



The Sloper Wetlands Hike is located in the northwest corner of the property. Our Sloper volunteers constructed a 400 foot Wetlands Boardwalk for the purpose of environmental education. The Wetlands Boardwalk was funded by the YMCA and the State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. Please feel free to visit the Wetlands Boardwalk, located off the Red Trail. For safety reasons and to prevent the disturbance of the wetlands wildlife, we ask that all visitors stay on the Boardwalk.

Other hikes available include:

- Sloper Tree Identification Hike
- Seven Natural Wonders of Sloper
- Sloper Historical Hike
- Sloper Wildlife Identification Hike

YMCA CAMP SLOPER Wetlands Hike



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Welcome to YMCA Camp Sloper. Here, new experiences are introduced and lasting memories are never forgotten. We reach out to the child in everyone and build character in the leaders of tomorrow. We change lives, build smiles and provide an environment for people to grow. Welcome to YMCA Camp Sloper – love it, share it and preserve it for the next generation.

YMCA Mission: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. The YMCA is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

AMPHIBIANS

Eastern American Toad

Physical Description

A medium sized toad usually found in the range of 2 to over 3½ inches. They do not drink water, they absorb it through their skin. The color of their skin depends on humidity, temperature, and stress. Prey is captured with their wide and sticky tongues or with their front legs.



Habitat

This species needs shallow water for breeding, but apart from that they like to spend their lives in any moist, humid hiding spaces with an abundant food supply. Anywhere from suburban backyards to the mountain wilderness will provide suitable habitat for the Eastern American Toad.

Food Source

Insects including ants, beetles, slugs, spiders, mites. Can eat 100 flies in 10 minutes.

Predators

Main predators of the toad are snakes.

Bullfrog

Physical Description

Bullfrogs are very large, 3½ to 8 inches in length. Olive-brownish in color with brown spots scattered over the body and webbed feet. They are the largest frog in North America. Male bullfrogs have a yellow throat, whereas the female throat is white. Their voice is deep-pitched and bassy which can be heard over distances of a quarter mile in the forest.



Habitat

Bullfrogs are aquatic and can be found in almost any permanent water body, such as lakes, ponds, rivers, marshes, swamps, etc. Bullfrogs can usually be found on the bank or along the water's edge. These areas are typically well-vegetated, and when the frog is startled it is just as likely to hide in vegetation as the water.

Food Source

Bullfrogs will eat almost any moving prey they can catch, and have been observed cannibalizing other newly metamorphosed bullfrogs. Their usual diet consists of insects, crayfish, minnows. Large frogs have even been known to catch and eat small birds and young snakes.

Predators

They are heavily preyed upon by many vertebrates, including humans. Bullfrogs are the main source of frog legs in the U.S.

Blue Spotted Salamander

Physical Description

Has a long tail that is 40 percent of its body length that detaches if a predator grabs ahold. They have long toes: four on the front feet, and five on the hind feet. Prefer vernal ponds that retain water into mid-summer, to ensure access to a suitable breeding habitat. Underbrush, leaf litter, rocks and logs are commonly used for shelter.



Habitat

The blue-spotted salamander can be found in deciduous and coniferous forests. It likes places with moist soil and small ponds. It often takes shelter in burrows or under damp leaves, moss or logs.

Food Source

Insects, spiders, worms and other small invertebrates.

Predators

Mostly fish and frogs.

Northern Water Snake

Physical Description

Grows to over four feet long. Can be brown, gray, reddish, or brownish-black. Dark bands on their necks and dark blotches on the rest of their bodies can cause them to be confused with cottonmouths and copperheads. They darken as they age and can become completely black. Non-venomous but aggressive when threatened.



Habitat

Muskrat houses and beaver lodges are good places to find water snakes. They also can be found near lakes, ponds, marshes, in people's houses, rivers, and canals; just about anywhere there is water.

Food Source

Small fish, frogs, worms, leeches, crayfish, salamanders, small birds and mammals.

Predators

Northern Water Snakes have many predators, including birds, raccoons, possums, foxes, snapping turtles, and other snakes.

INSECTS

Dragonfly

Physical Description

Large multifaceted eyes, two pairs of strong transparent wings, and an elongated body. Dragonflies do not normally bite or sting humans, though they will bite in order to



escape, if grasped by the abdomen. They are valued as predators that help control populations of harmful insects, such as mosquitoes. The first dragonfly species is dated back 320 million years.

Habitat

Throughout North America and Canada.

Food Source

Dragonflies typically eat mosquitoes, midges and other small insects like flies, bees, and butterflies.

Predators

Ducks, large spiders, and frogs.

Mosquito

Physical Description

Have a pair of scaled wings, a slender body, and long legs. In its life cycle the mosquito goes through four distinct stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Mosquitoes can transfer disease from one person to another without catching it themselves. Also known as a vector. Evolved around 170 million years ago.



Habitat

The number one habitat for mosquitoes is wetlands. They like the shallow water so they can lay their eggs there, and you can often see a group hovering above the water – believed to be a mating game.

Food Source

Both sexes are nectar feeders, but the females are able to drink blood.

Predators

Dragonflies, frogs, toads, bats and birds.

PLANTS

Eastern Skunk Cabbage

Physical Description

It has large, wide leaves, is low growing, and flowers early in the year. Has a very distinct smell. Notable for its ability to produce heat in order to melt its way through frozen ground.



Habitat

Prefers wetlands and can be naturally found in North America, Nova Scotia, and southern Quebec west to Minnesota, and south to North Carolina and Tennessee where it is protected as an endangered plant.

Fern

Physical Description

Most live in moist, shaded, and fairly undisturbed areas. Fern leaves are referred to as



fronds. Not flower producers, ferns reproduce with spores that are so small you cannot see them with the naked eye. Some ferns are among the world's most serious weed species.

Habitat

Ferns can grow in a wide variety of ecosystems; remote mountain elevations to dry desert rock faces.

BIRDS

Pileated Woodpecker

Physical Description

Adults are mainly black with a red crest and a white line down the sides of the throat. Adult males have a red line from the bill to the throat. These birds make a large nest in dead trees and tend to move after one year. Have been known to snap telephone poles due to their attempts at making a nest.



Habitat

Found in wooded areas usually settling in older trees.

Food Source

Mainly eat insects (especially beetle larvae and carpenter ants) as well as fruits, berries and nuts.

Predators

Have been known to include coyotes, red-tailed hawks, great horned owls, and foxes.

Mallard Duck

Physical Description

Large floating duck. Silvery-white wing linings. Female predominantly light brown in color. Male has a yellow bill while the females is orange.



Habitat – Found in all wetland habitats.

Food Source

Insects and larvae, aquatic invertebrates, seeds, acorns, aquatic vegetation, grain.

Predators

Mallard nests are often poached by animals like the coyotes, snakes, and certain types of birds.

SINKHOLE

Physical Description

At the end of the Wetland Boardwalk off the Red Trail, where an overflow of Sloper Pond drains, a small sinkhole has naturally developed. Sinkholes form for various reasons, but this sinkhole exists because of the wetness and looseness of the soil in the area. Look for the measuring stick that is submerged in the sink hole. If you pull it up, you'll see that this natural sinkhole is approximately 5 feet deep. Please return the measuring stick to the sinkhole.