

inSTALLations

March 2009



Life Below the Ice

The ponds have appeared lifeless for the last several months. Turtles and frogs have been buried in the mud at the bottom of the pond. Their heart rate and metabolism slow to the point that any oxygen they need can be obtained from the water through their skin. They have not eaten or defecated for several months now.



Fish in the ponds remain awake, although their activity level has slowed. They will continue to eat, although much less than in warmer months. Their metabolisms slow, but still require fairly high levels of oxygen. If the pond is covered with solid ice and snow for long periods, the oxygen levels can drop significantly resulting in a fish kill.

Aquatic insects also spend the winter in the pond. Many are food for the fish, while others are predators themselves. Some, like the frogs and turtles, bury themselves in the mud and are inactive.

As the days warm and the ice melts this spring, these animals will again become active. As you wait for the warmer weather, remember there are many other creatures waiting with you.



Sings of Spring



The first frogs to begin calling will be the chorus frogs looking for mates at the temporary vernal pools.

With the longer days and warmer temperatures, the sap will begin to flow. Look for buckets on our maple trees as we collect sap to make into syrup.

Toward the end of the month, the



tree buds will begin to swell in preparation for leaf-out in a month or two.

Birds begin singing their spring songs looking for mates. Some birds pair up in the wintering grounds, while others will wait until they arrive at their breeding location.

Visit the Information Desk for program information.

This inSTALLation is available online at www.chippewanaturecenter.org under the Naturalist Section.