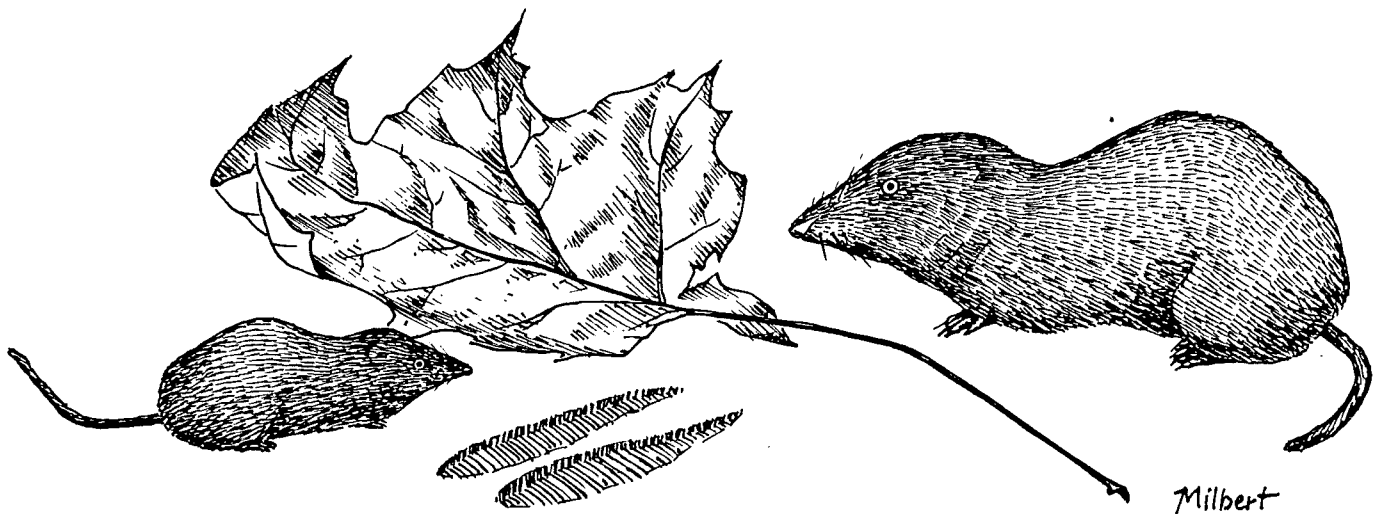


River Bend Naturalists Notebook

Presented by: RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, MN 55021

SHREWS



The smallest mammal at the River Bend Nature Center is the shrew and the largest is the White-tailed Deer. Both are active in winter. The nervous little shrew is rarely seen by most people, as it spends most of its brief life hiding under leaf litter or in tunnels underground. A glimpse of one scurrying from one hiding place to another, might look very much like a mouse. A closer look however will reveal that this mammal has a very pointed snout. Still closer examination will reveal differences in the eyes, ears, tail, paws, fur and teeth. The teeth of the shrew are sharp-pointed, suitable for eating insects and even mice. In contrast the House Mouse has chisel-like teeth adapted for gnawing plants.

A poisonous saliva is produced by glands in the shrew's lower jaw. The venom of most species is very weak; however, that

of the Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*) is strong enough to kill a mouse. It is not strong enough to do harm to a person. The Short-tailed Shrew is one of our most abundant mammals. It is found throughout Minnesota, being most common in wooded areas.

