



### FROGS AND TURTLES

Warm, sunny weather brings out the cold-blooded reptiles and amphibians of the swamp. Along the banks of Battle Creek, look for green frogs ready to hop into the water. Spotted and painted turtles like to bask on half-submerged logs. The small mud turtle leaves a recognizable trail as it creeps among the knees.



### LIZARD'S TAIL

In summer, open areas of the swamp are carpeted with low plants with broad, heart-shaped leaves. In July, tiny white flowers emerge in tapered, drooping clusters (the lizard's tails).



### POISON IVY

"Leaflets three, let it be!" Most people recognize poison ivy as a ground plant with clusters of three leaflets on a long stem.

Here, it also occurs as a fuzzy-stemmed vine, climbing the trunks of trees towards the sun. All parts of the plant can cause a severe rash and should not be touched.



### CARDINAL FLOWER

The bright red flowers of this plant appear from late July to mid-August. Hummingbirds, attracted by the color, are their main pollinators. This plant is very rare in the sanctuary, and its flowers should never be picked.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Bald Cypress trees play important roles in the ecosystem. They slow the flow of water preventing erosion and removing sediment, and their roots absorb nutrient pollution that might otherwise end up in the Chesapeake Bay. The cypress swamp provides breeding habitat for frogs, toads, and salamanders. Fish spawn in submerged hollow logs, and raptors like bald eagles build nests in the treetops.



### PINK TURTLEHEAD

From August to October, the white-to-pink, snapdragon-like flowers of this plant bloom along the trail in small patches. Does the flower look to you like a turtle's head poking out of the water?



### FERNS

Sloping edges of the swamp support an assortment of ferns. Look for: New York fern (tapers at top and bottom of stem), sensitive fern (tall, with wavy leaf margins) and Christmas fern (evergreen leaflets shaped like Christmas stockings).



### ANIMAL SIGNS

Most of the larger animals in the swamp are nocturnal. Look carefully for traces of their activities. Raccoons, digging for crayfish, leave hand-like prints in the mud. You may also see tracks of muskrat, deer, fox and otter.



### CRAYFISH CHIMNEYS

Near the banks of Battle Creek, small chimneys of stacked-up mud pellets mark the entrances to submerged burrows of crayfish.

# BATTLE CREEK CYPRESS SWAMP CYPRESS KNEE TRAIL

## Summer



# Welcome to **BATTLE CREEK CYPRESS SWAMP**

Stop for a moment and look up. Towering 50 to 100 feet above you is the majestic bald cypress, the most abundant tree in this swamp. Its flared base is distinctive, and its feathery needles (leaves) are shed in the fall. Peculiar knobby projections poking through the mud (called "knees") are extensions of the root system. They help brace the tree, store carbohydrates, and may help provide oxygen to the submerged roots.

In the shade of these towering giants, it is easy to abandon the stress of daily living for the intimate struggle of a spider with a fly or a crayfish with mud.

Remember: Stop frequently. The trail can be walked in 15 minutes, but pause to absorb the sights and sounds, and to enrich your memory of the cypress swamp.

Look with your eyes, but see with your brain. Try to think like the animal you seek, then look for movement; you may be rewarded by the bobbing of a waterthrush at your feet or by the barred owl's quiet stare.

Listen for every little sound. Many elusive creatures reveal themselves with sound. Woodpeckers can often be spotted by following their tappings.

Enjoy your visit, but please remember to stay on the trail and leave everything as you found it for others.

