

CLUES

1. The moving water is on your right but you cannot see its source.
2. Walk eight paces along the boardwalk and look for skunk cabbage and water parsley, for duckweed living in the mud-like water.
3. Walk ten paces more and you'll be in the Valley of Ferns. Do you see daggers reaching from the top of a dead tree trunk?
4. Peer through the thorns of blackberry bushes. Look but don't touch!
5. Continue on until you find the needle-like fern standing guard beside a large wooden platform.
6. Now face the giant fir tree, which many insects call home, and here you'll find our special stone!

WHAT IS A WETLAND?

Marshes, swamps, bogs, sloughs, and tide flats are all wetlands. They have several characteristics in common:

- The area is low in relation to other features of the landscape.
- If water is visible, it is standing or barely moving, without a defined channel.
- The soil is wet all year just below the surface.

Intermediate students at the Islamic School of Seattle and their teacher, Carol Wehbe, provided the framework for this unit.

Funded by King County Water and Land Resources.

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206-938-4203.

WHAT TYPE OF WETLAND IS THIS?

A wetland that is connected to a creek, river, lake, or pond is called a "freshwater wetland." We have four types of freshwater wetlands. Choose a partner or form a small team and look around you. **Which type of freshwater wetland do you see?**

- This is a **forested wetland**. It has trees scattered throughout that are at least 20 feet tall. They include alder, western red cedar, willow, and other species that don't mind having their roots damp all year.
- This is a **scrub-shrub wetland**. It has bushes scattered throughout, including Oregon ash, red-osier dogwood, and other species that don't mind having their roots damp all year.
- This is a **deep marsh**. It has *at least* a foot of standing water during wet seasons. Plants include arrowhead, pondweed, and other species that like to have their roots in the mud.
- This is a **shallow marsh**. It has wet soil all year and *up to* a foot of standing water during wet seasons. Plants include small-flowered bulrush, water parsley, and other species that like to have their roots in very damp soil.
- This is a **wet meadow**. It does not have standing water most of the time but the soil is waterlogged just below the surface all year. Plants include sedges, horsetail, skunk cabbage, and other species that like to have their roots in moist soil.

WHAT TYPES OF PLANTS ARE HERE?

Regardless of when you visit - spring or fall, drought or rainy season - the plants there can help you decide which type of freshwater wetland is. Follow these steps to collect information about the plants you see here:

1. Use the page of drawings and a field guide to help **identify up to six plants** and write each one's common name in the blank.

2. **Pinpoint each plant's location** by checking the correct box. Remember: Soil that looks dry may instead be wet all year just below the surface. To find out if "dry" is really "damp," scrape the soil with your finger or a stick, being careful not to disturb plants.

3. **Circle the letter for the contribution(s)** you see each plant making to the habitat, using this code:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| A = Helps cool the water | B = Provides shelter for wildlife |
| C = Makes oxygen | D = Provides food for wildlife |
| E = Holds the soil | F = Filters pollutants out of the water |

4. **Sketch** any plant you don't find on the page of drawings.

5. **Note** anything that especially interested you about each plant or that you want to ask about later.

Plant: _____

Location: dry damp
in standing/slow-moving water

Contributions to habitat: A B C D E F G

Plant: _____

Location: dry damp
in standing/slow-moving water

Contributions to habitat: A B C D E F G

Plant: _____

Location: dry damp
in standing/slow-moving water

Contributions to habitat: A B C D E F G

Plant: _____

Location: dry damp
in standing/slow-moving water

Contributions to habitat: A B C D E F G

Plant: _____

Location: dry damp
in standing/slow-moving water

Contributions to habitat: A B C D E F G

Plant: _____

Location: dry damp
in standing/slow-moving water

Contributions to habitat: A B C D E F G

Note any damage to plants and what might have caused it.

THE MARKER

WHERE WATER IS PART OF THE LAND, A FRAGILE HOME

reminds everyone who sees this stone that the wet, muddy world of wetlands is a finely balanced habitat.

The **skunk cabbage** dominates the wetland with its early, brilliant flower, giant leaves, and attractive (to some insects!) scent.

The **alevin petroglyph** emphasizes the importance of healthy freshwater habitat to growing salmon and ties this site to other links in the chain of water-based habitats.

Overall design and petroglyph detail by Tom Jay

WETLAND STEWARDSHIP

A wetland is probably the most fragile habitat in a watershed ecosystem because all living things in a wetland depend on having plenty of clean water, day after day and year after year. Here are ways you can help protect this finely balanced place:

- ✓ Stay on the trail. Going off on your own may cause erosion and damage fragile wetland plants. If others follow, your path could become a "rogue" trail that destroys plants and sends dirty runoff into the water.
- ✓ Pack out any litter you find - and don't add to it.
- ✓ Take only memories; don't pick wildflowers or dig up plants.
- ✓ Help others understand how things they don't think twice about doing can harm the wetland.

