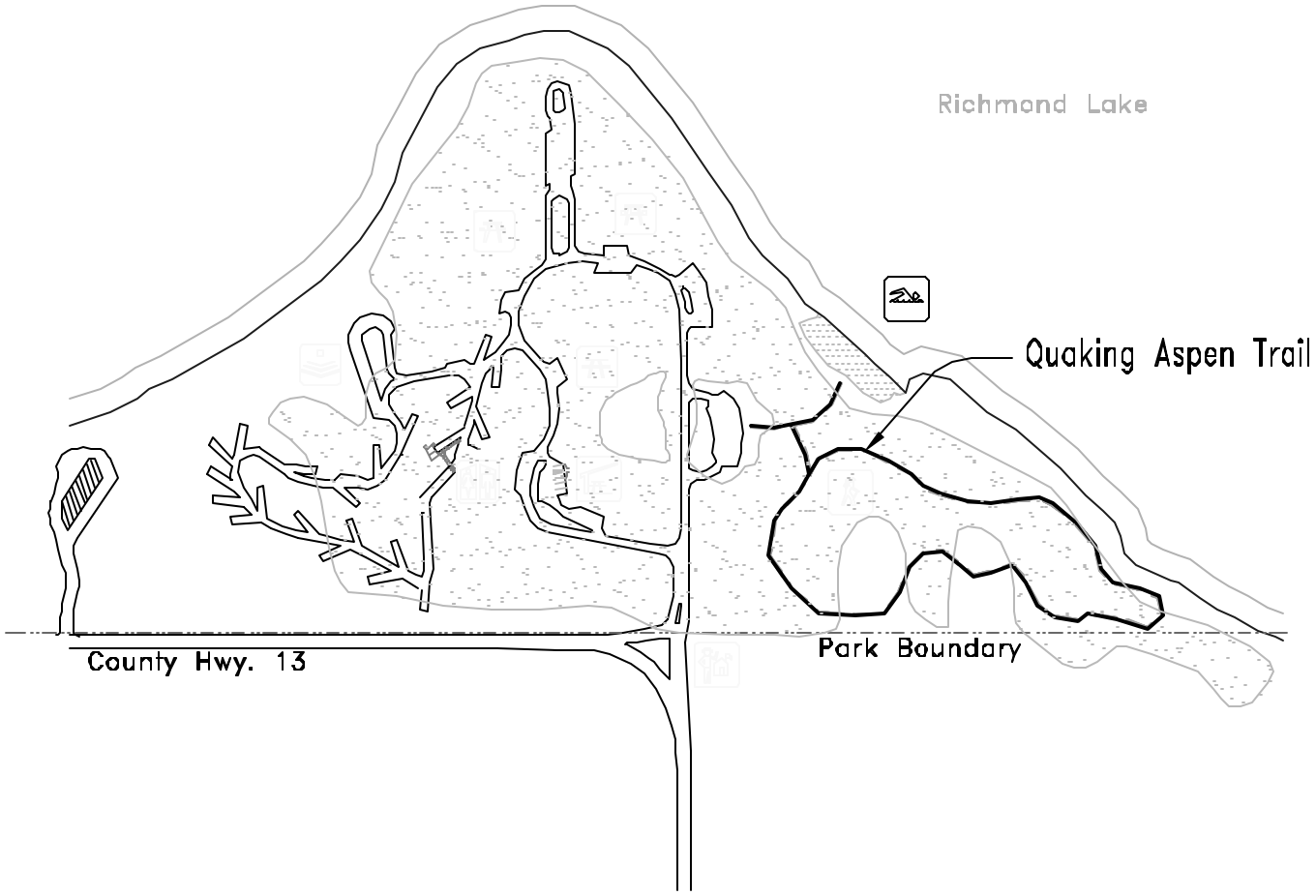
Name, address, and phone numbers of nearest Chamber of Commerce:
Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce, 516 S. Main St., Aberdeen, SD 57401, (605) 225-2860

