

The Alaska Birch

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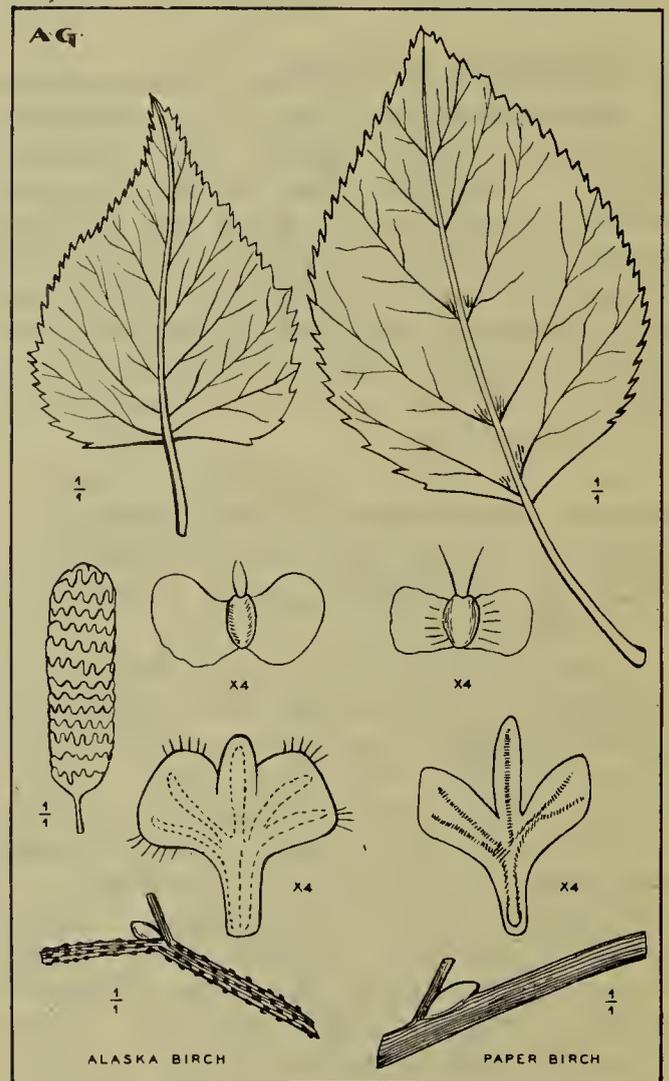
DURING the past several years I have studied the Alaska birch (*Betula resinifera*) in north-western Canada. Some botanists consider it a variety of the paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*). However, a number of consistent characters distinguish the Alaska birch as a distinct species, viz., small, bushy tree 15 to 30 feet high; twigs covered with resinous glands; leaves 1 to 2 inches long, glandular resiniferous, smooth and shiny on both sides; central lobe of the fruiting bractlets only slightly longer than the side pair. It occurs on sandy soil and muskegs in the forested region from Alaska to Manitoba.

In contrast, the paper birch is a large tree up to 75 feet in height; twigs without glands; leaves dull-green, 2 to 4 inches long, hairy in the axils of the veins beneath; central lobe of the fruiting bractlets extending considerably beyond the side pair. It occurs in mixed forest and on river banks from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

In the field, the Alaska birch can readily be distinguished from the paper birch by its lower stature, more slender and graceful habit,

resinous glandular twigs, and comparatively small, dainty leaves which are nearly as broad as they are long. The range of the Alaska birch is, in general, north of the paper birch. Their habitats are also different, as already stated. Never have I found both species growing together.

In height and general appearance, the Alaska birch closely resembles the gray birch of eastern North America.



Timber Wolves

WILLIAM NIVEN reports that two Timber Wolves were caught in the vicinity of Sheho last winter, and that another was seen between Sheho and Margo. Knowing that this is unusually far south for them, he wonders what brings this wolf so far from its usual haunts. Perhaps game is getting scarce in the north.