

THE WHISPERING MARSH

the tale of the untamed allies



Message from the Principal's Desk

Rooted in the timeless Indian philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"—the world is one family, we believe that every living being and every element of nature deserves care and respect. Afterall, the World is one big family.

Delhi Public School, Faridabad, stands firm with its motto, "Service Before Self", inspiring our young learners to lead with empathy, responsibility, and compassion. Staying true to its inspiring vision of "Giving Voice to the Voiceless," this project, undertaken by Team SEWAM (Society Empowered for the Welfare of Animals and Mankind) reflects our collective commitment to creating a more empathetic and sustainable world, which is no longer merely a choice, but a necessity.

I am delighted to see our students embark on this research-based project, which stands as a testament to their scientific curiosity, critical thinking, and unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship.

I congratulate the team of students for their dedication and perseverance in bringing this meaningful project to fruition in collaboration with Wetlands International South Asia, New Delhi. I am confident that their work will inspire readers to appreciate, protect, and conserve nature's priceless treasures, while motivating each one of us to become responsible custodians of our planet.

Blessings and best wishes.

Ms Sangeeta Chakravarty
Principal
Delhi Public School
Faridabad, Haryana

Message from the Director

It gives me immense pleasure to introduce *Whispering Marsh*, a comic born out of curiosity, compassion, and a deep sense of responsibility towards our wetlands.

Wetlands are among the most valuable yet often overlooked assets of our society. These ecosystems ensure our water, food, and climate security, while their rich food chains and biodiversity have earned them the moniker 'biological supermarkets'. The relationship between wetlands and people is ancient and intimate. Communities have long depended on wetlands for their sustenance and well-being, shaping and safeguarding these unique ecosystems in turn through everyday practices and traditions. While governments serve as custodians of wetlands, meaningful and lasting conservation outcomes can only be achieved by the 'whole-of-society' approach, bringing citizens to the forefront.

It is in this context that the role of our students becomes truly significant. Young minds carry with them not just knowledge, but also empathy, imagination, and the courage to actively engage in the conservation and management of wetlands. They are the generation that will inherit these ecosystems, and it is heartening to see them stepping forward not merely as students but as storytellers and guardians of wetlands.

I take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the students of DPS Faridabad, whose enthusiasm and creativity have given shape to this comic book. Their ability to translate a serious ecological concern into an engaging and accessible narrative reflects both their talent and their genuine concern for nature. This comic has been prepared under the guidance of the teachers and Wetlands International South Asia, whose expertise and support have been invaluable in ensuring that the science and spirit of wetland conservation are both accurately and creatively conveyed. Through simple story and relatable characters, they plant the seeds of awareness in young readers. With time, it grows into a generation more conscious of and committed to protecting our natural heritage.

I congratulate all the students and teachers involved in this endeavour and hope that *Whispering Marsh* inspires many more young readers to listen closely to what our wetlands have to say.

Dr Ritesh Kumar
Director

Wetlands International South Asia



DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL, FARIDABAD



SEWAM: Society Empowered for the Welfare of Animals and Mankind



TEAM AT WORK



Coordinators

- Abeera Khan
- Kushagra Wadhwa



Researchers

- Naira Kakkar- Class 6
- Vaidik Rawat- Class 6
- Harshvii Palta - Class 6
- Danny Thakur- Class 7
- Shanaya Madan- Class 7
- Kushagra Wadhwa- Class 7
- Mohanish Saini- Class 7
- Shrihaan Jha- Class 7
- Abeera Khan- Class 8
- Lavishka Gupta- Class 8
- Avika Garg- Class 8



Story Writers

- Mohanish Saini
- Harshvii Palta
- Danny Thakur



Illustrators

- Lavishka Gupta
- Avika Garg



Delhi Public School, Faridabad
Ms Sangeeta Chakravarty (Principal)
Ms Gauri Mendiratta
Ms Hashnu Wadhwa



Wetlands International South Asia
Dr Ritesh Kumar (Director)
Ms Suchita Awasthi
Ms Dayadra Mandal
Ms Aditi Patial

Preface

There are places where stories linger in the air, waiting for someone curious enough to find them.

Hidden beyond the edge of a quiet village lies Neelvan Marsh, a place of shimmering waters, whispering reeds, glowing fireflies, and secrets older than memory itself. The villagers say the marsh is watched over by Mandook, a mysterious guardian. Some believe he protects the wetlands, while others think he is only a story told on stormy nights. But legends have a curious way of coming alive when people stop listening to nature.

Aarav and Meera, curious twin siblings with a knack for asking questions and a habit of wandering where others dare not go, find themselves drawn to the mystery of the marsh. Joined by Pip, a witty firefly, they set out on an adventure filled with mystery, humour, courage, and discovery. What begins as simple curiosity soon turns into an unforgettable journey when they discover that something strange is happening in the wetlands.

