



# 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.