

## Exploring Meadows



Have you ever wandered out into the middle of a field and just listened? Or have you run your hands along the stalks of grass feeling the textures as you pass by? Have you chased grasshoppers through the weeds just to have them slip through your fingers at the last moment? Then you have experienced to joy and fascination of a summer meadow.

Meadows are open areas filled with herbaceous plants (non-woody) that include grasses and wildflowers. The specific species found in a particular meadow depends on the soil type, location, pH of the soil, amount of moisture, and many other factors. Some of the meadows here at Chippewa Nature Center support big blue stem - a grass that can grow over 5 feet tall, while other areas have smaller species that are only as tall as your ankle or knee. Each types of meadow holds unique and wonderful treasures.

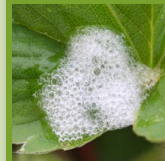
The type of animals found in a meadow largely depends on the types of plants found there. Insects abound in this diverse, sunny habitat. Bees and butterflies pollinate flowers, grasshoppers and caterpillars munch leaves, and aphids and spittlebugs suck plant juices while praying mantids stalk their insect prey. Then there are the birds.

Tree swallows and bluebirds snatch up insects while hawks and owls search for mice and rabbits. Frogs and snakes also make the meadow their home and even the occasional turtle can be found wandering through. Coyotes, fox, and deer are among the larger animals that visit the meadow.

We invite you to spend some time in one of the many meadows here at Chippewa Nature Center. Check out the Meadow Mouse Trail short cut, the Field Trail behind the Homestead Farm, the Arboretum, or even the Wetlands for a meadow experience. Take a few steps off the trail or a few moments to just listen and you might be amazed at what treasures (both plant and animal) you discover among the 'weeds'.



## Nature Notes



The **spittle bug's** bubbly hideout is created either by blowing liquid out its mouth or butt. When you find one, gently run your finger along the stem to locate the harmless, light green spittle bug. Be sure to put it back on the same plant with a little of its spittle to hide in.

The flowers you notice growing in a meadow change throughout the season. In the spring look for white **strawberry** flowers growing along the ground, later look for black-eyed susans, and in the fall goldenrod abounds.



Most **grasshoppers** are small and flightless this time of year. They have overwintered as eggs or immature nymphs and have several instars (or developmental stages) to go through before they develop wings and become adults.

**Visit the Visitor Center Office for program information.**

This inSTALLation is available online at [www.chippewanaturecenter.org](http://www.chippewanaturecenter.org) under the Naturalist Section.