



- \* Future plans for the Nature Trail
  - \* • More outdoor classrooms
  - Finish surface on entire trail
  - Extend trail to East entrance
  - Wetland outlook

## Russell Johnson Nature Trail

BETHEL UNIVERSITY 3900 BETHEL DRIVE ST. PAUL, MN 55112

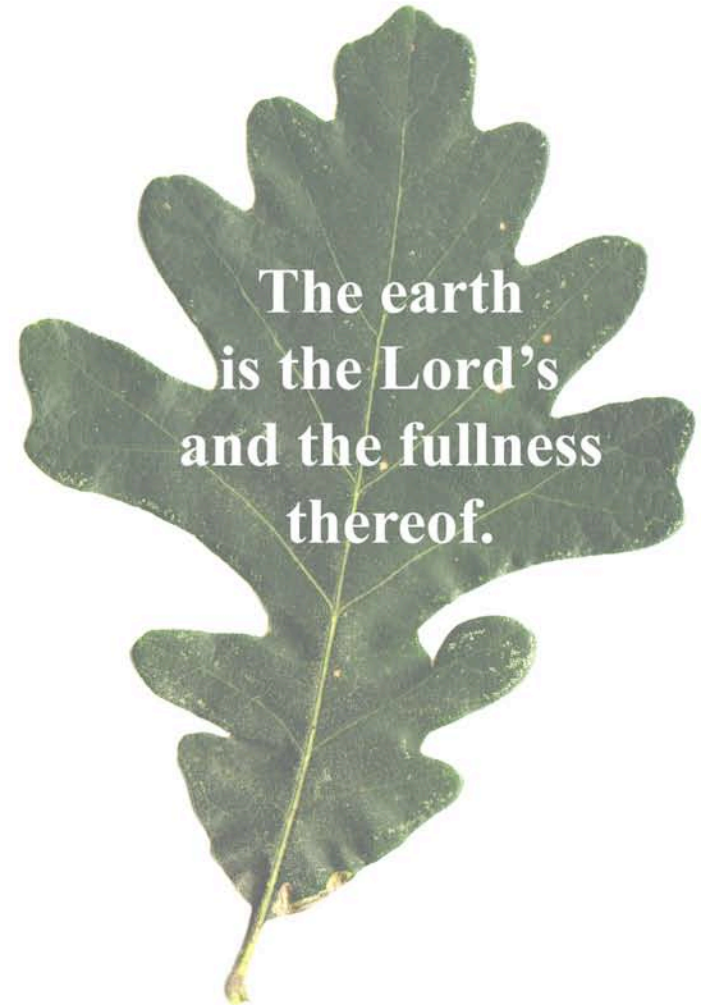
But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. Job 12:7-10

### LEGEND

- U UPLAND FOREST
- B BOTTOMLAND FOREST
- C CONIFER WOODLAND
- O OAK WOODLAND
- P TALLGRASS PRAIRIE
- W WATER
- WL WETLANDS
- M MANAGED LANDSCAPE
- A ATHLETIC
- RUSSELL W. JOHNSON NATURE TRAIL

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# The Russell W. Johnson Nature Trail



The earth  
is the Lord's  
and the fullness  
thereof.

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The Russell W. Johnson Nature Trail winds its way through the northern half of the Bethel campus.

**1** The hillside of the path to the seminary is covered by large oaks with patches of poison ivy adjacent to the path. Look for a small plant with three leaves - but don't touch!

**2** On the lake side of the path is the littoral zone, which buffers the lake from nutrients coming in from the developed areas of campus.

**3** As the trail leaves the asphalt path it angles between some large old oak and cottonwood trees. Stop and read the trail sign that tells about Russell W. Johnson to whom the trail is dedicated.

**4** Woodduck houses can be seen attached to trees and snags along the trail beside the lake. Woodducks nest in wetland wooded areas and feed on algae, aquatic plants, and insects, as well as fruits and nuts from the woods.

**5** Overstory trees like the large cottonwoods on the lakeside and oak and Norway pine often define the plant communities, but often the smaller understory plants like the 5-leaved Virginia creeper and the vine-like wild grape are also important.

**6** The open area upslope from the trail is reminiscent of the oak savannahs that were a part of the historical Minnesota landscape and consisted of scattered oaks intermingled with tall-grass prairie grasses.

**7** The Lakeside Classroom was donated to the trail by the Class of 2003 and a grant from the Bethel Alumni Foundation. The classroom can be reserved through the Bethel room reservation system.

**8** A grove of large red cedar trees (evergreens with flat leathery leaves) form the entrance to a more natural section of the nature trail. Students in Russ Johnson's classes planted these trees.

**9** Extensive cattail beds make up the most visible component of the littoral zone ecosystem on the lake side of the trail. The lawngrass merges with the grass-like sedges in the wet areas.

**10** The osprey nesting pole was placed here in 1998 with the cooperation of the Raptor Research Project. The osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) is a magnificent bird of prey that soars on a wing span of up to five feet long. It is sometimes referred to as the "fish hawk" because it feeds exclusively on fish. A good fisherman, the osprey makes spectacular dives from high in the sky, straight down, its talons outspread, and splashes into the water.

**11** Wet meadows are a relatively rare wetland type and extends from the drier sumac shrub border to the willow stand underneath the powerline tower.

**12** Turn right to return to campus along the nature trail, or a left turn will take you around the end of the lake to Old Snelling and a walk along the road back to the West Entrance to campus.

**13** As you ascend up the hill, pause to enjoy the patch of silver maples that are not found elsewhere on campus.

**14** On the top of the hill, an open area is maintained under the powerlines with large Norway pines and goldenrod, making a showy contrast on the east side in the fall, to the upland prairie of sumac and tallgrass prairie species like big bluestem mixed in with shorter prairie grasses.

**15** The largest forested area on campus lies to the west of the trail after you pass behind Chalberg. Oaks, ashes, and maples make up the majority of this remnant patch of old growth forest.

**16** The east end of the trail takes you directly through the corner of the forest. Listen for birds like chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, and warblers. Also observe the old fallen trees and tree snags that serve as habitat for numerous animal species as they slowly decompose to return nutrients to the forest ecosystem.



Russell W. Johnson, associate professor of biology at Bethel from 1951-2000, shared with students of all ages his love for both the creation and the Creator. Russ helped everyone to hear "the first book" — the creation — that God shared with humanity. His faith and passion for both his Lord and the natural world had a great impact on everyone he touched.