



## WETLANDS

- 💧 Ponds, sloughs, marshes, bogs, fens, swamps and peatlands are all considered wetlands. They are all areas that stay wet for an ecologically significant part of the year.
- 💧 Wetlands have characteristics of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.
- 💧 Wetlands are the kidneys of the landscape, filtering out sediment and pollution from the surrounding environment.
- 💧 Water leaving a wetland is cleaner than it was when it entered.
- 💧 Wetlands are significant water storage tanks, giant sponges, soaking up water during rain and snowmelt; then slowly releasing water during dry times, easing the effects of drought.
- 💧 Wetlands provide natural flood control, erosion control, recharging of groundwater, water purification, nutrient retention, and recreational enhancement (hunting, fishing, wildlife watching).
- 💧 Sometimes cities and towns construct wetlands to catch storm water runoff.
- 💧 We used to think wetlands were wastelands, swampy areas with no value. We drained them to build houses and plant crops. Now we've discovered that draining a wetland is often a mistake.
- 💧 Draining ponds, sloughs and marshes often lowers the water table and dries up wells.
- 💧 Wetlands reduce soil erosion by checking or slowing the runoff from storms and rapid thaws.
- 💧 Aquatic plants growing in wetlands take up phosphates and other nutrients washed in from the surrounding soil. This reduces algae and aquatic weed growth in larger water bodies.
- Wetlands improve the quality and quantity of water supplies as well as providing valuable wildlife habitat.
- 💧 Wetlands are home to many species of birds. Everything from swallows, swooping through the air catching small insects, to redwinged blackbirds singing with their reed-like voices.
- 💧 *Birds of Alberta* by Chris Fisher and John Acorn is one of many bird guides available.
- 💧 7 x 25 are good for wetland bird watching. Even simple "toilet paper tube" binoculars will help focus on sitting birds.
- 💧 Wetland animals are harder to spot, but if you sit quietly for 15 minutes or more you might see a beaver (head only showing) or a muskrat (head, body and tail showing), and depending where you live, perhaps even an otter.
- 💧 Wetland water is home to a wide variety of insects. Dip in a net (easy to make with a mesh stocking and a wire coat hanger) to see what you can find. Some "water bugs" are the larvae of dragonflies or mosquitoes.
- 💧 See *Bugs of Alberta* by John Acorn and Ian Sheldon.