

Build Your Own Wetland (Edible)

Grades: Grades 3-6

Duration: 45 minutes for wetland activity/visit
45 minutes for building (and eating) the wetland

Objectives: 1. Students will become familiar with the concept of wetlands
2. Students will be able to identify wildlife that depends on wetlands

Method: Students discuss the word "wetlands"; and life that depends on them. Students will think of different life forms that exist around wetlands. After identifying the life forms, students will build their own wetland out of edible materials.

Background

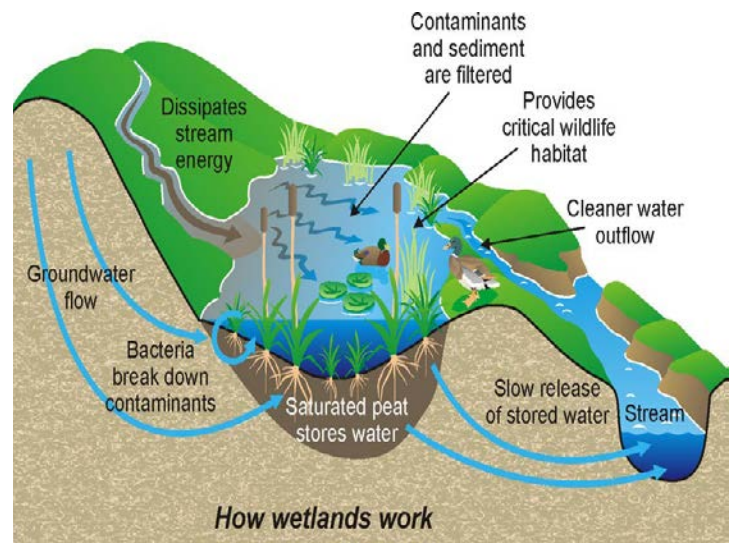
Water is, perhaps, our most important resource. We need water for drinking, cooking, cleaning, growing crops, and keeping our pets and livestock in good health. We make use of water by transporting our goods on oceans, lakes and rivers, and by raising fish in ponds. We also use water for fun - swimming, water skiing, fishing, etc. Wetlands are places that are completely covered with water at times.

Swamps, marshes, ponds, edges of creeks and rivers are all wetlands. Many creatures find their food in wetlands, including birds (ducks, mallards, pelicans), animals (raccoons, deer, moose), insects, fish, and sea life (shrimp, crabs, oysters). Wetlands help protect our homes from flooding. They lower floodwaters by holding rain and melting snow. On the sea coasts wetlands catch the fury of the hurricanes. Wetlands also help filter pollutants. They

provide habitat for wildlife, lend support for fisheries, and are sanctuaries for rare and endangered species.

Many wetlands are now a place where people can watch birds, fish, and learn about the animals and plants.

These are called "wildlife refuges." These wetlands are preserved to make sure that endangered species find their home and food there. Unfortunately, many wetlands are being drained of all their water. People then plant crops on them or build roads, airports or houses. As a result, animals and fish lose their homes.



Part One - Field Trip and/or Research

If you have wetlands near you, take a field trip there. Have your students make a list of animals, birds, and other creatures they see in the wetlands. Part of the activity can include bringing binoculars and/or bird and animal field identification books to help students identify the wildlife. After the field trip, ask students to draw their own wetland and label all the creatures in their habitat. If there is no wetland nearby, have your students conduct research on the Internet and combine this activity with some of the activities in the IDNR on-line Aquatic Illinois education kit.

Part Two - Building a Wetland

Materials

The amounts listed below will vary dependent upon the number of students involved. You will need a half a sheet of brownies or chocolate cookie bars, and one green and one blue fruit roll-up per group of 4 to 5 students. Other ingredients can be used for several groups.

- 9"x13"pan of brownies prepared ahead of time - soil base of wetland
- Graham cracker crumbs - sand
- Chocolate pudding cups - mud
- Blue fruit roll-up - body of water
- Green fruit roll-up - aquatic plants
- Fish shaped crackers - fish
- Green lollypops - trees and shrubs
- Green chewy fruit candy to anchor the lollypops
- Gumdrops - shrubs
- Gummy bears -animals
- Animal crackers - animals
- Green sprinkles - grass
- A cookie sheet on which to create a wetland

Procedure (Let your imagination direct your creation)

1. Divide the class into groups of 4 to 5 students. Each group may construct its own wetland.
2. Select a student in the class to prepare chocolate instant pudding (if not using premade pudding).
3. Give each group a cookie sheet, half a sheet of brownies or chocolate cookie bars, green and blue fruit roll-ups, and graham cracker crumbs.
4. Place half a sheet of brownies or chocolate cookie bars on the cookie sheet.
5. Sprinkle graham cracker crumbs all over brownie or giant cookie (indicating existence of dirt and sand)
6. Spread chocolate pudding over entire surface indicating muddy spots (around the body of water, under water)
7. Place blue fruit roll-up in the spots where the students want to put the body of water.
8. Place green fruit roll-up in the areas where the students want to put aquatic plants.
9. Place fish shaped crackers on the "water"(blue fruit roll-up).
10. Place green chewy fruit candy with green lollypops in them around the water creating "wooded areas"
11. Place gumdrops around the water edge for plants and shrubs.
12. Place animal crackers and gummy bears around the trees and edge of water.
13. If the students wish, they can mix some graham cracker crumbs with pudding to create contours around the wetland.
14. Sprinkle the green sprinkles over the land for grass (if desired).
14. EAT AND ENJOY.

