



CAW! CAW! CAW! Ten year old Billy Jim woke up and rushed to the window. The noisy crows had been his "alarm clock" again this morning. He didn't mind because today was going to be another day he explored the Limberlost.

The small farm he lived on with his parents was exactly next to the Loblolly Marsh, a part of the greater Limberlost area.







The Limberlost swamp had been drained and folks were trying to farm the land but their crops kept getting flooded out.

About twenty-five years ago a wise man named Ken Brunswick started a project to manage the area and restore as much of the wetlands as possible. Now nearly 1,800 acres had been restored to wetlands thanks to the work of a group of folks called Limberlost Swamp Remembered. The Loblolly Marsh makes up about 500 acres of the total wetlands restoration.



Ranger Bill and Ken Brunswick

Billy Jim took every opportunity he had to explore the Loblolly.

After he did his chores and had breakfast he set out on today's new adventure.



He started his hike on Veronica's Trail near his home. This area was an upland that had been restored as a tall grass prairie. The main grass was called Big Blue Stem. It had roots that went nine feet deep into the soil and stems that grew up to six feet tall. Billy Jim loved to walk Veronica's Trail and pretend he was in the middle of a vast prairie.



It was April and the red-winged blackbirds were here after spending the winter farther south. The males protected their territory by making loud calls and flashing the brilliant red bars on their wings. The females were deep in the grass tending to their nest filled with pretty, blue eggs. Sometimes the female would come up and perch on a stem for a while.



Billy Jim had often been with a group of kids on a hike led by Ranger Curt. Ranger Curt would help the kids make wonderful discoveries and tell them exciting facts about what they had found.



Soon Billy Jim came to the boardwalk over Veronica's pond. This was a shallow pond that had water in it during the wet part of the year. Billy Jim remembered being on hikes with Ranger Bill as he dipped water and mud from the pond and dumped it onto a screen over a bucket.



Ranger Bill would then help the kids find all manner of critters on the screen. There were crayfish (Grandpa Jim called them "crawdads"); tadpoles of frogs, toads, and salamanders; larval forms of aquatic insects like dragonflies and damselflies; leeches (which grossed out some of the kids); and, water bugs like water striders, spiders, and diving beetles.



As Billy Jim was nearing the end of Veronica's Trail he saw his younger cousin, Ingrid, approaching him. Following close behind was Ingrid's father Dan. Ingrid had her favorite hiking shirt on. It said, "Best Day Ever". Billy Jim thought that was a good saying because any day hiking in the Loblolly was a "Best Day Ever". Billy Jim and Ingrid exchanged high fives as they each went on their way.



As Billy Jim walked along he remembered how this was the favorite area of the famous author Gene-Stratton Porter. Mrs. Porter used this area as the setting for two of her most famous books, *Freckles* and also *A Girl Of The Limberlost*.



Billy Jim carefully crossed the road and started east on Trail One. He remembered last fall seeing the fields covered with New England Asters and Goldenrod.



Area birders were really excited to see a pair of Blue Grosbeaks nesting in the area.



As Billy Jim rounded a bend in the trail he came upon a Turkey Vulture having a meal on a dead animal of some kind.



The Turkey Vulture got its name because folks thought it looked like a Wild Turkey.

Wild Turkey, Male



As Billy Jim entered the woods he began to see many songbirds and other perching birds.

While walking through the woods he remembered a long list of perching birds he had seen in the Limberlost.

White-breasted Nuthatch





Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, Male



Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, Female

Hummingbird nest With two babies.



Baltimore Oriole, Male



Baltimore Oriole, Female



Black-Capped Chickadee

Warbling Vireo

Goldfinch, Male



Northern Cardinal, Male

Northern Cardinal Pair, Bonding



Cedar Waxwing



Wren



Blue Jay





As Billy Jim walked through the woods he saw several familiar woodpeckers.

Downy Woodpecker, Male

Downy Woodpecker, Female



Hairy Woodpecker, Male





Male Female

Red-Bellied Woodpeckers

As Billy Jim was nearing the end of the woodland trail, he heard a very loud drumming noise as if someone were pounding on a dead tree with a big stick. He knew immediately it was a Pileated Woodpecker.

He thought it was interesting this was the bird that was used as a model for the cartoon character Woody Woodpecker.



