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Wetlands

Reading Comprehension

The reading passage introduces students to wetlands. It gives a description of the different types of wetlands, discusses wetland plant and animal adaptations, and explains what threatens to destroy wetlands.

This is a longer reading passage, particularly for younger grades. Support students as needed.

The pictures included in this reading passage are in color, but you can print them in gray scale to save ink.

Students will still be able to get the information necessary if you print the pictures in gray scale.

Wetlands

Wetlands are the most underappreciated biome in our world. Most people do not understand the importance of the wetland biome; some people even refer to wetlands as *wastelands*. However, wetlands are home to a huge variety of plants and animals, and they are valuable to humans as well. Without wetlands, Earth would change for the worse.

What is a Wetland?

A wetland is land that is covered by shallow water for parts of the year. Sometimes the water is there for only parts of the year, but some wetlands are covered by water all of the time. The water in a wetland can be freshwater or saltwater, depending on the location. Some wetlands even have a mix of freshwater and saltwater! This brackish water is home to some unique creatures.

Wetlands usually are found in low-lying areas near rivers, lakes, streams, or oceans. These areas, where land and water meet, are an important protection against flooding. They are like a giant sponge, absorbing water when there is too much, and releasing it when water is needed.

Swamp



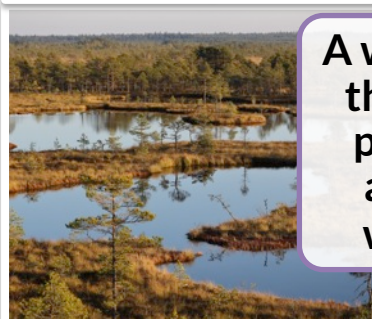
A wetland with many trees

Marsh



A wetland with reeds and grasses

Bog



A wetland that is a pool of acidic water

Wetland Plants

Plants that are able to grow in the moist wetland biome are called hydrophytes. These plants have special adaptations that allow them to grow underwater or float on top of the water. Some plants commonly found in

wetland areas include water lilies, cattails, swamp dogwood, loosestrife, reed grass, and many more. Some trees, including mangroves and cypress trees, have also adapted to the wet conditions of wetlands.

Wetland Animals

Most people do not realize that wetlands have a very diverse animal population. They are home to all sorts of birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and shellfish. Depending on the location of the wetland, you might find frogs, toads, alligators, newts, crocodiles, woodpeckers, beavers, muskrats, kingfishers, egrets, herons, oysters, clams, crabs, and many other animals.

Alligators have several adaptations that make them very well suited for life in a wetland habitat. For example, an alligator's eyes, ears, and nostrils are on top of its head, making it easy for them to hide in the water while still breathing, seeing, and hearing. When alligators are resting in the water, they are camouflaged to look like a log floating.



Another animal perfectly suited for life in a wetland is the mudskipper. A mudskipper is a fish that can go back and forth between water and land! Mudskippers have gills that they use to breathe while underwater. When leaving the water, these fish fill their oversized gill chambers with water so

that it can breathe even when on land. These fish must remain moist when out of the water, so they often roll in puddles or keep their tails in the water. They use their arm-like fins to “skip” around while on land.

Destruction of Wetlands

Wetlands are being destroyed at an alarming rate because people do not recognize their importance. Wetlands are constantly being torn down in order to build houses or drainage systems. Pollution also has had terrible effects on wetlands, with sewage, fertilizer, road salts, pesticides, and other harmful substances dirtying wetland waters. Overfishing in wetland areas causes problems as well.

The most important thing you can do to protect wetlands is to educate yourself and others. When people begin to understand the importance of the wetland biome, more efforts will be made to protect it.

Scaffolded Questions

The questions in this section are scaffolded to help you differentiate. This section will help support your lower level students or ELL learners.

There are two levels of scaffolding:

1. The question tells students which section to go to to find the answer.
2. Sentence starters are provided to help students when answering the questions.

Other than the two levels of scaffolding listed above, these questions are the same as the on-level questions.

The answer key on pages 15 – 17 applies to this section of questions as well as the on-level section of questions.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wetlands: Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Reread the first paragraph. What does the author think about wetlands? How do you know?

The author thinks that wetlands are _____
_____. I know this because _____
_____.

2. Reread the section titled "What is a Wetland?" What is brackish water?

Brackish water is _____
_____.

3. Reread the section titled "What is a Wetland?" How do wetlands help protect against flooding?

Wetlands protect against flooding by _____

_____.

4. Reread the section titled "Wetland Plants." What are hydrophytes?

Hydrophytes are _____
_____.

5. Look at the diagram titled "Types of Wetlands." What is the difference between a swamp and a marsh?

Swamps are _____
_____, while marshes are _____
_____.

Wetlands: Reading Comprehension Questions

6. Reread the sections titled “Wetland Plants” and “Wetland Animals.” Use that information to fill in the chart below.

Animals Found in Wetlands	Plants Found in Wetlands

7. Reread the section titled “Wetland Plants.” How is a mudskipper different from other fish?

Mudskippers are different from other fish because _____
_____.

