

ANIMALS AT IVY CREEK

Created for use by the Ivy Creek Foundation

One of the most fun things to do at Ivy Creek is to look for animals! There are many types of animals here...mammals, insects (and arachnids), birds, amphibians (animals that live on land and in water), fish, and reptiles. Sometimes it's difficult to know the difference between some of them. Let's not let that get in the way of our fun! Let's look at these different types.

MAMMALS This is the kind of animal that we often think of first. Mammals have hair and usually have their babies on land, rather than in the water. The mothers nurse their babies, who start out small and grow big, just like you do.

Keep your eyes open to see mammals on any of the trails in the area. The easiest ones to see are squirrels and deer. Sometimes, if you're really lucky, you can see beavers in the creek or the occasional rabbit or chipmunk.



Mama and baby deer near the education building



Great Blue Heron
by Bob Gore

BIRDS There are so many birds in Ivy Creek, all sizes, shapes, and colors. All birds have feathers, wings, two feet, beaks, and they lay eggs. There are some birds that have wings but don't fly. All the birds here at Ivy Creek fly. And they have so many different colors: black, brown, red, yellow, blue, orange, green, or different combinations of all these colors. Look for bluebirds, cardinals, swallows, ducks, herons, and even owls! Good places to see birds at Ivy Creek are at the bird feeders near the barn, in the reservoir, or in the air of course!

INSECTS There are lots and lots of insects here. Insects are usually small, have three body parts: head, thorax (middle part), and abdomen. They have six legs, two antennae, most have two pairs of wings, and they have their skeleton on the outside of their bodies! Some insects like butterflies, honeybees, praying mantises, and others help people. Some are nuisances like mosquitoes and roaches. Even the pesky ones are food for other animals so they serve a purpose and aren't all bad. You will find insects everywhere in the park.



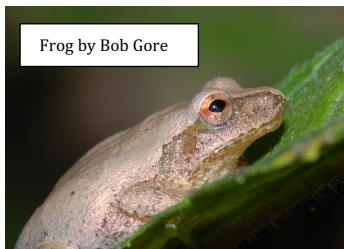
Dragonfly by Bob Gore



Spider web by Bob Gore

ARACHNIDS Sometimes it's difficult to tell this group apart from insects. But these animals have eight legs instead of six. Spiders and ticks are arachnids.

REPTILES These animals can be seen in the water, out of the water, and maybe on a trail. Snakes, turtles, and lizards are all reptiles. There are other reptiles, of course, including alligators...but you won't see them at Ivy Creek! Reptiles are cold-blooded animals so they need help to keep warm when temperatures are cold. Since it gets cold here at Ivy Creek, you probably won't see reptiles during the winter months as many burrow underground to stay warm. You can often see them basking in the sun on rocks, especially near water. Other characteristics include laying eggs and having scaly skin.



AMPHIBIANS This group of animals is common at Ivy Creek, especially in the water. They mostly have smooth skin, lay eggs, are cold-blooded (like reptiles), and live part of their lives in the water and part on land. Frogs and salamanders, toads and newts are all amphibians.

FISH All fish are cold-blooded and live in water. So how do they breathe? Fish have gills which let them get the oxygen they need to live, and breathe out carbon dioxide. Most fish have fins to help them steer through the water. And they have swim bladders, a part of their bodies that fill with air. That's so they don't sink or float on top of the water! Of course, the best (and only!) place to see fish is in the water, either in the creek or the reservoir.



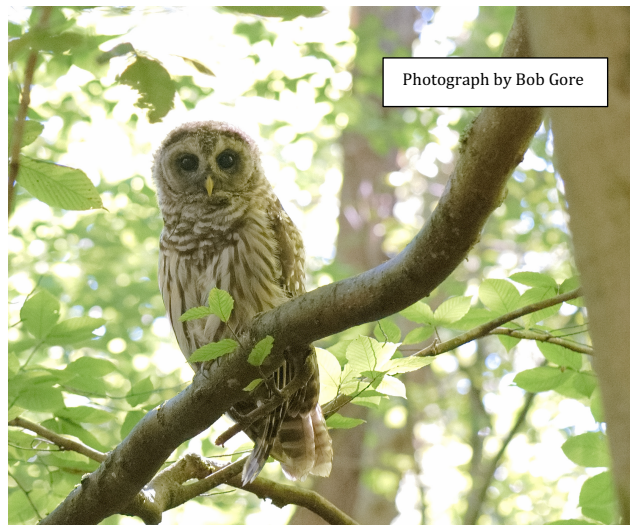
ANIMAL ACTIVITIES

See if you can see one of each animal family while hiking the trails. Or choose one type of animal and see how many of that type you can see.

Sometimes it's difficult to see the animals, especially if it's really hot or really cold. In that case, look for animal signs instead. You can often see deer tracks on a trail or ant hills in the field. Look for feathers or tufts of fur. Ripples on water can mean that fish are underneath. Listen for birdsong ... even if you don't see the bird. Look up in the trees to spot a nest. Is it a birds' nest? Or a squirrel's nest?

Scat! No, I'm not shooing away a cat. Scat is a word for animal poop! All animals poop and sometimes you can find examples on the trails.

Keep a record of all the animals you see, not just in Ivy Creek, but at home, in your neighborhood, while you're riding in a car. And don't forget that insects are animals and we always have lots of insects around. Draw pictures of what you find or find photographs in magazines.



BOOKS YOU MIGHT LIKE

OVER AND UNDER THE POND by Kate Messner. A lovely picture book about animals that live both above and below the water.

BOOKS FOR YOUNG EXPLORERS published by the National Geographic Society. This is a series of books about different aspects of animal life. Great photos!

LOST IN THE WOODS by Carl R Sams and Jean Stoick. An absolutely beautiful book filled with real photos of woodland animals.