Emergency phone numbers:
Ambulance – 911
Sheriff – 911
Fire Department – 911

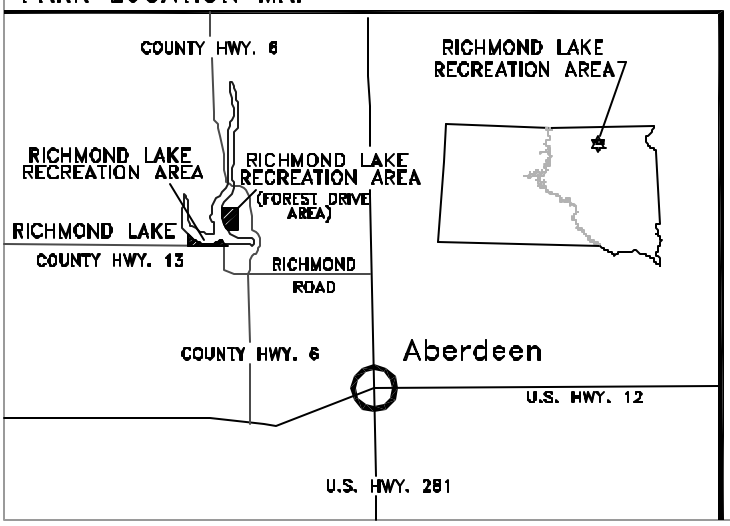
Do most cell phones work on this trail: Yes

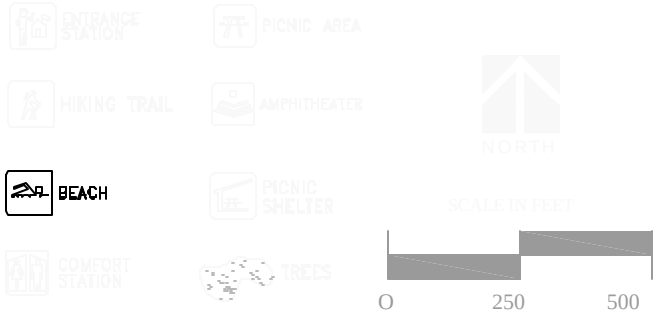
Out-of-State Horses: All out-of-state horses are required to have a valid, clean health certificate within the last 30 days, and a negative Coggins or ELISA EIA test within the last 12 months. SDCL 40-14-2. All documents must be on person.

Richmond Lake Recreation Area
Trail System



PARK LOCATION MAP





Richmond Lake Recreation Area

Quaking Aspen Trail

Type of trail: Hiking and biking

Trail surface: Dirt

Rated: Moderate, somewhat hilly, even trail surface

Fee required: Park Entrance Fee

Length of trail in miles: .25 mile

Location of the trailhead: Swimming beach

Facilities at or near the trailhead: Drinking water, toilet, parking, swim beach

Facilities along the trail: None

Will there be interpretive information available: No, only at trailhead

What lodging opportunities are provided IN the park: Tent camping, camping pads without electricity, camping pads with electricity and wheelchair accessible camping pads

Does this trail connect with any other trails: No

Nearest facilities for purchasing snacks, sunscreen etc.: In Aberdeen - 11 miles

Nearest motels/restaurants OUTSIDE the park: In Aberdeen - 11 miles

Nearest Chamber of Commerce:
Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce, 516 S. Main St., Aberdeen, SD 57401, (605) 225-2860

Emergency phone numbers:
Ambulance – 911
Sheriff – 911
Fire Department – 911

Do most cell phones work on this trail: No

Richmond Lake Recreation Area

Quaking Aspen Trail

Richmond Lake is one of scores of reservoirs created in South Dakota during the 1930s by the WPA. This 1,012-acre lake was one of the largest human-made impoundments created in South Dakota until the chain of dams on the Missouri River was completed.

Foot Creek, which was dammed to form Richmond Lake, originates in McPherson County to the northwest. The creek empties into Moccasin Creek south of Aberdeen and then flows into the James River. Years ago only a few willows and cottonwood trees grew in the area. The trees that now surround Richmond Lake have all been planted since the lake was created in the mid-1930s.

Numbered posts are keyed to the stations listed below.

STATION 1
The yellowish, green stemmed shrub that flanks the start of the trail is caragana. A native of Siberia, it was introduced into this country for its ornamental value in landscaping. The tiny yellow flowers develop into 1 ½ -to 2-inch long pods containing the seeds. These pods give the plant its other name, Siberian pea-tree. The 15 to 20 feet height reached by the plant and its adaptability to most soil types made the shrub a popular hedgerow plant in shelterbelts planted on the plains. One drawback to the shrub is that grasshoppers and other insects prefer the leaflets of caragana to other plants, and when these insect populations are prevalent they defoliate the shrubs.

If you are near a caragana on a hot fall day, you might hear the seedpods explode, casting their seeds on the surrounding foliage. There are spines on the branches of caragana that afford nesting birds some protection from predators. Each leaf of this shrub is composed of several leaflets, and for this reason they are called compound leaves.

As you proceed along the trail you might observe numerous caragana seedlings, thus assuring a contained stand of shrubs in the park.

