

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Wetlands

by Leslie Cargile

What do the bogs in Ireland, the marshes in South Carolina, and the swamps of Louisiana have in common? If you said they're all wetlands, you'd be right!

Wetlands are any land that is flooded with shallow water all or most of the time. They are a natural water holding system. If it rains a lot and a river floods or a bunch of snow melts and runs off; the wetlands are there to soak up the extra water like a big, natural sponge.



There are three main types of wetlands: bogs, marshes, and swamps.

Bogs are low-lying areas covered with a thick layer of partly decomposed plants. They are common in cool, wet climates like Ireland or England. You can also find them across the northern United States and throughout Canada. Lots of rainwater keeps the ground in a bog spongy. The most common plant that grows in a bog is peat moss. It covers the ground like a carpet. It can be hard to walk on, like trying to walk on a lumpy mattress.

Marshes can be seen near ponds, lakes and coasts. They stay under water most of the time. Some grow and shrink with the tides. Cattails, bulrushes and reeds are the most common plants in a marsh. Their roots anchor deep in the squishy mud. Marshes vary greatly in size. While some are no bigger than a parking lot, others are very large. One of the largest marshes in the world is Everglades National Park, in Florida. It's a giant marshy wetland that covers four thousand square miles!

A swamp is a forest whose ground is underwater all or most of the time. Unlike bogs or marshes, a swamp is full of trees and bushes. It might not be under water all the time, only flooding during certain seasons of the year. It's not a good idea to go exploring a swamp without a guide. There are hidden pools of water, thick mud, and sometimes big crocodiles looking for their next meal.

Hungry crocodiles aren't the only animals that make the wetlands their home. Alligators, beavers, otters, turtles, frogs, snakes and salamanders do too. The air is full of insects like mosquitoes and dragonflies. The water is home to crayfish, wood ducks, and many other fish and crabs. The plants and animals that call the wetlands home couldn't live anywhere else. They are adapted for living there.



We didn't always know how important the wetlands are. Long ago, people used to think wetlands were unusable, wastelands. People filled them in, and they even dumped pollution in them. Today, people realize that wetlands are important because they provide habitats for animals; they prevent flooding in many towns and cities; and they act like a filter that cleans water for lakes and oceans. Now people are doing their best to preserve the wetlands we have left.

It's very likely there are wetlands near your home. If you visit a local swamp, bog, or marsh, you will enjoy one of Mother Nature's best water holding systems. So grab a friend or two and an adult, and set off to explore one of nature's wonders; *the wetlands*. Just make sure you wear your boots.



## Interesting Wetland Facts

Have you ever eaten cranberry sauce or drank cranberry juice? If you have, you've eaten food that was grown in a bog.

Cranberry shrubs are small bushes that grow best in wetland bogs.

Many of the birds that live in wetland areas have long, thin legs. Egrets, herons, and flamingos can all be found in wetlands.

These birds' long legs help them wade through the shallow water, looking for fish, frogs, and other prey.

Wetlands are found all over the world. There are wetlands on every continent, except Antarctica.

Canada has more wetland areas than any other country in the world.

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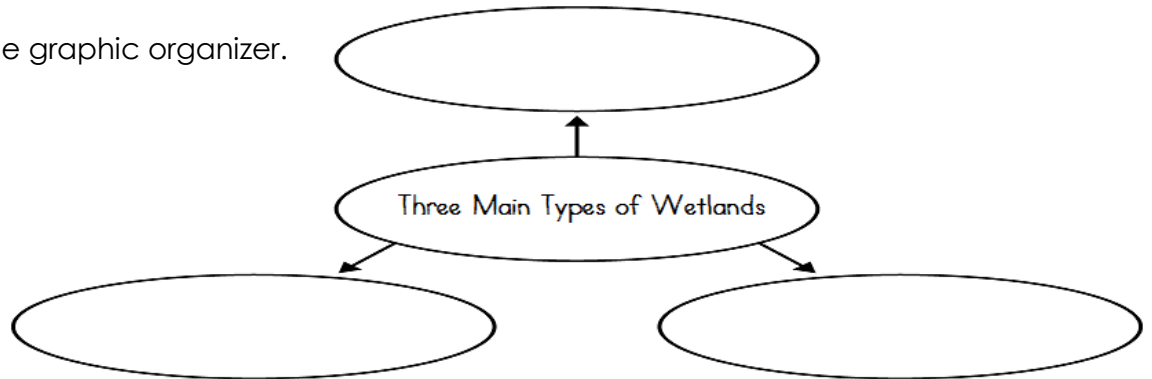


