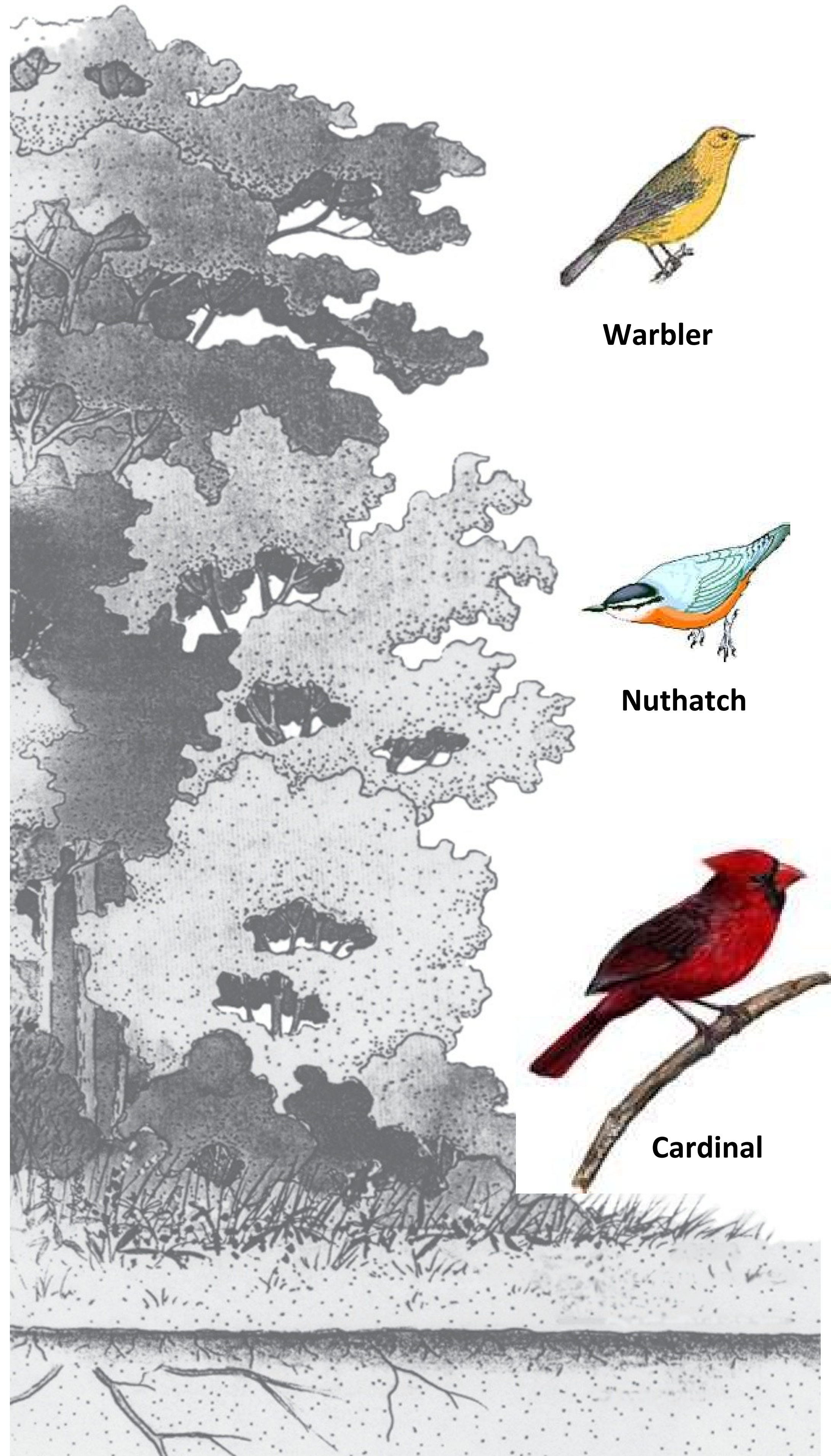


## B

# FOREST CANOPY AND WILDLIFE

While the wetland behind this sign lacks understory shrubs it does support large trees that form a canopy. These species include the Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) with its deeply furrowed bark and the American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) with whitish, peeling bark. These species are both native to this region and are known for their hydrophilic (water loving) tendencies. In contrast, the native Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), a species not found in floodplains, is absent from the wetland but is common in the area at a slightly higher elevation on the opposite side of the trail.

The tree canopy not only serves as a habitat and foraging environment for many species but it also creates conditions which contribute to the great diversity of wildlife in the wetland. The architecture of these trees consists of woody branches supporting a canopy of leaf foliage stretching across openings to fill any gaps and trap as much light as possible. The tops of the trees can range in height from about 15 feet to 50 feet off the ground. This variation in height alone creates a diversity of habitats for a range of bird and mammal species. For example, Cardinals and Mockingbirds are found in the lower canopy trees while Woodpeckers and Nuthatches are more common in the mid-canopy and Warblers are in the highest part of the canopy. In addition to birds, the canopy also provides habitat for Squirrels, Raccoons, Opossum, and a variety of other animals. The canopy captures sunlight and intercepts wind and precipitation thereby buffering climatic extremes in the understory and forest floor microhabitats.



Warbler

Nuthatch

Cardinal