So step carefully into Neelvan Marsh. Follow the glowing trails, listen to the frogs, and keep an eye on the shadows. You never know what secrets the marsh might reveal.



MEET THE CHARACTERS

The allies, the helpers and the challengers



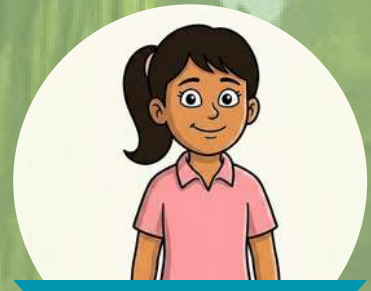
Mandook



Pip



Aarav



Meera



Grandpa



Grandma



Fisherman



Environmental
Officer



Viraj Thorne



Engineer

The village of Neelvan wakes up to swirling mist. Strange stone patterns have appeared overnight at the edge of the marsh.



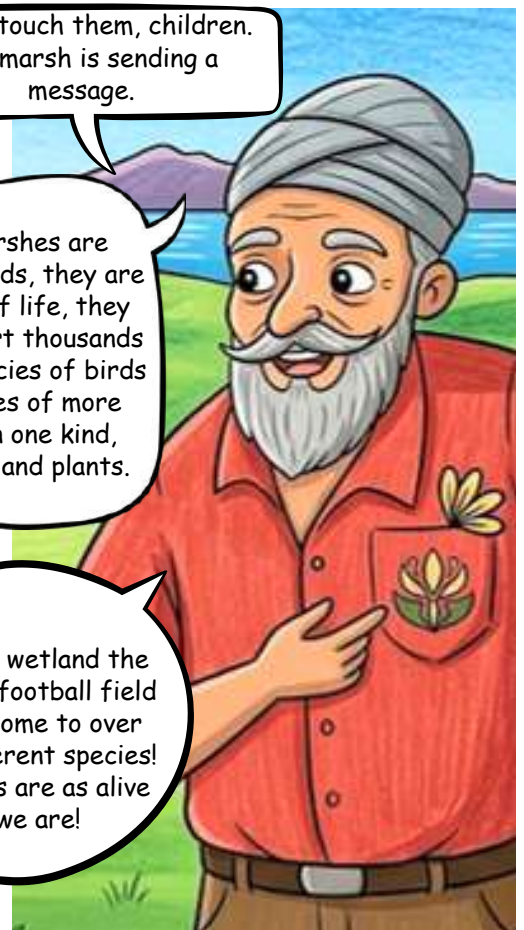
Aarav, look!
Another one of
those weird figures
have appeared
again near the
reeds !

That's the
third one
this week.
Is someone
purposefully
leaving
them.

Do not touch them, children.
The marsh is sending a
message.

Marshes are
wetlands, they are
full of life, they
support thousands
of species of birds
fishes of more
than one kind,
frogs and plants.

Even one wetland the
size of a football field
can be home to over
200 different species!
Wetlands are as alive
as we are!





Grandma! Have you seen the new figures near the marsh? Everyone in the village is talking about them and saying these are Mandook's sign.

