EXPLORING SOILS

1. Before taking a sample, make a data table in your field notebook like the one below:

Sample Depth	Soil Color #	Hydic Soil?	Texture Moisture	Soil Particles	Other Features or Creatures

2. To take a soil sample, dig a small hole and make a slice from the surface down to about 12 inches. Do you see horizontal layers of different soils? Take a small sample from the surface to examine more closely. Take a second one from about 4 inches down, and a third one from 12 inches deep.

3. Hold each sample behind the holes of your color chart. Move it around until you find the color that nearly matches the main color of the soil. Record the soil number on the data table you made earlier.

4. On the color chart soil numbers 1,5,7,9,10,13,14,15, and sometimes 2 are usually wetland soils. Numbers 14, 15, and 16 are made mostly of clay and are known as "gleyed" soils. Numbers 4, 8, and 12 may match "rust spots" sometimes found in wetland soils.

5. Feel each sample and describe its texture and dampness. Does it stick together well enough to make a ribbon between your fingers? Record a description on your data table.

6. Describe and record the size and coloring of soil particles.

7. What signs of life do you see in the soil?

Soils questions to ponder:
What part of your soil sample is the oldest? Why do you think this is so?

Did you find any differences between the soil at the surface and deeper down? If so, what are some possible explanations for this?

Did you find anything unnatural (human-made) in the soil sample? If so, how might it have got there?