STATION 2
Following this trail you will cross many terraces. They were built on the hillsides to prevent erosion of soil and to conserve moisture for the trees that were planted on their leveled features. Special measures such as terracing are often necessary to establish trees on hillsides in areas of erratic moisture and difficult soil conditions. The efforts of the WPA tree planting crews were successful in this park as evidenced by the variety of species and the growth attained by the trees. Many farmers and ranchers also plant other crops on terraces when their fields are too steep.

Can you notice a difference in the growth rate between trees planted on terraces and other trees planted in the park?

STATION 3
This is a cottonwood tree. It is native to South Dakota and the tallest growing tree on the plains. It prefers a moist area for growing, and you may observe in the park that cottonwoods growing in lower areas, such as at this station, will usually be more vigorous.

The triangle-shaped leaves hang from flattened stems that allow them to rustle in the slightest breeze. Because it is not divided into leaflets, it is called a simple leaf.

In early spring the park will be white with the seed-bearing cotton puffs from cottonwood trees. This feature makes the fast-growing tree unpopular for landscape plantings. A cottonless variety, called Siouxland, has been developed for ornamental plantings.

The cottonwood's main trunk was preferred as the sacred center pole for Plains Indians during their Sun Dance ceremony. The bark of young trees, called saplings, was fed to American Indian ponies during the winter when grass was covered with snow.

Because of its preference for low wet areas, the sighting of cottonwoods on the plains often meant a source of water for early pioneers.

STATION 4
This shrub is a lilac. Like the caragana, it was planted in many shelterbelts for its dense hedge growth habit. The lilac's habit of spreading by underground roots makes it unpopular for shelterbelts and ornamental plantings because it spreads into fields and yards. Its dense growth provides good cover for small game animals, and many songbirds build nests in its thick branches.

Do you see the shorter, 12-inch to knee-high woody plants growing in this area? They have leaves made up of several leaflets. The plant is called leadplant. When in bloom the purple flowers are very attractive on their spike-like stalks. Leadplant leaves make an interesting tasting tea when brewed with hot water. American Indians taught this beverage idea to the pioneers. The lead-gray foliage color gives the plant its name. Early legends erroneously claimed that the plant grew above areas where lead could be found.

STATION 5
The clusters of silver buffaloberry on both sides of the trail at this stop are native shrubs. The BB-sized red berries are quite tasty if sampled after the first frost in the fall. Be careful if you pick some of the fruit; the whitish branches are armed with sharp thorns. Because of its habit of growing in clusters, buffaloberry makes an excellent escape cover for small wildlife species. The elongated silvery leaves of the plant will help you identify it. Tartarian honeysuckle growing in the vicinity also bears orange or red fruit in the fall. The branches of honeysuckle do not have thorns, and the leaves are oval and green. These features make it easy to distinguish from buffaloberry. The fruit of honeysuckle is not edible by humans; however, robins and grackles eat the berries.

STATION 6
The silvery leafed trees in this vicinity are often mistaken for buffaloberries. Note that the branches are much darker, and the leaves are much more elongated and pointed than those of buffaloberry. The seeds of Russian olive are borne in pea-sized, oval, mealy fruits that cling to the trees nearly all winter. The tree is a native of Siberia and has been a popular specimen for planting in shelterbelts on the Great Plains.

The Russian olive may be considered either a tree or a shrub. In its native Russia, it is often cut back to ground level and allowed to grow as a hedge plant with many stems. The fragrant yellowish flowers are another reason for this tree's popularity as an ornamental.

The trail ahead follows the lakeshore and passes under a canopy of Russian olive branches.

STATION 7
Several species of seedling woody plants may be observed behind this post. They include honeysuckle, wild plum, buckthorn and juniper seedlings. They indicate a healthy forest condition in this area, for these new plants will replace older trees and shrubs that will eventually die.

Most of the grass cover in this vicinity is smooth bromegrass, and you can identify it by the M-shaped constriction of the leaf blades. Brome is a native to Europe, but has become popular in this country as a livestock feed when mixed with alfalfa for hay.

STATION 8
The tree at this station is a willow. Like cottonwood trees, willows prefer to grow in low moist areas. Notice the elongated lance-shaped leaves. Early Plains Indians boiled the bark of willow for a tea they would drink to relieve headaches. The scientific name for the willow family is salix, from which salicylic acid is named. This modern component of aspirin is derived from the willow.

Tall stalks of evening primrose may be observed in this vicinity. This plant is a biennial. During the first year's growth, the leaves form a rosette near the ground. During the second year, a tall stalk grows from the center of the rosette. This stalk bears the yellow flowers that open each evening in the summer and early fall. After flowering, the seeds are borne in bullet-shaped pods that line the stalk.

