

Winter 1961

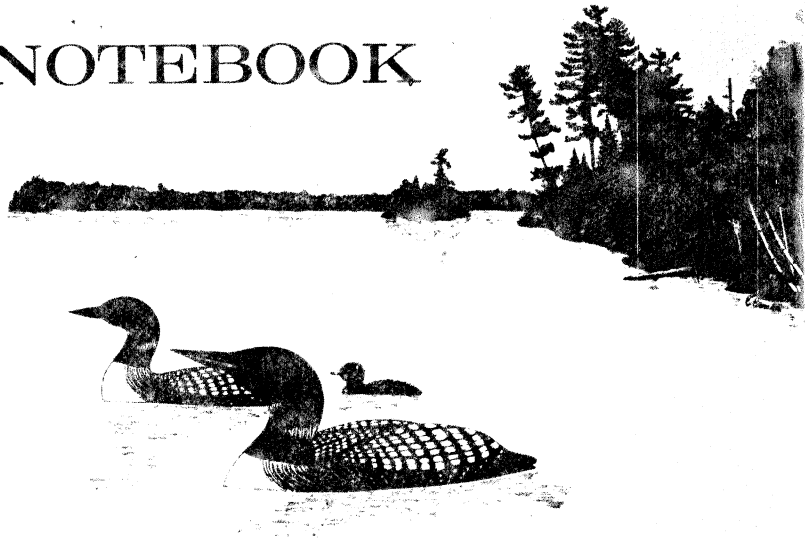
# NORTH COUNTRY NOTEBOOK

George Vukelich

**Our Noisy Poets:** Someone once said that bringing out a book of poems was comparable to tossing a leaf into the Grand Canyon and listening for it to strike bottom. Just in time for Christmas is a poetry anthology entitled *Poetry Out Of Wisconsin*. The anthology includes new work by such nationally known Wisconsin poets as *Horace Gregory, August Derleth, Chad Walsh, Edna Meudt* and others. The book is published under the auspices of *The Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets*, Dodgeville, Wisconsin and should be in the nation's book stores directly.

**Our Maple Syrup Man:** Wisconsin, which ranks third in maple syrup production, will produce an estimated \$525,000 in farm income this year from the thick amber liquid that goes so well on pancakes. That's the figure cited by *Ted Peterson*, an extension service forester for the *University of Wisconsin*. And, Peterson adds, the total is only 2% of the potential volume from sap and syrup in Wisconsin. A lot of our out-of-state friends are going to gleefully write us that they felt all along we had more sap up here than we knew what to do with.

**The Bear Facts:** With most of Wisconsin's bear population dug in for the winter, *George Knudsen* has a little more time for himself these days. Knudsen is a biologist who works for the *Conservation Department* as a bear researcher. But trapping the bears is the only way he can get close enough to "research" them. So Knudsen trails bears, traps them, "shoots" them with knockout serum and then goes to work: measuring, weighing and tagging them. His trap line extends across Northern Wisconsin, — from the St. Croix River in the west to the Menominee in the east. Still as tough and lean as in his college weight-lifting days, the 39 year old Knudsen cradles his worn old briar pipe and talks bears. He undoubtedly knows more about them than anyone else in the entire state. In three years he has personally trapped 151 in 188 nights afield. Knudsen's trapping seldom hurts the bears. Teeth are removed from the steel traps and the trap jaws are so spaced to merely hold a bear's paw securely — not pinch it. Knudsen attaches ear tags to each of the bears he tags. Knudsen states that the male bears are surprisingly docile, mama bear is the one you have to watch. And like humans, males have the wanderlust, the females seldom roam. "I think Wisconsin has a bear population of between 7,000 and 9,000 right now. And we don't need to mollycoddle them." He thinks that Wisconsin should have a special fall season on bears — with dogs, the same as neighboring Michigan. "Wisconsin hunters could kill 1,500 bears each year without endangering the species," he says, "the legal kill last year was only about 600, with an additional 150 shot by wardens on complaints of property damage." One of his worst moments came with a year old bear in a trap. It headed toward a swamp where the drag chain wouldn't hold. Knudsen grabbed the chain and the little bear dragged the 220 pound biologist right across the swamp. "They are strong," he admits. "And smart too. Very seldom are they trapped twice." Seven to nine thou-



sand bears. That's more bears than there are people in most northern Wisconsin towns. The bear man smiles. "That's right," he says. "And I think everybody aims to keep it that way. The people. And the bears."

**Cruising the Timber:** The largest living specimens of eight native American trees are located in Wisconsin, according to a report by the *American Forestry Association*. The trees are *black ash, common chokecherry, jack pine, Norway pine, eastern white pine, black spruce, white spruce* and *pin oak*. Here are the locations and dimension of the trees:

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|--------------------|---|
| Eastern White Pine | — 17 feet 2 inches in circumference, 140 feet high, crown spread of 56 feet. Located near <i>Newald</i> .             |
| White Spruce       | — 10 feet 1 inch in circumference, 75 feet high, crown spread of 42 feet. Located near <i>Herbster</i> .              |
| Norway pine        | — 8 feet 10 inches in girth, 98 feet high, crown spread of 34 feet. Located at <i>Stephenson</i> .                    |
| Jack pine          | — 6 feet 2 inches circumference; 79 feet high, crown spread of 24 feet. Located near <i>Brule</i> .                   |
| Black spruce       | — 3 feet in diameter, 58 feet high, crown spread of 24 feet. Found near <i>Florence</i> .                             |
| Black Ash          | — 8 feet 8 inches in circumference, 79 feet high, crown spread of 39 feet. Located in <i>Chippewa County Forest</i> . |
| Chokecherry        | — 3 feet in circumference, 34 feet high, crown spread of 28 feet. Located in <i>Madison</i> .                         |
| Pin Oak            | — 10 feet 9 inches in circumference, 78 feet high, crown spread of 81½ feet. Located at <i>Keshena</i> .              |

*The Wisconsin Conservation Department* keeps records of large trees. Persons having information about big specimens are asked to contact *Walter Scott* at the *Wisconsin Conservation Department, Box 450, Madison 1, Wisconsin*.

Impressive as these trees are, the most memorable one we'll see all year is the waxy-green one that will sit in our living room pretty soon. After all, we don't just cart any old tree into the house. Our tree is always something special. It can be a runty little tree, but it's the biggest special runty little tree in the north woods. And so, we bet, is yours. May we wish a Merry Christmas to you, and your tree, and all the folks who gather round it with you.