



SKY-COME- DOWN

NATURE TRAIL



OAKWOODS METROPARK NATURE CENTER

A UNIT OF THE HURON-CLINTON METROPOLITAN AUTHORITY

1 FOREST

STILL . . . COOL . . . DAMP . . . IMPOSING TANGLED . . . PRIVATE . . . CASCADING . . . ALIVE

A Community where . . .

. . . oak, hickory, maple, and ash tower overhead.
. . . dogwood, blue beech, ironwood, and viburnum thrive in the shadows.

. . . countless green factories make tree food from water, sunlight, and carbon dioxide.

Does the forest have a special smell?

Will all the small trees grow to be giants?

Find a leaf skeleton.

Locate a rotting log. What will it be next?

Do woodpeckers help or hurt trees?

How many trees does it take to build a house? What kinds?

Has this always been a forest? Will it always be a forest?

Do wild animals live here? Where? What do they eat?

Are all the trees straight and perfect?

How much of a tree is underground?

Earth Fact: One tree produces enough oxygen each day to support one person.

2 EDGE

An Ecotone that is neither forest nor field but a transition between them. It is a creeping tide of shrubs and young trees absorbing open space. It is a hiding place for the furred and the feathered.

Which way is the EDGE moving?

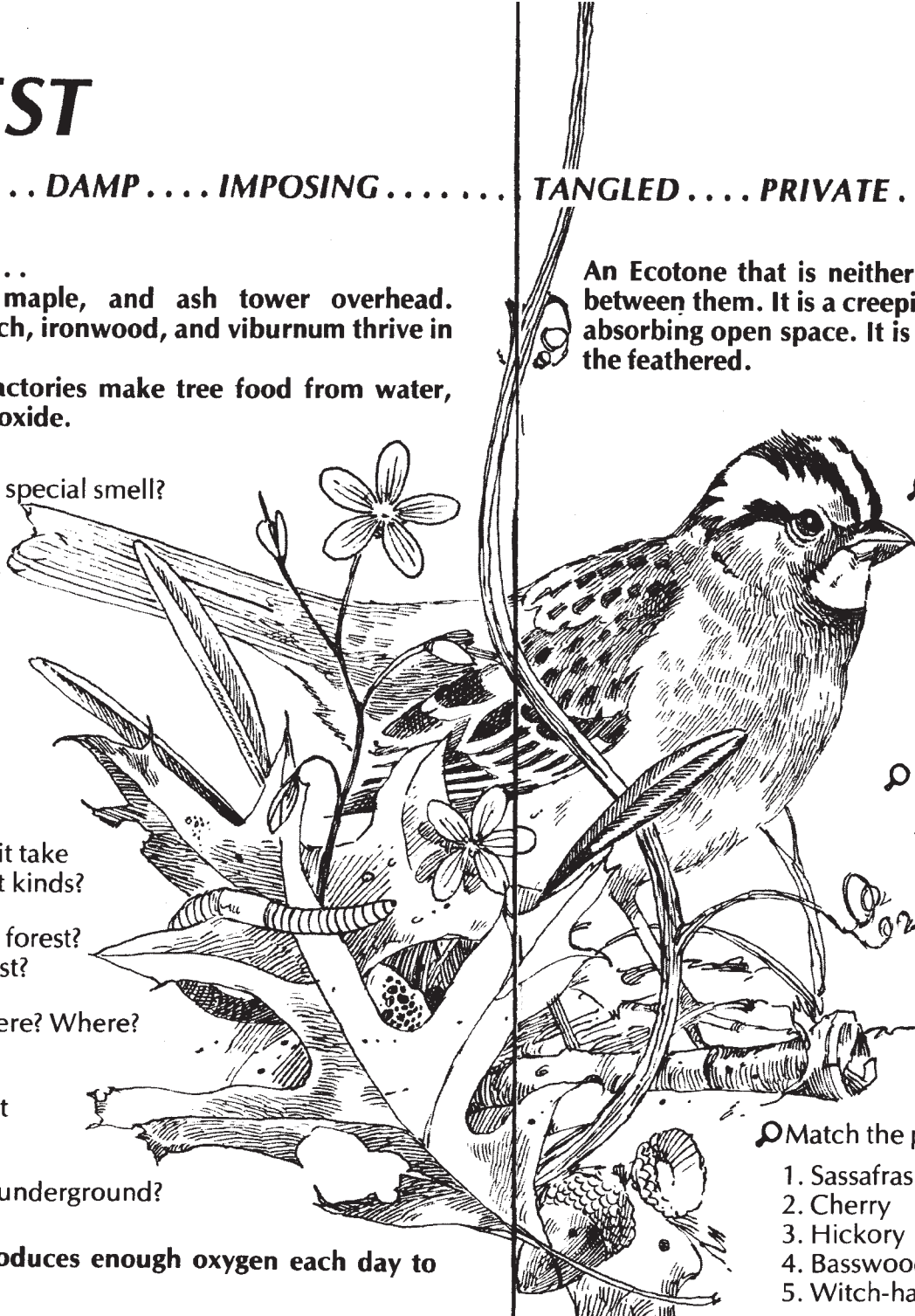
Thorny branches everywhere. Good nesting places or not?

