

Waldbauer

## A Walk Around the Pond

Insects in and Over the Water

A water strider darts across a pond, its feet dimpling the surface tension; a giant water bug dives below, carrying his mate's eggs on his back; hidden among plant roots on the silty bottom, a dragonfly larva stalks unwary minnows. Barely skimming the surface, in the air above the pond, swarm mayflies with diaphanous wings. Take this walk around the pond with Gilbert Waldbauer and discover the most amazingly diverse inhabitants of the freshwater world. In his hallmark companionable style, Waldbauer introduces us to the aquatic insects that have colonized ponds, lakes, streams, and rivers, especially those in North America. Along the way we learn about the diverse forms these arthropods take, as well as their remarkable modes of life—how they have radiated into every imaginable niche in the water environment, and how they cope with the challenges such an environment poses to respiration, vision, thermoregulation, and reproduction. We encounter the caddis fly larva building its protective case and camouflaging it with stream detritus; green darner dragonflies mating midair in an acrobatic wheel formation; ants that have adapted to the tiny water environment within a pitcher plant; and insects whose adaptations to the aquatic lifestyle are furnishing biomaterials engineers with ideas for future applications in industry and consumer goods. While learning about the evolution, natural history, and ecology of these insects, readers also discover more than a little about the scientists who study them.

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