

The Pond

By Dr. Leonard Lee Rue III

Water is essential to life. No creature can survive without having access to it in some form. Some creatures get the fresh water they need from the vegetation they eat; others drink salt water and their bodies distill it into fresh water and eject the salt. Most creatures drink the water that they get from rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. Some creatures, such as fish and some insects, live in the water and are able to get the oxygen they need through their gills or the pores of their skin. Frogs, toads, salamanders and some insects pass part of their developmental stage in the water. Other creatures, such as ducks, geese, muskrats, beaver and some snakes, get some of their food in the water, while others just come to the water to drink.

There is no doubt about it; water is a magnet to all wildlife. The pond on my property is a little ecosystem, drawing, holding and providing for the multitude of creatures that live in, on, or around it. It is only $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre in size, which is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the size of a football field, yet to some creatures it means the entire world to them.

The deer are the largest creatures that visit my pond. They could easily drink at one of the small streams, but they also come to feed upon some of the water plants. A pair of Canada geese raises a family on my pond and is very territorial, chasing away all other geese. The wood ducks and mallards come to the pond because I put corn in the water every day, for them and the geese, to eat. I have put up nest boxes for the wood ducks, which gives them a place to raise their families.

Beaver occasionally pass through my pond, but do not stay, as there are not enough trees to provide food for them. The muskrats live in the pond year round. They find enough roots of water plants and grasses, but also like to eat the corn I put out daily. The black bass and sunfish have no choice but to live in the pond, and are perfectly happy to do so as it provides everything they need. The frogs, toads and water snakes divide their time between the pond and the swamp below. The turtles leave the pond only to lay their eggs.

Dragonflies and damselflies patrol the pond constantly in the summer months to feed upon all types of flies and mosquitoes. Actually, because of the dragonflies, there are almost no mosquitoes; they are nature's original "Mosquito Control Commission". The many bushes around the pond provide food and shelter for different types of songbirds, such as catbirds, robins, bluebirds, cardinals, etc.

I put up a permanent photographic blind at the edge of my pond, in which I hide, to take pictures and the footage you are seeing on this tape. The advantage to being hidden from wildlife is that they don't know you are there and they go on with their natural activities and behavior. I get into the blind long before dawn breaks and it is exciting to hear and watch the world around the pond come to life as the creatures wake up to start their new day. The first sound is usually the two note whistle of the titmouse, followed closely by the singing of the cardinals and the cawing of the crows. Soon the honking of the geese and the quacking and whistling of the ducks can be heard. I often hear the ducks splashing down in the pond, as they fly in, before I can see them. Soon the light spills over the horizon and trees and all of the creatures are stirring. Now, I can photograph and watch the wildlife from my blind without disturbing them. It's a fantastic way to start a day!

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Amplexus	Sexual embrace to help the female lay eggs.
Antler	The bone-like formation on top of the head of male deer, elk, moose and caribou.
Calcium	A mineral needed for proper bone growth.
Camouflage	Allow to be hidden.
Chitin	A hard substance like your fingernails.
Clutch	A cluster of eggs laid by a bird.
Courtship	The pattern of activity which leads to breeding.
Dominate	To be the boss over others.
Duff	The decomposed leaves and needles found on a forest floor.
Ecosystem	A complete biological community of creatures and their environment.
Embryo	A fertilized egg develops into an embryo or baby.
Flock	A large group of birds.
Forbs	Broad-leafed plants.
Gander	A male goose.
Gestation	The period of time that it takes for a baby to develop and to be born.
Gills	A part of the body used, to get oxygen from water.
Gosling	The young of geese.
Hatch	When the fully developed chicks come out of the egg shells.
Hibernate	To spend the winter in a deep sleep with lowered body functions.
Incubate	The application of the proper heat needed to hatch fertile eggs.
Instinct	Action taken without thinking.
Insulation	Material used as protection against the cold.
Intruder	Someone who trespasses.
Larvae	Immature stage of insects.
Litter	Having a number of young at one time.
Microcosm	Cosmos is the surrounding world; microcosm is a small area of that world.
Migration	The annual movement of wildlife usually north and south, often over a long distance.
Molt	The gradual replacement of old feathers with new ones.

Nourished	Fed.
Occurrence	A happening.
Oil Sac	A gland filled with oil, located at the base of a bird's tail, on the top side. The bird uses the oil to waterproof its feathers.
Oxygen	A colorless, tasteless, odorless gas needed to breath.
Plumage	The feathers of a bird.
Plummeting	Falling quickly.
Precocial	Baby birds that can hunt for their own food when only hours old.
Predator	Any creature that eats another creature.
Proclaim	To announce.
Propulsion	A method of being able to move.
Reeds	Coarse type of water plants.
Reigns Supreme	King over all others.
Restricted	Controlled.
Rival	A competitor.
Rodent	A mammal having four large cutting teeth in the front of the mouth.
Sedges	Coarse type of water plants.
Sediment	Soil or debris settled on the ground, beneath water.
Semi-aquatic	A creature that spends a part of its life in the water.
Stalk	To sneak up on.
Starch	A carbohydrate found in plants such as potatoes.
Subspecies	Members of the same species that are slightly different from one another.
Succulent	Full of moisture.
Territory	An area that birds or animals claim as their own and often fight to keep rivals away from it.
Trilling	A vibrating call made by toads and frogs.
Tympanum	The circular covering over the ear of a frog or toad.
Velvet	The network of blood vessels which covers and nourishes a deer's growing antlers.
Water repellent	Water rolls off without soaking in.