

WHAT IS A WETLAND?

K-2

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, the students shall be able to do the following:

1. Describe, orally or in writing, the characteristics of wetlands;
2. Identify, orally or in writing, some plants and animals that live in a wetland area; and
3. Give an oral or written definition of the new terms: brackish, habitat, tide, and wetland.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wetlands are transitional areas where land and water connect. There are different types of wetlands. Some are full of salt water from the oceans. In some coastal areas, the water is fed by fresh and salt water. This makes the water brackish. Most coastal waters are affected by tides. Inland, the wetlands are fed by fresh waters. The plants and animals that live in a particular wetland are suited to a particular habitat. An important factor for survival is dependent on how much water is available during the seasons of the year.

Terms

brackish: water that is a mixture of fresh and salt water.

habitat: the place or type of site where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives and grows.

tides: the alternate rising and falling of the ocean's surface which occurs twice in each lunar day (24 hours).

wetland: areas that periodically have waterlogged soils or are covered with a shallow layer of water resulting in reduced soil conditions; wetland areas typically support plant life that are adapted to life in wet environments.

SUBJECT:

Science

TIME:

1 hour or 2 30-minute sessions

MATERIALS:

pictures of wetlands
books for reference
aluminum pan
clay
florist foam
cotton swabs
pine needles
twigs
pebbles
drawing paper
toothpicks
crayons
glue

ADVANCE PREPARATION

- A. Gather pictures depicting various wetlands.
- B. Copy the word search puzzle.
- C. Make a model of a wetland to display for students to base their models on.

PROCEDURE

I. Setting the stage

- A. Explain what a wetland is and describe some of the different types of wetlands.
- B. Show pictures of several different types of wetlands and make a list of names.
- C. Explain that one of the most common types is the fresh water marsh.
- D. Have students think of plants and animals that might live there.
- E. Go on a scavenger hunt to gather pine needles, twigs, pebbles, moss, and weeds.

II. Activities

- A. Make a model of a fresh water wetland.
 - 1. Put clay sloping into an aluminum pan.
 - 2. Use florist foam as the buffer.
 - 3. Add water.
 - 4. Have students illustrate animals of the fresh water wetlands; color, cut out, glue to toothpicks, and place in the marsh model. Use cotton swabs as cattails, pine needles to represent reeds, twigs for trees, and scatter pebbles around the model.
- B. Provide students with the word search puzzle.

III. Follow-Up

- A. Review the definition of a wetland and its characteristics.
- B. Display models in the classroom.

IV. Extension

- A. Provide reference books and have students make other models based on other types of wetlands, such as salt water marsh, fresh water swamp, mangrove swamp, or a bog.

RESOURCES

Wading into Wetlands, Nature Scope, Vol 2, No. 5, National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D.C., 1986.

Young Scientist's Introduction to Wetlands, U.S. Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station, Vicksburg, MS.

Word Search:

What is a Wetland?

Word List:

marsh
swamp
bog
river
stream

lake
pond
tide
coastal
wetland

W T S W A M P A C B
E D I T D E O G F O
V H I V R W N U C G
W K X J S E D L O T
R F M Y R T A U A X
E P T L Q L R M S Q
V W I A Z A X A T E
I Q G K H N D R A Y
R T Z E Y D R S L B
T S Z N O A P H C Z