

Examples of Floaters

Duckweeds (*Lemna*, *Spirodela*, and *Wolffia* species)

Duckweeds have one, two, or three green **fronds** that lie flat on the water. Fronds are a combination of leaves and stems. The top of each frond is exposed to the air, and the underside is in water.

A single plant can fit on the end of a child's finger. *Lemna* and *Spirodela* have roots that grow into the water from the center of each frond. *Lemna* has only one root per frond; *Spirodela* has two or more. *Wolffia* is a tiny green bead without roots. It is able to float due to the surface tension of the water.

Masses of small duckweeds form floating green carpets on waters of sluggish bayous, ditches, lakes, and **swamps**. Where water is rich in nutrients, they cover the surface, shading out plants beneath them. Several species of duckweeds often grow together. They rarely flower but reproduce asexually by forming new fronds that break away from the parent plant.



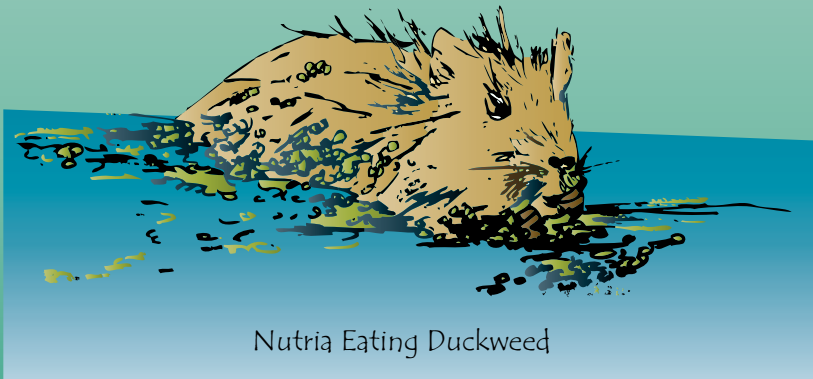
Duckweed on Child's Hand

Water birds, fish, crawfish, and nutria

graze on duckweeds. Nutria, a vegetarian mammal, dips its furry chin into the water and scoops duckweeds into its mouth with its two front paws. These animals were introduced into Louisiana from South America for their fur in 1938. Since then, they have overpopulated wetland areas and become nuisances. Their very large populations can destroy the plant life of marshes. Nutria burrow into the shorelines and undermine levees, roads and other structures around waterways.



Single Lemna Plant



Nutria Eating Duckweed