

BOOK REVIEW

A Walk Around the Pond: Insects in and over the Water

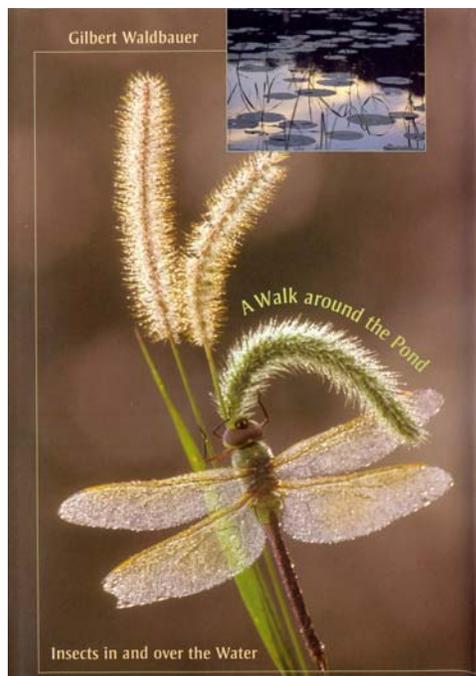
Gilbert Waldbauer (2006)

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'A Walk Around the Pond: Insects in and over the Water' was written by Gilbert Waldbauer, Professor Emeritus of Entomology at the University of Illinois but sections of the text come directly from the recollections of the young Gilbert Waldbauer, budding naturalist and entomologist with a thirst to know how the creatures around him while he was growing up, did what they did. Clearly his subsequent training in entomology and his professional pursuits provided much of his knowledge of insect physiology and morphology but observations from his childhood contributed as well and set the foundation for that career. Some early lessons had a profound effect – like the time in sixth grade when he put what he later found out to be a large dragonfly nymph into his aquarium of small native fishes to see what it turned into. He learned that it was an immature dragonfly and that immature dragonflies eat small aquarium fishes! Several fishes later, he observed the act of capture and gained an understanding of the morphological adaptations dragonfly nymphs had acquired for such a feat.

Time and again this book provides the answers to questions that most people expect entomologists to know about insects that are encountered in and around water. The universal *"What is that?"* is covered in the first chapter *'Who's Who in the Water'* where the Orders are introduced. *"Where do they live and how do they breathe?"* are described in the next two chapters. *"What do the immature stage of such and such look like?"* Or, alternatively, *"what does this weird-looking thing turn into? What do they eat and how do they find or capture it? How can they stay underwater for so long? If there are so many giant water bug eggs laid how come there aren't a lot more adults? How come there are millions of blood-sucking mosquitoes? How do these insects move about? What happens to all these insects in winter?"* All of these things are covered in Waldbauer's companionable style. Almost a story, *'A Walk Around the Pond: Insects in and over the Water'* is an easy read with many interesting facts about the interaction of insects with the aquatic environment interspersed with anecdotes from the author's professional and personal experiences. For readers wanting a bit more, the book ends with a bibliography broken up into the chapter headings for easy reference.

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