Other conspicuous non-woody plants in this vicinity are the white-flowered sweet clover, sunflowers and the broadleaf plantain. The fan-like leaves of plantain, oval and up to 7 inches long, shade and kill other plants if they invade your yard or garden. A few gumweed plants also may be observed. During the summer and fall, it is nearly knee-high and bears sticky buds and yellow flowers.

STATION 9
American elm is a threatened species in South Dakota because of the European bark beetle, which carries Dutch elm disease. In some areas of the United States, this disease has killed all of the American elms.

This elm is growing abnormally, and it has formed weak crotches where the three trunks join. The weakened crotches may break in a windstorm, and the exposed wound is susceptible to insects and disease damage, resulting in a shorter life for this specimen.

Normally, American elms grow like an inverted cone, appearing from a distance like a bouquet of flowers or an ice cream cone standing on end. The elm seeds are borne in flattened wafer-like pods. Notice the shape of the simple leaves of the elm. The leave's edges look like the teeth of a saw. This is called a serrated leaf margin.

Early spring hikers on this trail may observe many white-flowered anemone plants growing as groundcover in this vicinity.

STATION 10
On the bluffs above the lakeshore opposite this stop you may observe the buildings of the Brown County Youth Camp. Beyond the camp is Richmond Forest Recreation Area. The 135 acres of trees were planted by the Game, Fish and Parks Department on land donated to the Parks Division by C.C. Lee of Aberdeen. Planted in the late 1940's, today the trees offer scenic vista drives, bridle trails, and picnic and hiking opportunities.

Notice the rocks lining the shoreline in this vicinity. Piling rocks to prevent the lakeshore from washing is called rip-rapping. You may observe where wave action from high water levels in the past have eroded the banks and washed soil from tree anchor roots, causing the trees to topple into the water.

A short distance ahead on the trail allows you convenient access to the lakeshore. This stop is at the eastern end of the state recreation area. The final portion of this trail leads away from the lake.

STATION 11
In the fall many yellow-flowered goldenrod are visible along the trail in this area. The tree on the left is a hackberry. When mature in the fall, the purplish seed berries of this tree taste quite sweet. American Indians dried them for a sweetener to mix with meat and other foods. The hackberry is a popular landscape tree, and because of its drought resistance it is often planted in shelterbelts. The ash-gray bark with corky wart-like ridges makes it easy to recognize. As the tree matures, it often develops curious tangles of branches in the crown. These clusters of twigs are called witches'-broom and are suspected to be caused by a mite insect and a fungus.

STATION 12
The unusual woody plant at this site is a buckthorn. It is supposed to grow as a shrub, but this specimen with a 10-inch diameter trunk appears more like a tree. The fruits are not edible, and the stems are often tipped with a spine. Birds eat the seeds, which accounts for the wide dispersal of the plants in the area. The seeds are deposited with bird droppings, and seedling buckthorns sprout. At one time buckthorn was used for windbreak plantings, but later it was discovered to be an alternate host for crown rust of oats, and plantings were curtailed.

En route to the next stop, note the abundance of shade and sparse ground cover. As you cross the low area notice the cluster of gumweeds to the right of the trail. Early cowboys used to rub the sticky yellow flowers on their saddles to prevent and relieve saddle sores.

STATION 13
The trees to the right and left of this post are also native to South Dakota. They are green ash trees. Their compound leaves are made up of several large leaflets, and their seeds are borne in clusters and look like bunches of canoe paddles. Some youngsters think the clusters of ash seeds look like bananas.

Notice that some of the trees are growing abnormally tall and slender as the crown leaves try to reach the sunlight.

Other ash trees in this vicinity have malformed trunks that have developed weak crotches. The death of these trees will be hastened if these weakened crotches are split during a windstorm.

Baseball bats are made from the hard wood of ash trees.

STATION 14
Notice that grass dominates the undergrowth on the forest floor where sunlight is plentiful. Behind this post is a blue spruce tree. As you look at this conifer (cone bearer), notice what appear to be layers of branches. These are called whorls, and counting them will give you a fairly accurate age of a spruce tree.

The blue and Black Hills spruce are the most common tree species found in South Dakota. The Black Hills spruce is native to that region but is found across the state in windbreaks and landscape plantings. It has been designated the South Dakota state tree. Blue spruce has longer and more rigid needles than those of the Black Hills spruce. The seed-bearing cones of blue spruce are much larger than those of the Black Hills spruce.

