

# Habitat Conservation Area

## *A Self-Guided Interactive Tour Activities*

### POND DIPPING

**Materials:** Fine mesh net, bucket or container, identification guide ([link on website](#))

Walking past the beaver lodge and around the berm wetland, you may hear or see Red-Winged Blackbirds, Marsh Wrens that are common wetland birds. Red-Winged Blackbirds create their nests in the cattails just above the water and in late spring/early summer you can sometimes see their light blue, dark speckled eggs hidden in their nests.

At the other end of the berm, you will notice a dock area that can be used for pond dipping. Looking off the dock into the water you may notice aquatic invertebrates (animals without backbones) swimming in the water and that is because a wetland is not only abundant and diverse with animals and plants, but also insects. The best time of the year to go pond dipping is from May to August when the ponds are at their peak activity. But it is always best to go pond dipping a few times from late spring to early fall to see how ponds change over the course of the summer, week by week and even month by month.

Many flying insects lay their eggs in the pond and their young called nymphs or larvae live under water before changing into adults. Larvae are maggot-like insect young, sometimes with legs. Nymphs look more like adult insects but without wings, usually with jointed legs. Many insects start their lifecycle in the water and complete it on land, such as: dragonflies, mosquitoes, mayflies and damselflies. Dragonflies can live in the water as nymphs from two to four years before climbing to the top of a cattail where they shed their exoskeleton, open their wings and become the land-based dragonfly we all know and love. Other common aquatic invertebrates include water mites, whirligig beetles, predaceous diving beetles, zooplankton, water striders, fishing spiders and many more! In the winter, insects hibernate under the leaves, grass and in the mud.