8. Which animal has adapted better to the wetlands, an alligator or a mudskipper? Use at least two details from the reading passage to prove your answer.

A _____ has adapted better to the wetlands because _____
_____.
Furthermore, _____
_____.

9. Reread the section titled “Destruction of Wetlands.” What can you do to help protect wetlands from being destroyed?

To protect wetlands from being destroyed, I can _____
_____.

10. What picture should the author add to this reading passage? Why?

The author should add a picture of _____ because _____
_____.

On-Level Questions

The questions in this section are more straightforward than the questions in the Scaffolded Questions section.

These questions and answers do not have any scaffolding to support students.

Students are given a question and expected to write a short answer in a complete sentence.

The answer key on pages 15 – 17 applies to this section of questions as well as the Scaffolded Questions section.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wetlands: Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What does the author think about wetlands? How do you know?

2. What is brackish water?

3. How do wetlands help protect against flooding?

4. What are hydrophytes?

5. What is the difference between a swamp and a marsh?

Wetlands: Reading Comprehension Questions

6. Use the information from the reading passage to fill in the chart below.

Animals Found in Wetlands	Plants Found in Wetlands

7. How is a mudskipper different from other fish?

8. Which animal has adapted better to the wetlands, an alligator or a mudskipper? Use at least two details from the reading passage to prove your answer.

9. What can you do to help protect wetlands from being destroyed?

10. What picture should the author add to this reading passage? Why?

Extension Activity

This extension activity has students write a nonfiction article about the wetlands. Students are required to use vocabulary from the reading passage in their article.

A rubric is provided for easy grading.

Student Instructions and Writing Paper
Pages 12-13

Rubric
Page 14

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wetlands: Extension Activity

Write a nonfiction article about wetlands. Use the information from the reading passage to help you include accurate details. Be sure to include all of the words below in your article.

brackish
shallow
flooding
hydrophytes

adaptations
pollution
plants
animals

Title: _____

By: _____

Wetlands Article: Grading Rubric

Student Name: _____

3 points

2 points

1 point

<u>Vocabulary</u>	The student included <u>all</u> of the required wetland related words correctly.	The student included the required wetland related words, but some of them were used incorrectly.	The student included few or none of the required wetland related words. Most of the wetland related words included were used incorrectly.
<u>Accuracy</u>	The student showed a thorough understanding of wetlands. All of the information regarding wetlands was accurate.	The student showed some understanding of wetlands. Some of the information regarding wetlands was incorrect.	The student showed very limited understanding of wetlands.
<u>Organization</u>	The article follows a logical sequence and paragraphs are utilized appropriately.	The article follows a mostly logical sequence. The student attempts to use paragraphs, but they are not utilized appropriately.	The article is not in a logical sequence, and it is very difficult to understand what the student intended.
<u>Conventions</u>	There are very few errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.	There are several errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, or grammar.	There are many errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. Because of these errors, the essay is very difficult to read.

Total Points out of 12:

Answer Key

This answer key applies to both the Scaffolded Questions (pages 5 – 7) and the On-Level Questions (pages 8 – 10).

Some of the questions encourage higher level thinking and do not have one correct answer. If that is the case, it has been noted that “Answers Will Vary.” When grading these questions, make sure students defend their thinking in a logical way.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wetlands: Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What does the author think about wetlands? How do you know?

The author believes wetlands are important to the Earth and undervalued. I know this because the author states that "Most people don't understand the importance of the wetland biome" and that "Without wetlands, Earth would change for the worse."

2. What is brackish water?

Brackish water is a mix of freshwater and saltwater.

3. How do wetlands help protect against flooding?

Wetlands protect against flooding because they are like a giant sponge.

When there is too much water, they can absorb the extra water and release it later.

4. What are hydrophytes?

Hydrophytes are plants with special adaptations that help them survive in wetlands. These plants are able to grow underwater or float on top of water.

5. What is the difference between a swamp and a marsh?

A swamp has many trees, while a marsh has mostly reeds and tall grasses.

Wetlands: Reading Comprehension Questions

6. Use the information from the reading passage to fill in the chart below.

Animals Found in Wetlands	Plants Found in Wetlands
frogs, toads, alligators, newts, crocodiles, woodpeckers, beavers, muskrats, kingfishers, egrets, herons, oysters, clams, crabs, mudskippers	water lilies, cattails, swamp dogwood, loosestrife, reed grass, cypress trees, mangroves

7. How is a mudskipper different from other fish?

Mudskippers are different from other fish because they can go back and forth between land and water.

8. Which animal has adapted better to the wetlands, an alligator or a mudskipper? Use at least two details from the reading passage to prove your answer.

Answers will vary. Make sure students defend their answers with at least 2 details from the passage.

9. What can you do to help protect wetlands from being destroyed?

To protect wetlands from being destroyed, the most important thing I can do is to educate myself and others on the importance of wetlands.

10. What picture should the author add to this reading passage? Why?

Answers will vary. Make sure students defend their answers.