

WHAT LIVES IN OR NEAR THE WATER?

By Cherie Schadler

When you are splashing in a creek, or boating on a river, do you ever consider what lives in or near the water? There are various forms of life around you every moment. Some forms you can clearly see, or hear, such as birds flying overhead, and dogs barking in the distance. However, there are many forms that you can't see without the help of a magnifying lens, a microscope, or binoculars. Many creatures are so small, or so well **camouflaged** that they almost seem invisible. However, even though you can't see them, they may be watching you from a safe hideout in the water, up in a tree, or behind a bush.

An **aquatic environment** provides many different **habitats** that are home to bugs, birds, fish, reptiles, and mammals. In the water live thousands of **microscopic** life forms as well as **macroinvertebrates**. Many different varieties of birds feed on the bugs they find in the air, in the forest, and in the water. Fish, frogs, turtles, snakes, and sometimes even alligators, feed and breed in and around the waters, on the sandy banks, or in the lush, green forest. Snakes glide across the water from one side of the creek to the other in search of food.

You may be surprised to know that beavers sometimes build dams in our creeks and rivers, and that bats fly overhead to supper on flying mosquitoes and other insects. Deer, opossum, raccoons, and bobcats come to the water to drink and hunt.

The next time you visit your local creek or river, you may want to sit very quietly and observe how many different forms of wildlife are around you. The health of your creek or river may be essential to their livelihood. Take along a notebook and write down your observations. You will be amazed at how much activity is going on!