



Wetland Communities

UNIT OVERVIEW

The Theme

Wetlands: Wonderlands not Wastelands

Wetlands have many ecological, hydrological, cultural and social values. Wetlands in Tasmania include swamps and marshes, lakes and rivers, wet grasslands and peatlands, estuaries, tidal flats, near-shore marine areas, and human-made sites such as fish ponds and reservoirs.

In 1971 at a small Iranian town called Ramsar, representatives from eighteen nations signed the Convention on Wetlands. Australia was one of the first nations to sign the Ramsar Convention. World Wetlands Day has been celebrated each year, since 1997, on the 2nd of February to mark the anniversary of the Ramsar Convention in 1971. Australia now has 64 Wetlands of International Importance or Ramsar Sites. Tasmania has 10 of these sites.

Wetland Values

Wetlands can help to provide flood control as they have a large water storage capacity - they act like a giant sponge. Without wetlands the extra rain water might otherwise flood rivers and creeks.

Wetlands are habitat for wildlife. A wetland provides breeding, nesting, feeding grounds and habitat for many forms of wildlife, including migratory birds. Wetlands act like a filter and can help absorb pollution, silt and organic matter.

Wetlands are good sources of nutrients in water food cycles and act as nursery grounds and sanctuaries for fish.

Wetlands are a resource of great recreational value.

This unit is designed to increase students understanding and awareness of wetlands through highlighting their ecological importance, significance to birdlife and other wildlife as well as examining a variety of human user groups.

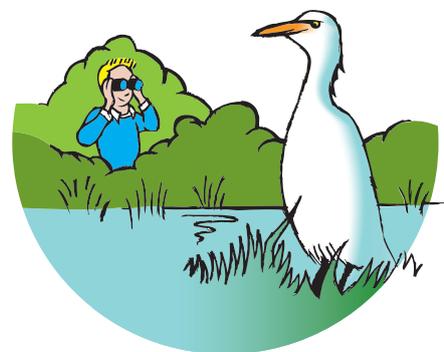
Through this unit students ask the questions:
Who are the users and custodians of the wetland?
How do people, animals and I use the wetland?
What effects do I and others have on the wetland?

* Activities with a star have a detailed lesson plan page.

Getting Started

Wetlands Wonderlands - Brainstorm. What is a wetland? What is found there? Why are they are important? And to whom?

Pictures from the Past - Make a history book. Research the history of a nearby wetland and some of the uses it has had. Collect old pictures of a wetlands area from family and friends or the library to use in the students' book.



Wetlands E-Set suited to upper primary students.

Mapping Migrations - Make a migratory bird map. Each student can choose one migratory bird and make a poster of any known migration path, include a map that shows other wetlands on the pathway.

* Writing in Role - Understanding of the diversity of users of the wetland is gained by taking on the persona of an identified user group.



* Bird Identification - an art project to explore the physical and behavioral characteristics of some wetland bird species.

* Balancing a Wetland - sequenced activities to demonstrate the inter-relationships of the human users and wildlife within a wetland.

Site Activities

Parks and Wildlife Service Education Rangers are often available to conduct these and other activities at the site. Please contact the Parks and Wildlife Service Education Section via email: parkseducation@parks.tas.gov.au

* Exploring a Wetland - A guided walk focussing on bird watching through a wetland community.

Wetland Detective - Try and piece together the users and residents of the wetland by the traces you find. Take plaster of paris and egg rings to make plaster casts of any tracks you find. Look out for scats, feathers and any other 'evidence' of life.

Photography / Field Guide - Take photos of plants, animals, birds, fish, grasses etc to make a field guide when you return to the class room. These images can also be used to create a digital storyboard.

Bird Counting - Work in with local land management agencies and organise a bird count. This could be done twice, to highlight bird migration patterns.

* Food Gatherers - A game to illustrate bird beak adaptations. Used with permission from the Gould Group.

Dip Netting - Take samples of different areas of the lagoon and identify organisms / fish that you find. This could also be incorporated into a field guide.

Indigenous Cultural Activities - Wetlands are important to many indigenous communities. Contact the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community for further information on cultural activities and community participation.

Enviro-Art - Incorporate art activities that reflect the values of the natural landscape. These could include drawing, rubbings of bark and other textures, grass weaving and bark paintings. Artwork can be used as installations in a class display.

Follow-up Activities

* Best Practice - Team debate/group discussion on the best practice management of the wetland. Ensure that all the interest groups are represented.

Email Connections - Email another school that lives near a wetland, and discuss the relevance to the students in that area (food, recreation, culture etc).

Digital Story Board - Create a digital story board of the visit to the wetland, incorporating photos taken during the visit. You can access free software to edit photos and also create slideshows with Microsoft photo story (see link under resources).

Wetlands E-Set - Unit Overview

E-Sets are an Electronic Environmental and Educational set of notes for teachers

FURTHER INFORMATION

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