

Wetlands

Wetlands can be found all over the world. Some are fixed while others are seasonal. Seasonal wetlands such as vernal pools fill for a few weeks or months. Then they disappear until the next rainy season. Swamps and other fixed wetlands have some sort of water at all times. These ecosystems are important breeding grounds for hundreds of animals.

For many years, wetland areas were misunderstood. They were not viewed as the important habitats that they are. People used to think that wetland environments were soggy and useless. Many wetlands were torn down and filled in. Buildings and housing developments were built on top of them, and animals lost their homes.

More than half of the nation's wetland areas have been lost. Groups like the National Wetlands Research Center are now trying to protect the wetlands that are left. They are also building new wetland environments and trying to attract species that have left.

Coastal wetlands are one type that people are focused on saving. They are important to many species of birds and mammals. If you visit this diverse ecosystem, you will see lots of different animals. There could be sandpipers skimming the water. You might even see an otter cracking open freshwater mussels.



Project

Work with a small group to create a wetland habitat mural to display.

Materials

- large sheets of butcher paper
- paint, markers, and other coloring supplies
- wetland habitat description cards
- miscellaneous art supplies (construction paper, scraps, cotton, rope, string, yarn, and any other recyclables that could be used to add texture to the mural)
- scissors
- glue

For the Teacher

Make one copy of the wetland habitat description cards (page 15) per student.

Directions

1. Choose a wetland habitat description card and read it with your group.
2. Use the description to plan your mural. Ask yourselves:
 - What kinds of plants do we want to show?
 - What kinds of animals do we want to show?
 - Where will we put each one on the mural?
 - What does each one look like?
 - How can we creatively show differences and textures?
3. If necessary, look up pictures of the plants and animals that you would like to include on your mural. Use the library or the Internet.
4. Paint, draw, sketch, and glue your artwork. Work together so that you are able to be as creative as possible!
5. Label the plants and animals and display your mural for your classmates!