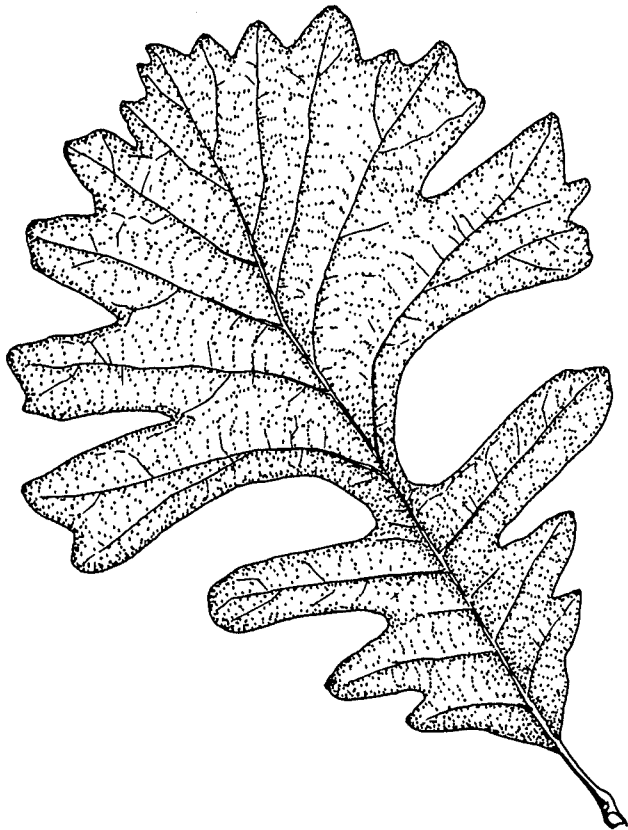
The Pigmy Shrew (*Microsorex hoyi*) weighs the least of all Minnesota mammals, about as much as a dime. Like most other shrews, it prefers moist habitats.

All shrews are voracious insect eaters, needing to consume four times their weight daily. They have such a high rate of metabolism that they need to eat almost constantly to stay alive. If deprived of food for more than a few hours, some species will die of starvation.

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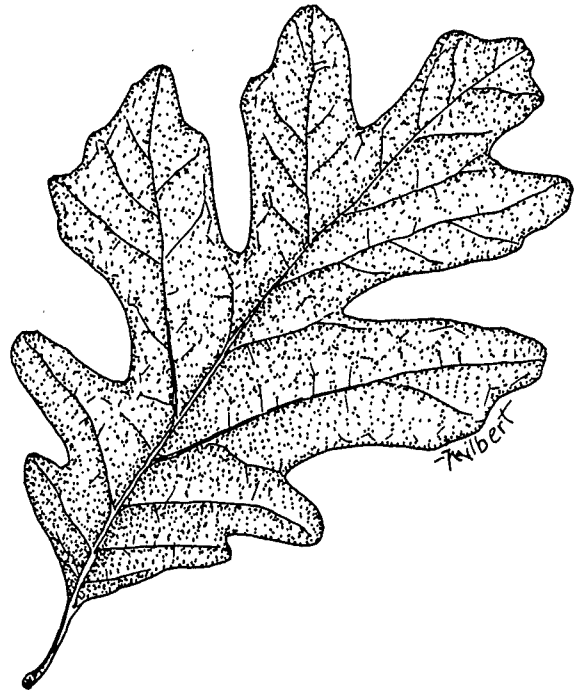
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WHITE OAKS



The BUR OAK, MOSSY CUP OAK
(*Quercus macrocarpa*) has large leaves which are wedge-shaped, with deep indentations of the lobes, almost to the midrib. The cup of the acorn is deep, and fringed with stout hairs, thus its name Mossycup. The twigs often have corky ridges after the first or second year. The Bur Oak is common on rich to sandy soils along edges of the prairies where it forms groves and thickets, called "oak openings".

The leaves of the White Oaks have rounded lobes. The acorns mature in six months, and are gone by winter. They can be recognized by the smooth linings on the inside of the nut shells. The nut meat of the White oak is relatively sweet. Dried and crushed, the acorns can be placed in porous bags and put through a boiling process to remove the tannin. They can then be redried, ground into a meal and used to make muffins and breads, which some consider delicious. The acorns are rich in protein and fat.



The WHITE OAK (*Quercus alba*) has leaves that are bright green above, pale green below with 7-9 rounded major lobes. The clefts below the lobes are usually deep, but may be shallow. The acorn cup is shallow, with knobby scales. These trees are found in heavy, well-drained, mostly acidic soils.

- text by Orwin A. Rustad