Urban Explorer

SO MUCH LIFE...TO EXPLORE!
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ANIMALS
**INSECTS**

**DRAGONFLY**

What is a dragonfly?

- An insect with large eyes, transparent wings, and elongated body.
- They have nearly 360 vision!
- During migration, they can travel around 900 miles.

**DAMSELFLY**

What is a damselfly?

- More slender bodies than dragonflies.
- The eyes are much more separated.
- They hold their wings perpendicular to their bodies at rest.
Monarchs lay their eggs on milkweed plants for their caterpillars to eat.

The milkweed plant makes the monarchs taste bad, so usually birds won’t try to eat them.

Every fall, all of the monarchs fly south to Mexico where they will stay for the whole winter.
Damselflies are closely related to dragonflies but are smaller, have wings that fold back when they land, and their eyes don’t touch.

There are a lot of species of damselflies within our parks, but many can be very hard to tell apart.
Just like damselflies, we have many different kinds of dragonflies!

Both dragon and damselflies spend most of their lives as nymphs that live in the water.

When they are ready, they climb out of the water, shed their old husk and sprout wings.

Dragonflies are very good fliers, which lets them hunt flies with ease.
BIRDS
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

- These are birds that are commonly found in prairies and marshes all over Wisconsin.

- They have a variety of calls to listen for.

- While the boys are pure black with bright red spots on their shoulders, the girls are a brown pattern with much less noticeable markings on their wings.
AMERICAN ROBIN

- Robins are common birds seen all over Wisconsin!
- They are easily identified by their reddish orange underside and grey backs with a dark head and yellow beak.
- You might be able to spot their nests in the nooks of trees or even light poles or beams.
- Robin eggs are a sky blue color.

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REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS
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REPTILES

What is a Reptile?
• A reptile is a cold-blooded animal that has scales or scutes.
• Types of Reptiles in Milwaukee: Snakes and Turtles

AMPHIBIANS

What is an amphibian?
• An amphibian is a cold-blooded animal that needs water to survive.
• Some can even breathe through their skin!
• Types of Amphibians in Milwaukee: Frogs and Toads
Butler’s garter snakes are smaller than the common garter snakes that are normally seen in the other parts of the state. They also have a different pattern of stripes.

These snakes only live around the Great Lakes region, so you can’t find them in many places other than here!

These are the snakes you will see the most of in the Milwaukee area!
DEKAY’S BROWN SNAKE

- These guys are slightly smaller and less common than the butler’s garter snakes.
- They have coppery brown scales with a sandy stripe down their back.
- Be on the LOOKout for snakes basking in the sun by the sides of trails!
SMALL MAMMALS
SMALL MAMMALS

MICE
What is a mouse?
• A mouse is a small mammal that has a loooooong tail and big ears.

VOLES
What is a vole?
• A vole is a small mammal related to mice (like cousins!)
• They have smaller ears and eyes, a hairy tail, and a round head.
White-footed mice are the most common mice in Milwaukee.

Adults have white undersides with reddish brown fur on top.

Despite there being another species of mouse called the “House Mouse,” if you find mice in your home in Wisconsin, it’s probably one of these guys instead.
If you ever see a potato run across the trail, it was probably a meadow vole.

These guys are closely related to mice, but are bigger with smaller ears and a shorter tail.

Meadow voles tend to like tall grassy areas instead of shady areas with trees.
SQUIRREL

What is a squirrel?
- A squirrel is a rodent with a big bushy tail and hyper behavior.
- You can often hear and see them scurrying up trees.

CHIPMUNK

What is a chipmunk?
- A chipmunk is also a rodent, but has a small, thin tail and often has lines or spotting on its back.
- These guys tend to be smaller than squirrels, and are more often seen on the ground.
GREY SQUIRREL

- You won’t have to go very far to find grey squirrels, as they probably live in the trees by your own front yard!

- Wisconsin has more than five different kinds of squirrels, but grey squirrels are probably the only ones you will see in Milwaukee.

- They have greyish brown fur with a bushy tail.

- While you won’t find any in Milwaukee, in certain parts of Wisconsin you may find grey squirrels that are an oily black color, but they are still the same species as the ones at home.
Chipmunks are closely related to squirrels, but have less bushy tails and stripes down their back.

Despite what popular movies may suggest, they cannot sing, but do make chattering noises like squirrels.

You can usually find them looking for seeds on the ground in shady areas covered by trees.
While there are a few species of rabbits in Wisconsin, the eastern cottontail is the one you are most likely to find everywhere.

You can often see them sitting on lawns or open grassy areas.
CREEPY CRAWLIES
Slugs

- Slugs are mollusks with slimy, squishy bodies.
- They can usually be found under rocks or logs, as they prefer dark, moist areas since their skin can dry out easily.
There are lots of different spiders that live in Wisconsin.

