

**POND WATCHING GIVES PLEASURABLE VIEW OF NATURE'S
SUBTLE DYNAMIC
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I have always been intrigued by ponds and swamps. They hold a fascination for me that the many years I have been prowling them has not diminished. My dream to someday own a pond of my own has finally been fulfilled.

It is not much of a pond, most would call it a swamp, but we enjoy untold pleasures from it. Originally it was a swampy creek that found its way into the Middle Branch of the Moose River

A three-foot wooden dam on the creek some 100 or so feet from the river transformed it into its present state. Overnight it became a magnet for untold numbers of plants and animals.

The day after the dam was built and the water reached its level, a beaver moved in and declared its intentions to improve on my work. It was amazing how much it could accomplish in just one night. I finally won out and had it my way, but I am constantly being challenged by Nature's experts.

Just under a quarter acre in size, it can be viewed in its entirety from the end of our drive. Some days it's just a glance as we come and go, and others, a time to take a closer look at the varied plant life and animal denizens. It's an ever-changing scene with each day bringing new discoveries and surprises. Although I have been engrossed in all things connected with ponds and swamps, I never realized how many and varied they could possibly be. They change dramatically with each passing day.

We basically perceive all things based on the four seasons of the year. We fail to recognize they change each day of each season. I have been made acutely aware of this fact in the daily monitoring of our pond.

Many mornings I stroll down the drive to quietly observe the emerging or declining ebb and flow of the plant or animal life.

In the case of animal life, it is not always necessary to see the animal itself to know of its comings or goings. The unmistakable signs of its activities are discernible to one who has learned to look for them.

One of my greatest joys as a grandfather is pointing out these signs to my grandchildren. The inevitable questions of "why" and "how" then follow and have to be explained.

The close proximity of the pond makes this a possibility on an almost daily basis. The pleasure I derive from the pond pales when I realize the joy they take in it. When the weather permits, a daily trip to its banks is one of the most favored past times for grandsons Forrest and Tecwyn. When they have playmates or cousins visiting, they lead the charge, eager to show them the mysteries they have discovered.

A big plus is that it is relatively safe for three-year-olds and up because it is very shallow. It's murder on the clothes washer and parent's patience, however, and that's a circumstance my perverse sense of humor takes pleasure in. You know the bit, turn about is fair play!

Our family is not the only ones who enjoy the pond. Its proximity to Singing Waters Campground and adjacent to old Route 28 affords a first-hand view to hikers, strollers and bikers. They linger, observing its unusual attractions, much of it is captured on film.

I will never cease to look at the pond in the summer without seeing Moe Martin, landing net in hand, attempting to catch a frog for his grandchildren. They needed it for the Annual Father's Day Frog Jumping Contest. His protestations to the contrary, I knew he was enjoying every minute of it.

I have touched on the pleasure the pond (or swamp) provides, but little on the individual things that collectively make it so. In my next column I will try to enumerate some of them.