To the right of the post is a ponderosa pine tree. In the Black Hills of western South Dakota, 85 percent of the trees are of this species. Ponderosa pine accounts for most of our state's lumber products, and lumbering is our third largest industry.

The pine is also a conifer, for the seeds are borne in a cone. It's much larger than the cones of either blue or Black Hills spruce. Notice the length of the leaves, or needles, on the pine tree as compared to the spruce.

Near the base of the pine tree you may notice another conifer native to South Dakota. It is a young seedling of red cedar, or juniper. You'll find a larger cedar at the next stop. As you proceed, watch for birds' nests in the treetops.

STATION 15
This tree is an eastern red cedar and a member of the juniper family. The junipers are the only conifers native to eastern South Dakota. The fragrant redwood of junipers is used to make cedar chests and linings for closets. Its odor repels insects. The needles, which are like tiny sharp spines, were often burned as incense to purify a tipi before an American Indian council meeting.

This popular evergreen is planted in many farm shelterbelts and makes an excellent wildlife cover planting. You may observe many bird nests in this species, for its branches offer a protective cover and its sharp needles discourage predators.

To the right of Station 15, can you find the green ash tree whose bark is covered with gray and yellowish blotches? These growths are lichens and their presence indicates clean air, for they grow on nearly everything in nature, but only when the air is clean and unpolluted.

Near the bottom of the ash tree on the north side, you may see a growth of moss. Finding moss on a tree is usually a familiar and welcome sign to a woodsman. Moss usually grows on the north side of trees, and this knowledge may help someone who becomes lost in the woods.

STATION 16
This is a cluster of wild plum shrubs with a few honeysuckle interspersed. In the spring, the fragrance of the white plum blossoms will be very obvious in the vicinity. The fruits that ripen in the fall are delicious, but birds, animals, and insects all compete with humans for the ripe fruit. The plum curculio, which attacks the stone fruits, is a beetle, and the larva is responsible for the "shot" holes found in the ripe fruit of wild plums.

STATION 17
Wild rose plants are on both sides of the trail at this stop. The delicate pink blossoms, and later the marble-sized red fruits called hips, are protected by sharp spiny branches.

Reportedly, three hips contain more vitamin C than an orange. They were frequently eaten by American Indians or mixed with hot water for a tea-type drink to induce sleep.

En route to the next stop, notice the abundance of juniper seedlings. They vary in size and age, and this age class is an indication that new trees will replace older ones that die or are damaged by storms. It is the way a forest sustains itself.

STATION 18
This broadleaf tree with trembling leaves and pale greenish-gray bark is quaking aspen. When summer breezes blow, the thin stems of the leaves allow them to become restless and to move constantly. This is why the tree is called quaking aspen. Its wood is a favorite for beavers, and, like the cottonwood, the aspen also prefers growing near water areas. Like many of the trees in this park, the aspen is exotic; it is not native to the park vicinity.

En route to the next stop, you'll walk into another open area where grass dominates the vegetation. Note the patches of buffalo grass as you cross the hilltop ahead. Its patchy growth habit appears like rugs scattered among the other plants.

STATION 19
When dams like Richmond are built across rivers or creeks, it often becomes necessary to build smaller dams on the upper watershed. The gullies that drain into the main reservoir often carry eroding silt from the fields and let it settle out in the reservoir.

The small dam you see behind this post was built for that purpose, to retard erosion runoff into the reservoir and give the sediment a chance to settle out before it could reach the main body of water. It also benefits the trees in this locality and prevents gully erosion in this natural drainage.

Notice the many bird nests in the trees. Can you find any holes or cavities that might house a woodpecker family? Squirrels, bees, rabbits, mice, wood ducks and other wildlife seek shelter and home in tree cavities.

STATION 20
In this low drainage area, you'll find many green ash trees growing. Like willows, cottonwood and aspen, the ash trees prefer moist growing conditions. Notice the increased growth attained by the specimens in this vicinity.

STATION 21
Notice the many odd-shaped growths on this boxelder tree. These growths are called burls and can result from several causes, including gall, insect attack, or mechanical injury. The burls do not harm the trees. They are prized by some wood workers who make pipes, gunstocks, lamps, and fine furniture from the colorful grains that appear when the burls are polished.

The boxelder is also a native tree in South Dakota, and it is a close relative of the sugar maple tree. The juice of the boxelder trees is also sweet and may be made into maple syrup. American Indians cut the tree's trunk and used the drippings for a food sweetener.

The trail now leads back to the starting station. We hope you have enjoyed your walk and will return to Richmond Lake often. The scenery and plants change with every season. Be sure to visit Richmond Forest across the lake if time allows.