What is Succession?

Most habitats go through a predictable series of changes called succession. Ponds are no different. Ponds are really nothing more than shallow holes where water collects. **Over time, if left to succeed, most ponds will eventually fill in with soil and plant debris** until the pond becomes dry land. In time, the dry meadow or field that used to be a pool of water will be converted to a woodland as various species of trees take seed.

It could take anywhere from a few years to hundreds of years for a pond to succeed into a meadow. The transition from a pond habitat to a meadow habitat is affected by many things — like climate, pond depth, plant growth, impact by humans, etc.

**The Stages of Pond Succession**

1. Once a pond is created, seeds are flown in by birds or deposited by mammals who visit the pond. These first seed plants are called pond pioneers.

2. As established plants grow and die they sink to the bottom of the pond and helping to fill in the shallow water.

3. Eventually, the pond’s emergent plants may cover the entire pond turning the pond into a soggy marsh.

4. In time, the soft, wet ground of the marsh will be overtaken by plants and dry out.

5. When that happens it means the pond has succeeded into a field or meadow.

6. As plant life & soil conditions change, the wildlife attracted to the area will change. The red-winged blackbirds that built their nests among the cattails will be replaced by birds like goldfinches, who are attracted by the fluffy milkweed seed pods they use to line their nests.