1. Write a definition for wetlands?

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2. Complete the graphic organizer.



3. Imagine you see a shallow-water area with large trees whose trunks grow from underwater. Which type of wetland are you most likely seeing?

- a. bog
- b. marsh
- c. swamp
- d. rainforest

4. Why do many birds that live in wetland areas have long, thin legs?

- a. so they can run very fast
- b. so they can swim more easily
- c. so they can kick predators
- d. so they can walk in the shallow water

5. Explain how a marshland could prevent flooding in a nearby town.

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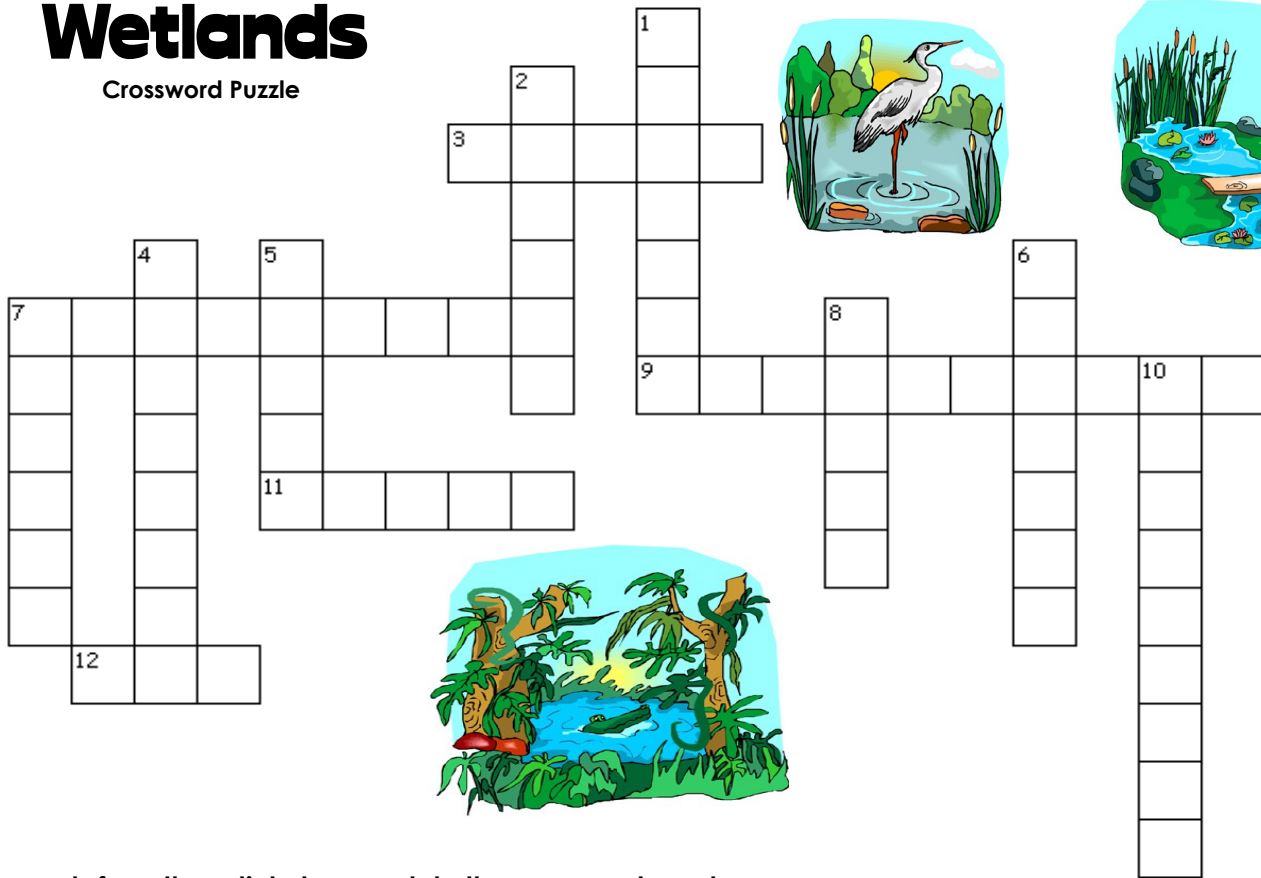
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# Wetlands