Find a vine (beware of Poison Ivy). How does it climb? Does it harm the host plant?

Earth Fact: American Indians derived over 170 effective medicines from native plant sources.

Match the plant with its method of spreading.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Sassafras | a. Wind-blown seeds |
| 2. Cherry | b. Seeds 'shot' from capsules |
| 3. Hickory | c. Seeds passed in droppings |
| 4. Basswood | d. Shoots from root systems |
| 5. Witch-hazel | e. Seeds buried by animals |



3 POND

INVITING TRANQUIL VITAL AGING EXPOSED BUSY WIND-SWEPT FILLING

Water, the fluid of life, is constantly in motion. Evaporating, condensing, falling, collecting. Fresh, clean, acid-neutral water - an endangered resource.

- Take a few minutes to concentrate on the zone of life at the water's edge.
- What is a water table? Do you see one?
- Does winter's icy cover harm or help pond residents?
- Only one bullfrog tadpole in 40,000 will reach maturity. Why?
- Shoreline tracks betray visitors. Are they hungry or thirsty?

Earth Wisdom: A frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives. Indian Proverb

4 FIELD

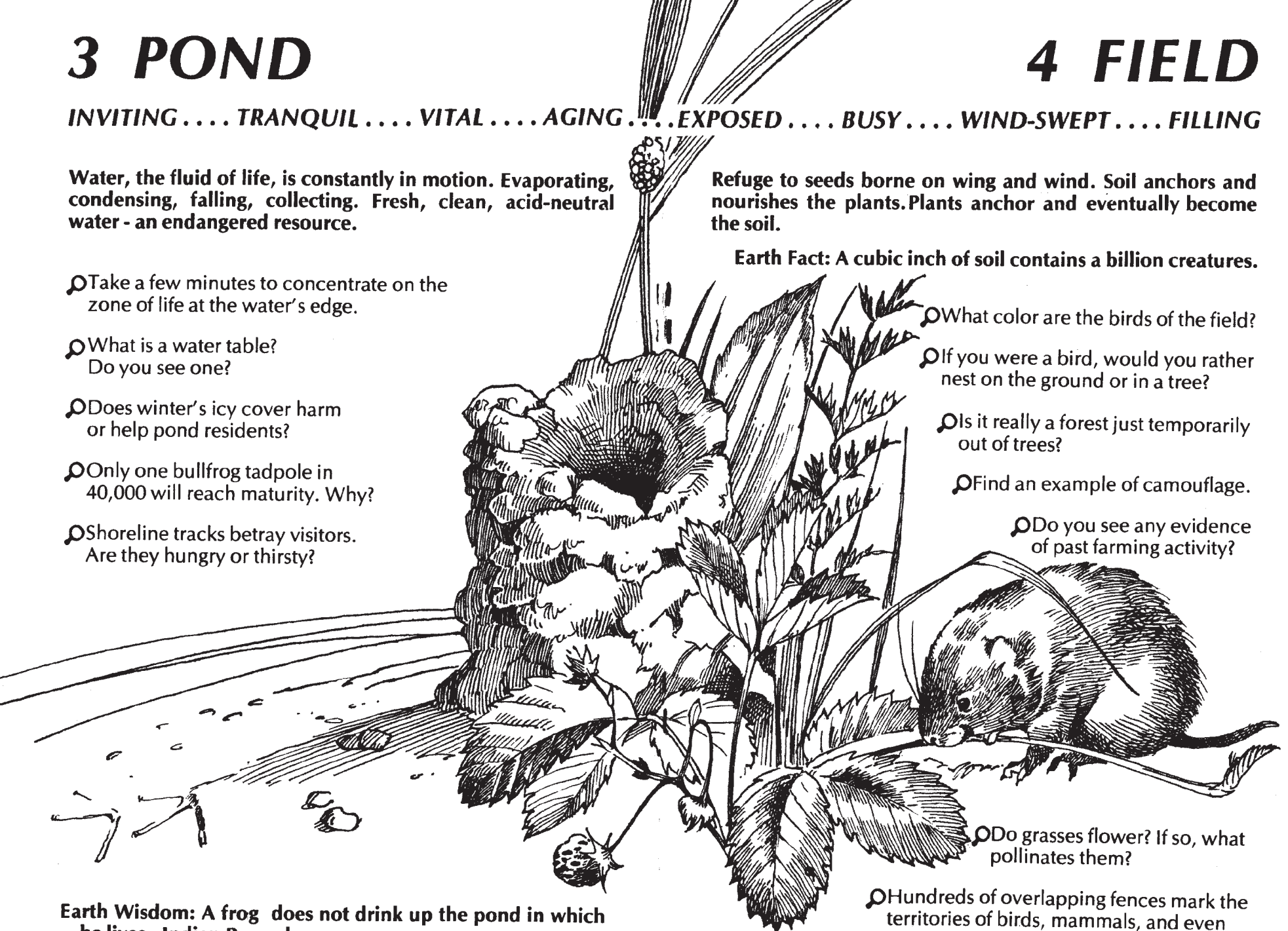
Refuge to seeds borne on wing and wind. Soil anchors and nourishes the plants. Plants anchor and eventually become the soil.

Earth Fact: A cubic inch of soil contains a billion creatures.

- What color are the birds of the field?
- If you were a bird, would you rather nest on the ground or in a tree?
- Is it really a forest just temporarily out of trees?
- Find an example of camouflage.
- Do you see any evidence of past farming activity?