Spiders use venom to stun their prey when they bite them.

While many spider can kill or seriously hurt people with their bites, none of the spiders you can find in Wisconsin are dangerous, and a bite would only itch.

Spiders are one of the many helpful creatures that eat annoying mosquitoes!
ANTS

- Ants like to make big nests just below the ground, and the ones that you find crawling around are probably looking for food to bring back to the nest, which is why they can be issues on picnics.

- Despite being tiny, they are very strong for their size and can bite hard, so remember to brush off ants if they get on you.
Small-Mouthed Bass

- Small Mouthed bass are fairly common fish that like to swim in schools in lakes and rivers.
- There are also large mouthed bass, which not only have bigger mouths but bigger bodies as well.
- Both kinds of bass are popular catches when fishing.
FROGS AND TOADS

FROGS

What is a Frog?
• A frog is a type of amphibian that spends all of its life in or near water.
• They are wet and 
  *slimy*.
• They hatch from eggs as tadpoles, and later become frogs when they grow up.

TOADS

What is a Toad?
• A toad is a type of amphibian only spends the beginning of its life in or near water.
• They have drier, bumpier skin that looks like *warts*.
• There is only one species of toad in Wisconsin.
To the surprise of absolutely no one, green frogs are a pickle green color.

They are smaller than bull frog, which can look rather similar.

Their calls are a “dunk” noise, similar to someone plucking a rubber band.
Leopard frogs are small, green frogs with spots. They make a more chipper call, in contrast to the deeper calls of green or bull frogs.
The only toad species in Wisconsin is the American Toad, which is very common. They can be found in small holes and in fields, as opposed to frogs which are almost always in or around water. This is due to toads having tougher skin that doesn’t dry out as easily.
Painted turtles get their name from their bright and colorful undersides.

They have surprisingly loooong claws. You can usually find some basking on logs in the sun.

Turtles may be known for being slow, but they are actually very good swimmers!
Snapping turtles are the biggest turtles in Wisconsin.

They have looong tails and have fairly plain, grey shells.

As the name suggests, they have strong beaks, and can bite very hard. This is so they can quickly catch fish, but is also a good reason to leave them alone if you see one, since they actually have looong necks and are always ready to snap something that bothers them.
NIGHTTIME
Raccoons roam around both the woods and cities at night. People often say they look like they are wearing burglar masks, which is somewhat fitting, as they are quite smart and often find ways to steal food out of dumpsters and sneak into small places. In the wild, raccoons usually spend the day sleeping in trees.
The Virginia opossum is the only marsupial in North America. This means that they keep their babies in a pouch.

They like to hang from tree branches by their tail, and if they get scared, they play dead.
Coyotes look like small wolves with red patches of fur.

While coyotes are usually active during the night, it is best to be aware of places where coyotes have been seen, as they have been known to attack small dogs and even people.

While it is best to stay away from coyotes, you can still see that they have a lot of things in common with pet dogs.
Wisconsin has several species of bats. While you won’t see them during the day, you may see the small wooden bat boxes on trees that they sometimes sleep in.

If you look in the sky when the sun has just set, you might be able to see some flying over you.

Bats use their noises to detect objects in the dark, which is why they have big ears.
COMMON MILKWEED

- This unique species is the only food source for monarch butterflies!
- They produce a milky sap that is toxic; thus, when monarchs eat it, they become poisonous too.
- Milkweed is also home for a lot of other insects such as aphids and milkweed bugs.
- You can easily identify them by their spikey seed pods, oval leaves, and pink flowers.
Although they resemble sunflowers, they are not.

This plant is distinctive from its large lobed leaves, white hairs, and bright yellow flowers.

They can live in a variety of conditions regardless of competition and climate.

It is believed that these plants were used for navigation in the past because their leaves point in a N/S direction.
DON’T TOUCH THESE!
POISON IVY

- This plant is easily identifiable by the distinct three leaflets and woody stem.

- Due to an oil it produces called urushiol, skin irritation and rashes can occur if you touch the leaves.

A plant with many hats:

DON’T BE FOOLED!
This plant can have lobed or smooth edges, grow as a shrub or vine, and be green or red in color.
This is an invasive species in Wisconsin identifiable by its sharply toothed leaflets, yellow flowers, and its wrapped petioles (when the leaf base wraps around the stem of the plant).

It produces a sap, that when in contact with your skin, can cause rashes and blisters when exposed to the sun.
This plant is native to Europe, but has found its way to Wisconsin.

It is identifiable by its serrated leaf edges, heart-shaped leaf, and stinging hairs.

When touched, these hairs come off the plant and can cause a stinging sensation on your skin.

FUN FACT:

This species was used for medicinal purposes as well as for a source of food and tea around the world.