Wetland Discovery
Activity Guide

A wetland is covered in water for at least part of the year. These important areas provide valuable habitat for plants, animals and insects. Wetlands are often found around ponds, streams and rivers and help prevent flooding.
**Become a wetland explorer**

Walk around a wetland to discover the life in this habitat. Think of some ways that wetlands are valuable to living things.

**What to bring exploring:**

- Boots or water shoes
- Magnifying glass
- A clear container for collecting pond water

*Wetland plants* have unique traits. They provide food and shelter for insects and other living things.

- Look for plants around the wetland. Where do you find plants growing?
- Look closely at a cattail or other water plants. How is it different from other plants?

*Wetland soil* absorbs and holds water like a sponge, and helps prevent flooding.

- Collect a small sample of wetland soil.
- Roll it into a ball. How does it feel?

**Things to look for**

- Snails, crayfish, insects, frogs,
- Turtles, birds, animal tracks and homes.

How many different types of plants and animals can you find? How are they important to humans?
Crayfish, snails and aquatic insects are some wetland inhabitants, called macroinvertabrates. These are a significant source of food for other wetland animals, including amphibians, birds, reptiles and fish. One species, the dragonfly, starts its life underwater as a nymph, then undergoes a change, called metamorphosis, to grow into an adult.

- Collect water from the wetlands in your clear container. Use your magnifying glass to get a closer look. What do you find?
- Find water bugs on the water’s surface and look for flying insects in the air above the wetland.

Preserving and protecting wetlands is important for our community. Explore wetlands at these preserves: Mellody Farm, George Beach Trail at Middlefork Farm, Dixon Wetlands at Skokie River, and West Skokie. What can you do to help wetlands?