

**The Wonderful Bitternut Tree  
Walnut Family  
Bitternut Hickory "Bitternut" "Pignut"  
(*Carya cordiformis*)**



**White-breasted Nuthatch that Made its Home in the Bitternut Tree**

Trees are homes for many animals. They also support the growth of other plants. As we rake in fall, we can examine the fallen leaves to see what might have lived there or continue to live there.

A Bitternut tree in the Kuse Nature Preserve has been there for many years. Look at the curled and dying leaves. They are yellow or brown. Some may have galls attached to them. Various insects make galls. Eggs are laid on the leaves and a protective covering forms around the hatching, maturing egg in summer. Later it emerges, but the scarred, knobby gall remains.

The Bitternut leaves may have been choice food for the larva of the Luna Moth. If birds did not eat the larva, it would have spun a cocoon in summer. In autumn this cocoon would fall off with the leaves. Lawn mowing might cut and kill it. Stepping on it could break it. Squirrels might have found it and eaten it.

Only a few of the many survive. As leaves are raked, it is important to look for, pick up, and protect these Luna Moth cocoons.



**Luna Moth Cocoon**

If kept cold over winter, they will survive and eclose in Late May or early June and the cycle will start over.



**Luna Moth**

Walk and rake carefully for you may find one of these special creatures. Help preserve and protect it.

Look for the nuts. They are round and light colored and may still have a green or brown husk covering them.



The Bitternuts are a favorite food for squirrels.



A hole in the tree provides a home for them.



Deer also sometimes come to eat the nuts or mast.