○ Do grasses flower? If so, what pollinates them?

○ Hundreds of overlapping fences mark the territories of birds, mammals, and even butterflies. Do you see the fences?



5 SKY

INFINITE . . . DYNAMIC . . . CHALLENGING SECRETIVE . . . TREASURED . . . THREATENED

Temperature, humidity, wind, and rainfall, collectively our climate, dictate all other resources. This invisible force owes its strength to the Sun.

○ Michigan averages 32 inches of precipitation each year. Where does it all go?

○ Which do winds help carry?

1. Seeds
2. Pollen & Spores
3. Spiders
4. Scents
5. All of these.

○ Which way is north?

○ Burrowing animals seem to prefer south-facing slopes. Why?

○ Can you predict the weather from the cloud formations?

○ Can you identify any birds or trees by shape or silhouette?

Earth Fact: Traces of iron in the brains of migrating birds orient them to magnetic north.

6 WILDLIFE

Our ever-shrinking legacy . . . using adaptations, instincts and skills honed through eons . . . trying to survive in an ever-changing environment.

Earth Whimsy: "Nothing was created in vain but the fly came close." Mark Twain

○ One pair of meadow mice on January 1st could generate 300,000 offspring by July 1st if uncontrolled. What keeps this from happening?

○ Eighty-five percent of all mammals are active only at night. Why?

○ Small birds are often seen chasing much larger birds. Why do they do this?

○ Which is most responsible for reducing animal populations? Predators, disease, hunting, or loss of habitat?

Earth Fact: Pollinating insects insure the production of over 100 kinds of fruits and vegetables eaten by man.