Crossword Puzzle



Use words from the article to complete the crossword puzzle.

## Across

- 3. species of bird with long legs that is often found in wetland areas
- 7. large reptile with sharp teeth that lives in some wetland areas
- 9. the only continent that does not have wetlands
- 11. forest whose ground is covered in shallow water
- 12. type of wetland that is covered with a thick layer of decomposing plant matter

## Down

- 1. state where Everglades National Park is located
- 2. brown mammal that chews tree trunks and builds lodges in wetlands
- 4. small insect that bites animals and drinks small amounts of blood
- 5. appropriate footwear for walking in wetlands
- 6. any land that is flooded with shallow water
- 7. country with the most wetland areas
- 8. wetland where cattails, reeds, and bulrushes grow
- 10. type of fruit that is grown in bogs

# ANSWER KEY

## Wetlands

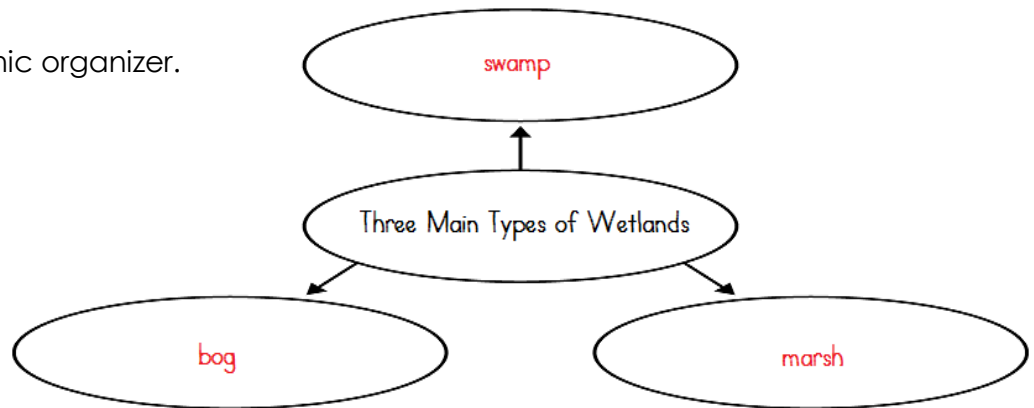
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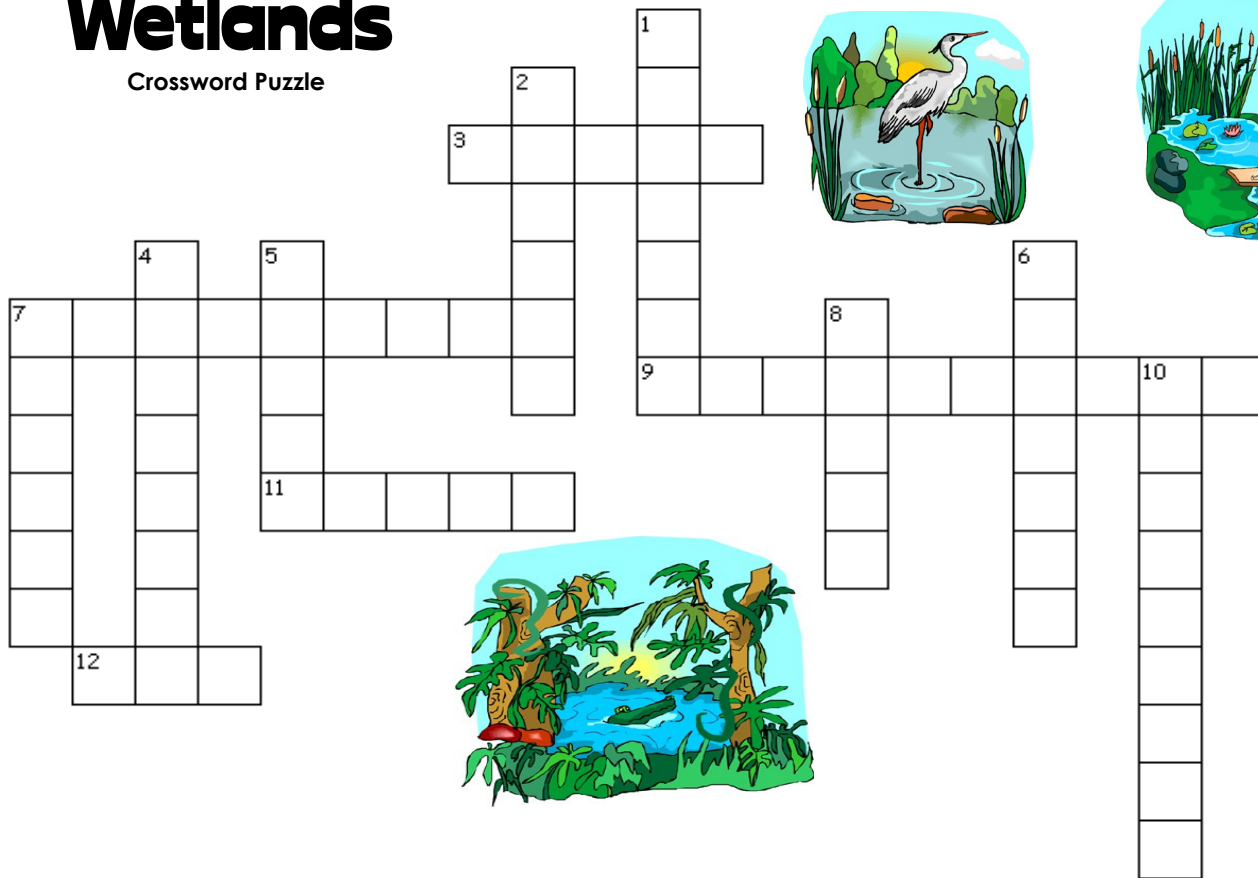
5. Explain how a marshland could prevent flooding in a nearby town.

When there is heavy rain or snow melts, a wetland area can absorb much of the water like a natural sponge.

# ANSWER KEY

## Wetlands

Crossword Puzzle



### Across

- species of bird with long legs that is often found in wetland areas (**heron**)
- large reptile with sharp teeth that lives in some wetland areas (**crocodile**)
- the only continent that does not have wetlands (**Antarctica**)
- forest whose ground is covered in shallow water (**swamp**)
- type of wetland that is covered with a thick layer of decomposing plant matter (**bog**)

### Down

- state where Everglades National Park is located (**Florida**)
- brown mammal that chews tree trunks and builds lodges in wetlands (**beaver**)
- small insect that bites animals and drinks small amounts of blood (**mosquito**)
- appropriate footwear for walking in wetlands (**boots**)
- any land that is flooded with shallow water (**wetland**)
- country with the most wetland areas (**Canada**)
- wetland where cattails, reeds, and bulrushes grow (**marsh**)
- type of fruit that is grown in bogs (**cranberry**)