WETLANDS

HELPER'S GUIDE

GETTING THERE

Park on the south (uphill) side of S.W. Barton St. at the entrance to Fauntleroy Park. By bus, take Metro 54 to the entrance. Enter the park and take the wide trail to your left. Walk east until you reach the large bridge over the creek. The clues begin at the spur of boardwalk that meets the bridge. To combine a visit to the wetland with a stop at the pond, use the large bridge as your reference point.

PREPARATIONS

1. Preview what you will be doing on this field trip, go over the "Explorer's Guide," and answer any questions.
2. Assemble for each youngster
 - a copy of the "Explorer's Guide" for this site
 - a copy of "Plants Common to Pacific Northwest Wetlands"
 - a pencil
 - a clipboard or square of cardboard
 - notes and sketches from the field-trip preparation exercise
 - a copy of the rubbing page for this site.
3. Bring one or more **field guides to wetland plants** in the Pacific Northwest and **large crayons** to make rubbings of the images on the stone marker.

SEASON AND SAFETY

Visit this site during late spring or early fall; avoid the wettest, coldest months. Advise youngsters to dress for the weather and wear comfortable walking shoes or boots. If it's raining or has rained recently, they might get muddy.

To help explorers focus in a very stimulating setting, we suggest **one adult for every five youngsters, fourth through sixth grades.**

APPROXIMATE TIME

Walk in: **15 minutes**

At the wetland: **40 minutes**

Walk back to entrance: **10 minutes**

At this site, young "explorers" will

- distinguish types of freshwater wetlands.
- become acquainted with plants commonly found in Pacific Northwest wetlands.
- see how plants contribute to wetland habitat.

WHAT TYPE OF WETLAND IS THIS?

Before starting this activity, remind youngsters that wetlands are essential pieces that connect to other pieces of a watershed and that watersheds are integral parts of our natural environment. If you did the puzzle exercise in class, recall how you compared the natural world to the many interconnecting, essential pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle.

Help youngsters find partners or form small teams.

After they have reached conclusions about what type of freshwater wetland this is, take a vote with a show of hands for each type. For each type selected, choose a partnership or team to explain their decision. Highlight similarities and differences in reasoning, then move on to the next activity to refine their definition of this wetland.

WHAT TYPES OF PLANTS ARE HERE?

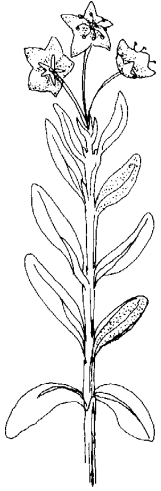
The page of drawings ("Plants Common to Pacific Northwest Wetlands") has many of the trees and other plants you are likely to find. You will discover others, though, which is why we advise bringing field guides. Using them will demonstrate their value for providing information on the spot *and* enhancing a nature experience. During this activity, assist youngsters, as needed, in finding plants and completing basic information about them.

After everyone is finished, discuss these or similar questions:

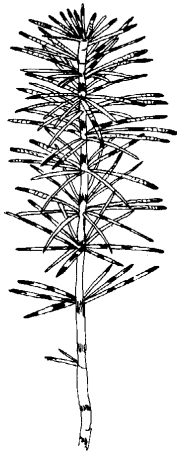
- Which plants did you see the most of here?
- Have you changed your mind about what type of wetland this is?
- What contributions did you most often see these plants making to this habitat?
- What kinds of wildlife did you see here or see evidence of? What would you add to the stewardship advice on your worksheet?

PLANTS COMMON TO PACIFIC NORTHWEST WETLANDS

Use these drawings to identify trees, bushes, and other plants that grow in moist or wet soil.
(Drawings are not to scale.)



BOG LAUREL



HORSETAIL



INDIAN PLUM



DOCK



SALMONBERRY



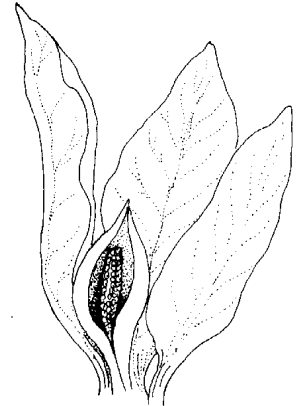
**RED
ELDERBERRY**



**REED CANARY
GRASS**



WATER PARSLEY



SKUNK CABBAGE



FOXTAIL



SALAL



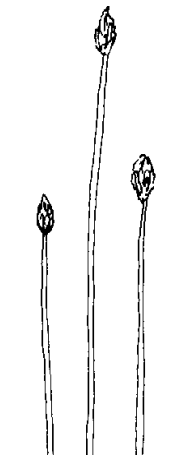
DEWBERRY



**WESTERN
BUTTERCUP**



BRACKEN FERN



SPIKERUSH



RED ALDER



HERB ROBERT



**WESTERN
RED CEDAR**



**RED-OSIER
DOGWOOD**



**LEAFY
MITREWORT**