Billy Jim left the woods and began walking on the trail along Loblolly Creek. Soon he came to a beaver dam he had seen many times before.



The dam caused water to create a pond and gave the beavers a place to build a lodge of sticks and mud. The lodge was the home for the beavers. Here they stored branches they could use for food during the winter. The lodge was also a safe place for the baby beaver to grow up.



Along the shallow edges of ponds, like the beaver pond, Billy Jim had seen many shorebirds.

Some of the birds were very well camouflaged.

There are at least 12 birds in this picture. How many can you find?



On the following pages are several shorebirds
Billy Jim has seen in the Loblolly and Limberlost.

Long-billed Dowitcher





Killdeer

Killdeer nest with eggs and babies.



Ring-billed Gull



Yellowlegs



Wilson's Snipe



American Avocet



Spotted Sandpiper

Pectoral Sandpiper

Pectoral Sandpiper

He also remembered seeing many wading birds and swans in the various wetlands of the Limberlost.

**Great Blue Heron** 





Tundra Swan



Sandhill Cranes



Whooping Crane



Mute Swan



**Great Egret** 

At the south edge of the Loblolly Marsh was a large Cottonwood tree. Billy Jim often saw a Bald Eagle perched in this tree looking out over the marsh.

Bald Eagle, Adult



Sometimes there would be a juvenile Bald Eagle in the tree. Bald Eagles do not get white feathers on their head and tail until they are about four years old.

Bald Eagle, Juvenile



The Eagles made Billy Jim think of other raptors (birds that hunt animals for food) he had seen in the Limberlost.

Cooper's Hawk, Adult



Cooper's Hawk, Juvenile





Short-eared Owl



Snowy Owl



Barred Owl

American Kestrel, Fledgling



Northern Harrier, Male

Sometimes Billy Jim's father would take him to the Limberlost Swamp Wetlands Preserve where he could see many different species of waterfowl.

**Hooded Merganser** 



Mallard hen with ducklings

Mallard pair on nest



Scaup



Western Grebe

Blue-Winged Teal



**Greater White-Fronted Geese** 



Bufflehead



Goldeneye



Canvas-Back Duck



Common Loon

Common Merganser



Ring-Necked Duck



Pintail Duck

**Double-Crested Cormorant** 



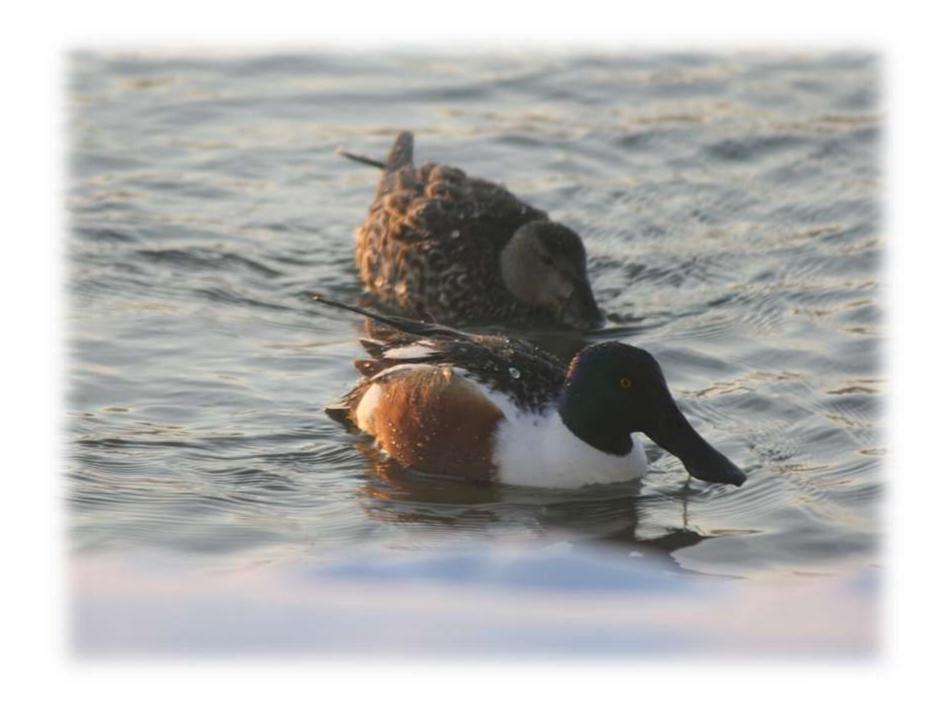
Pied-Billed Grebe



Snow Geese



Canada Goose family



Northern Shoveler Pair

It was getting near lunch-time so Billy Jim began to walk back toward home.
As he looked back near the woods, he saw a mother deer and her three fawns walking through the marsh. He was excited to see so much wildlife in the Limberlost now!



