Ponder A Pond
Pre-visit Activities
1st-3rd Grade

The activities included in this pre-visit packet have been designed to help you and your students prepare for your upcoming program at St. Joseph County Parks. By becoming familiar with this information, your students will have a better understanding of the activities that we will conduct with them at the park.

Dragonflies are often seen near a pond. They lay their eggs in the water and their babies (nymphs) live underwater before turning into adults. The adults hunt for mosquitoes and other insects that live near the pond. Here are two short videos that can introduce your students to dragonfly bodies and life cycles:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyt4HtcMPgg

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lD-LNsQkym4

Dragonfly Match
Circle the two dragonflies that are exactly the same.
Draw a line from each wetland animal to the food that it eats. (Use the clues provided if you need help!)

**Food in the Wetland**

- **Muskrat**
  - **Hint:** Likes to eat plants.

- **Dragonfly**
  - **Hint:** Likes to eat an insect we think is a pest.

- **Frog**
  - **Hint:** Will catch this large flying insect with its tongue.

- **Great blue heron**
  - **Hint:** Will hunt its food as it slithers through the wetland grasses at the edge of the pond.

- **Aquatic turtle**
  - **Hint:** Their food can not live outside of the water.
Fish, tadpoles and dragonfly nymphs are active in the water all winter long! Color this pond scene.

The pond where the spring peepers trilled their first song is edged with ice and now holds only brittle, broken reeds and dead iris leaves. Beneath the water and ice, however, is a colony of gray-brown tadpoles and almost transparent *dragonfly* larvae that will survive the winter in deep pools along with the frogs buried in the leafy debris and fish such as these *bluegills* (*Lepomis macrochirus*) that feed on insect larvae.

Winter will be less of a struggle for these underwater creatures than for some of the animals that live on the land. The bluegill, a member of the sunfish genus, is olive green above with blue sides shading down to a red-orange underside. Its face has two blue markings running back from the mouth to the gills.

*From A Walk in the Woods* by Dot Barlowe
Snails live in ponds and eat algae and other water plants. Here is a video showing how snails eat!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0Q-zFLAvPE
During your visit to the park, you will scoop in the pond with a small strainer. What do you think you will catch? Here are a few things that you might see wiggling in your scoop! Many of the creatures you will find are the young (baby or teenage phase) of different insects.

**Damselfly (nymph) (teenage phase):**
It has three leaf-shaped gills at the tip of its abdomen (end of its body.)

**Giant water bug (adult):**
It uses its first pair of legs for grabbing prey.

**Predaceous Diving Beetle (adult):**
Its shiny, flattened, oval shaped body is generally black to brownish black.

**Mayfly (nymph) (teenage phase):**
It has three, featherlike tail flaps at the end of its body.

**Tadpole:**
Some kinds of tadpoles turn into an adult frog or toad after only 12 days. Other kinds live as tadpoles for three years!

**Dragonfly (nymph) (teenage phase):**
They are predators (eat other animals) and will especially eat other insects in the water.

**Predaceous Diving Beetle (adult):**
Its shiny, flattened, oval shaped body is generally black to brownish black.
Answer Sheet
for
Ponder A Pond
Pre-visit Activities
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Food in the Wetland
- Muskrat/Cattails
- Dragonfly/Mosquito
- Frog/Dragonfly
- Great blue heron/Snake
- Aquatic turtle/Fish

Although some of these animals will eat the same things, these answers reflect what the animal will more commonly feed on.

Dragonfly Match