Aquatic-Plant Zone: Bursting With Life

If you hear the word “wetland” you may visualize this zone. **Emergent plants** like cattails grow in the shallows. A little farther out **floating-leaf plants** like water lily develop. In deeper water **submerged plants** like pondweed grow as far as sunlight reaches the bottom. **Free-floating plants** like duckweed hang near the surface.

The plant life supports a thriving food web. **Insects** and **crustaceans** of all kinds develop in these calm waters. These small animals in turn sustain the diets of **amphibians** and **fish**. Birds also benefit: You may see **swallows** catching mosquitoes as they swoop near the water’s surface, or **egrets** hunting minnows close to shore.

Wet and Mucky: A Perfect Home

**Wetlands are vital to sustaining waterfowl populations.** Minnehaha Creek is home to mallards, wood ducks and grebes. Along the shoreline and in the aquatic–plant zone they find all they need for nesting, shelter and food.

A wood duck surveys her surroundings from a fallen tree. Snags like this one are an important element of wetland habitat.