

How Much Do YOU Know about New Hampshire's Symbols?

Part I - Tree, Animal and Insect

Like many others, I am an "immigrant" having moved up to NH seven (7) years ago from New Jersey. I've met numerous people here that also were from New Jersey and quite a few more from Massachusetts! The longer I live here the more interesting things I learn about my "adopted" state.

I'm sure most of you know the State motto - *Live Free Or Die* and that it is nicknamed the Granite State. I knew those two things from vacationing with friends each summer for twenty (20) years on Newfound Lake. I also had made acquaintance with the Man of the Mountain, the official state emblem (for which I am grateful). What I did not know would take up a lot of space!

I'm curious as to how many of you born and raised here folks know all of the following things I recently learned. So, I'm here to share my new-found knowledge! Hopefully, both long and short time residents will learn at least one new and interesting thing about New Hampshire!

First on my list is the official state tree which was declared the White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) in the 1947 Legislature without argument or opposition. It was sponsored by Senator J. Guy Smart of Durham on behalf of the New Hampshire Federation of Garden Clubs. The white birch is also called the canoe birch or the paper birch, as Indians used its bark to make canoes, and



it was also used for writing paper. The White Birch was chosen for several reasons. Not only is it native to New Hampshire, certainly a prime consideration, but it is found in all regions of the state, growing on rich-wooded slopes and along the borders of lakes and streams. It is a characteristic part of the scenery. The beauty of the white birch is dramatic against the green of other trees. Although all birches are sturdy and graceful and many grow tall, the canoe, or white birch, sometimes reaches a height of 80 feet. Its bark is chalky to cream white, tinged with yellow and peels in thin film-like layers. Its leaves are broadly oval on short, stout leaf stalks. The cylindrical fruit spikes usually droop in contrast to the more commonly erect fruit of the other birches. Not only did I learn it's the state tree, I also learned that there is more than one kind of birch tree!

The state animal is the White Tail Deer. I was disappointed that was all I found about this particular symbol. Does anyone out there know how this came to be? If so, please let me know and I'll write it up.

The state insect is the Ladybug also known as the ladybird and the lady beetle. The 1977 Legislature voted her as the state official insect in a history-making manner. It was the grade 5 students of the Broken Ground grammar school in Concord who



were the instigators of the ladybug project. This resulted from their school social studies class. They developed a plan and followed it to completion. First they turned to the two legislators of their East Concord district, and then they gathered signatures from over one hundred (100) citizens. Red tape being what it is they went through numerous House manipulations. An actual Insect Selection Committee was formed to ascertain how other groups might feel about naming a state insect. After quite a bit of back and forth bill sponsoring, bill denials, and resurrection of a bill the Senate passage finally took place on April 12, 1977 and became effective on June 14, sixty (60) days later. In an unprecedented legislative compliment, the senators all attached their signatures to a copy of the ladybug bill, had it framed and presented to the young sponsors for permanent display in their school. The ladybug, described by its sponsors, is a tiny, multi-colored, fast-flitting insect, which is shaped like half of a pea, and often having red, white and yellow spots. Ladybugs feed chiefly on plant lice and scale insects. The pupils also testified that the ladybug stands for good luck and most people are careful not to harm them. I can remember as a child whenever a ladybug would land on us or near us we would chant "Ladybug, ladybug fly away home your house is on fire and your children will burn! Anyone else remember that? Oh well, maybe it is a Jersey thing!

For more information on New Hampshire's symbols look for Part II of this article in an upcoming issue of the Steamer.