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Fish of the pond

There are many kinds of small fish in the pond. Have you ever tried to catch a minnow?

You may have heard someone say, "He swims like a fish." A person may be a very good swimmer, but he could never swim as well as a fish!

God, the Master Designer, designed the fish's body for swimming.

A fish uses its tail to swim quickly through the water. Its scales protect its soft body from disease and injury. Its fins help it to balance itself in the water.

A fish needs oxygen to breathe as much as you do. The oxygen that fish breathe is given off by the plants that live in the pond. It is dissolved in the water. The oxygen we breathe is in the air. We breathe it through our noses or mouths and into our lungs.

When fish breathe, they take in water through their mouths. The water passes over their **gills**. The gills remove the oxygen for the fish and send the water and carbon dioxide back into the pond or wherever the fish is swimming. The carbon dioxide is then used by the plants. The fish's gills act very much like our lungs.





Something to try!

How is oxygen dissolved in water?

Fish breathe oxygen that is dissolved in water. Can you see the oxygen? Try this and see!

What you need:

- glass of cold water
- warm room

What to do:

1. Fill a glass with cold water.
2. Let it stand in a warm room.

After a long while you will see tiny bubbles floating to the top. These bubbles contain oxygen which was dissolved in the water.

Birds of the pond

You can see many kinds of birds by a pond. What kinds of plants and animals would these birds depend upon for their food?

Not all bird nests are in trees. In the rushes and cattails that grow by some ponds, you may find a blackbird's nest.

You will have to look hard to see the bittern. It seems almost invis-ible. This is another example of **camouflage**, God's way of making an animal blend in with its surroundings.



Comprehension Check ✓

Fill-In: Write the correct answers on the line.

1. What is dissolved in the water that fish need to breathe? _____
2. What gas do plants need? _____
3. How do the fish and the plants of the pond help each other? _____

A mammal of the pond

You might think this mammal is a big, brown rat, but it isn't. It is a muskrat.

Its fur is light brown and very valuable. It is used in making fur coats. The **muskrat** is about one foot long. Its tail is almost as long as the muskrat is tall. It uses its tail to steer itself as it swims under the water.

The muskrat was created to live near the water. Its hind feet have

webbed toes to help it "paddle" through the water. Its front feet are not webbed. If they were, the muskrat could not dig its tunnel, which is its home.

The muskrat's tunnel is in the bank of the pond. The door or entrance to the tunnel is nearly always under water. This keeps the muskrat's enemies from catching it.

This means that the muskrat must swim under the water to get to its tunnel. The muskrat is a mammal. It cannot breathe under the water.

How long can you hold your breath? The muskrat can hold its breath for almost five minutes. You cannot do that, but then, God knew you would not have to swim under water to get home!



Muskrat