

Nature Week at Heritage Village - April 26th

LIVING IN A RUT

Someone has been driving down our Strail and what a mess! #*&*#@!!! As I stand contemplating I catch movement in the water. Crouching down I see that this water-logged road rut is alive with creatures: some dark beetles, a water strider, and lots of wiggling worm-like creatures (future mosquitoes). They move quickly but I grabbed up a pile of leaves from the bottom of the pond, scooping several beetles and some water. There are no year-round ponds at Heritage Village so this road rut certainly is adding biodiversity. Maybe a road rut is not such a bad thing.



(These are not our species.)
Mosquito larvae hang upside down from the water surface by their breathing tube. Since no adults are flying yet, our mosquitoes must be emerging from diapause, dormancy induced by drought and freezing conditions. Did they come out of the bottom of the rut? Does anyone know?



I captured at least three species of predacious diving beetles (or are they water scavenger beetles?). They are tiny - from 2 mm to 7mm. Adapted for life at the water line, they have wrap-around eyes. They can see up into the air and down into the water at the same time.

Evidently they fly at night and have located this pool by the reflection from the water's surface. They spend most of their time under water catching food while breathing from an air bubble they carry on their stomach.

The predacious beetles replenish their air by sticking their abdomen up out of the water and collecting a fresh bubble. The scavenger beetles collect the air by sticking one antennae out of the water and sucking in fresh air. I did not watch long enough to figure out who was who. Do you know, if so let me know?



Water striders have two amazing features. First, their middle and hind feet are covered with water proof hairs strong enough to keep their whole body afloat. They hold their front legs up ready to pounce upon a prey. Secondly, their feet have motion sensors. Similar to

our lightning bugs, these animals search for mating partners by the male sending a certain vibration across the water surface, in this case a wave pattern instead of a light pattern. The female either responds with a "stay-away" or a "come" response signal.

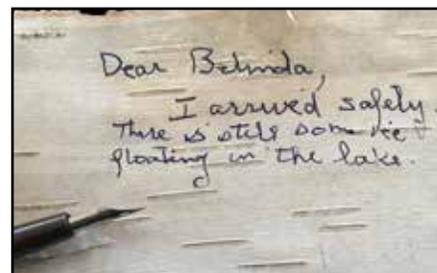
BREAKING OUT

Bark sloughing started this week at Heritage Village. The spring growth has begun.

The outer bark of trees is a protective coating consisting of dead tissue, like our outer skin and hair. Even if we don't notice, all trees must shed some of their bark in the spring so the tree can get bigger in diameter.

Some trees shed their bark in sheets like the white birch, some in plates like oaks and pine, some in strips like cedar, or in blocks like dogwood.

Edgar Conkling, our village founder, used birch bark to write letters home. It was cheaply available in Mackinaw at a time when there were no stores to buy paper. Can you imagine the post office on Mackinac Island accepting bark mail?



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