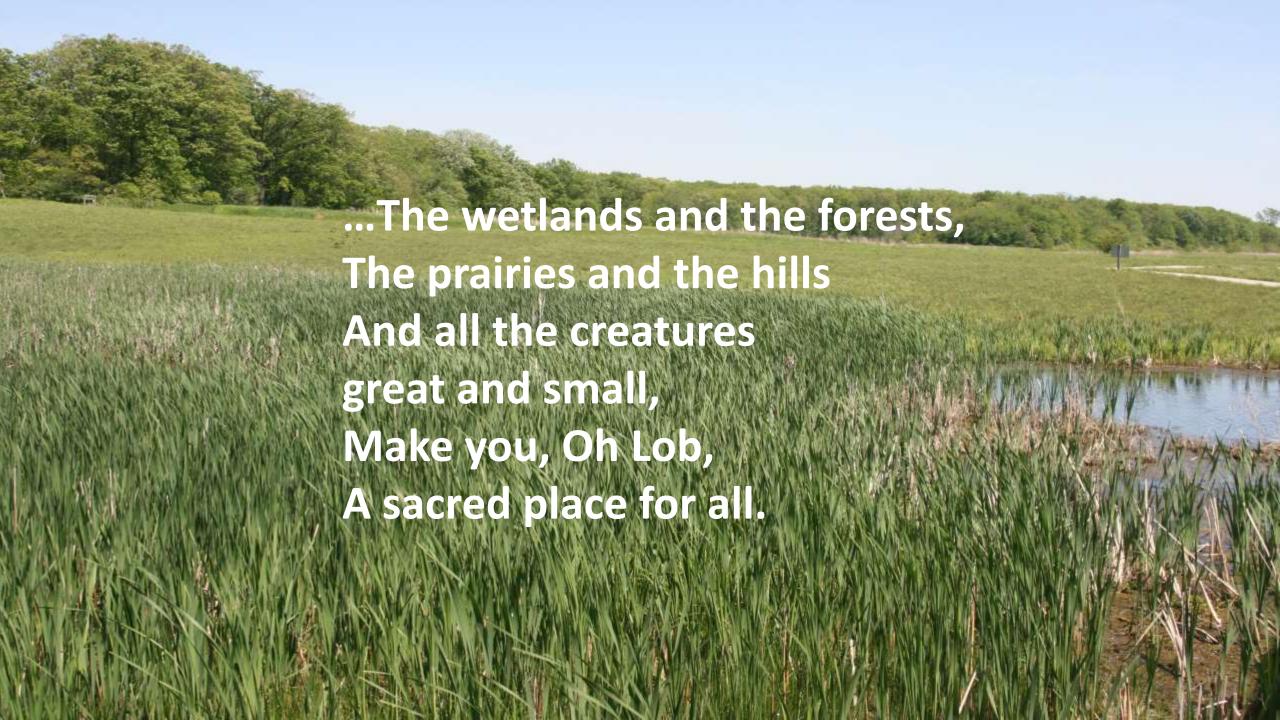
As Billy Jim was getting close to home, he decided to spend a few minutes just lying in the grass and enjoying the Marsh.

Whenever he did this, he would remember the poem his father had written called "An Ode To The Loblolly Marsh".

In the poem his father expressed his love and appreciation of the Marsh. Billy Jim took the poem from his pocket and read the first and last stanzas.







Billy Jim thought again how wonderful it was that Ken Brunswick and the dedicated folks at Limberlost Swamp Remembered had taken the time and effort to restore hundreds of acres of the Limberlost to wetlands!



With those happy thoughts in mind, Billy Jim made his way home and began looking forward to his next chance to....

