

# DOWNNS PARK NATURE NOTES

## THE WET SET



In the heat of summer, plants and animals that thrive near water are putting on colorful shows for park visitors.

Wildlife abounds at the pond, near Brightwater Pavilion, and it's worth a walk down to the observation deck to take a look. Herons, egrets, osprey, belted kingfishers, cardinals, robins and red-winged blackbirds, as well as turtles, frogs and dragonflies, enjoy the pond. Lining the opposite shore are white and pink hibiscus. To the right, toward the bay, is a tall stand of phragmites. Near the deck, the purple flowers of swamp loosestrife attract butterflies. (Pictured above, a tiger swallowtail butterfly perches on loosestrife.) The underwater, weedy plant is parrot feather. Both parrot feather and phragmites are non-native invasive plants.

Another watery scene unfolds at the head of Locust Cove, in the park's northwestern sector. Your best view is from the causeway between Mileposts 2.3 and 2.4 on the Perimeter Trail. Look downstream. Purple pickerelweed is in a cluster on the right. In front and to the left are cardinal flowers, with spikes of bright red blooms. Around them are tall royal ferns.

– *Dave Cohn, naturalist volunteer*