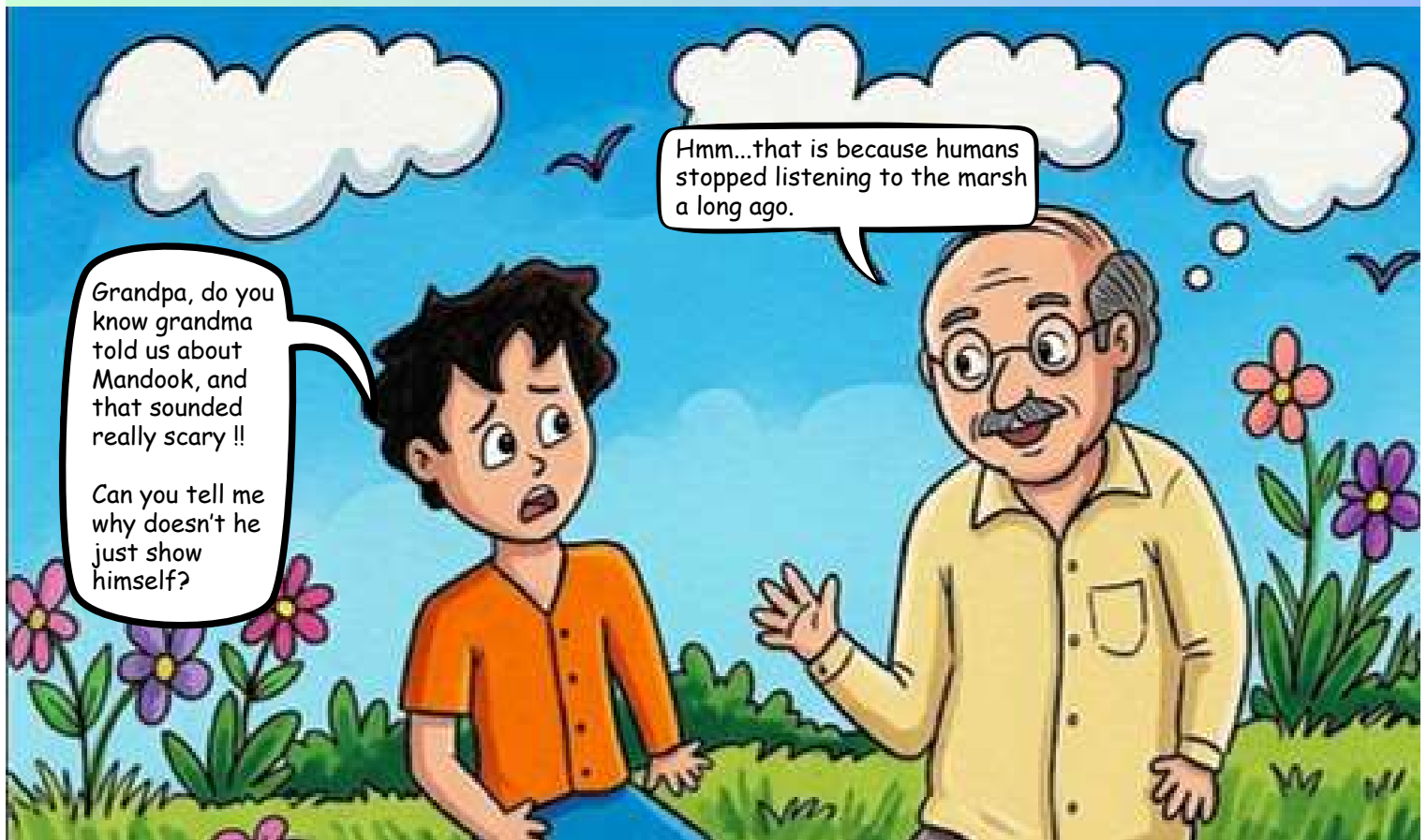
Is Mandook real? or just a story?

Hmm... that means Mandook has awakened.

Yes! Aarav, yes! Meera. The guardian of Neelvan Marsh. He is half man, half frog. Some say the marsh itself created him to protect its waters from those who destroy it.

Frogs Are Nature's Alarm Bells!

They are called 'indicator species' as they are the first to be affected when a wetland becomes polluted. Do you know, why? Their skin absorbs water directly. If frog populations drop, it is a warning that the ecosystem is in danger.



Grandpa, do you know grandma told us about Mandook, and that sounded really scary !!

Can you tell me why doesn't he just show himself?

Hmm...that is because humans stopped listening to the marsh a long ago.

Loud machines arrive near the marsh. A well-dressed man climbs out and surveys the land with greedy eyes.



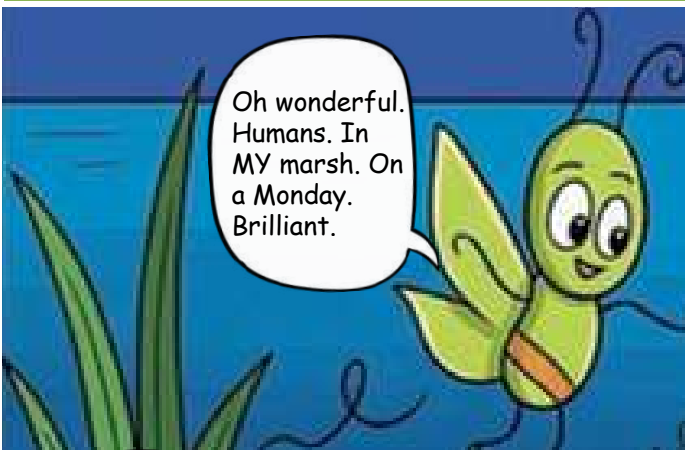
The next morning, the twins sneak out early with a notebook and a torch, determined to investigate the marsh themselves.



Dragonflies Are Ancient!

Dragonflies have been around for over 300 million years; they existed before the dinosaurs! They have been vital indicator species of wetland health for millions of years. A healthy dragonfly population means a healthy wetland.

Suddenly, a tiny glowing light shoots out from between the reeds and hovers right in front of Meera's nose.



Oh wonderful.
Humans. In
MY marsh. On
a Monday.
Brilliant.



WHOA! It
talks!



Of course I
talk. I'm Pip,
your Patron
Pilot, unofficial
guide, and the
only firefly
here with an
opinion. And
right now, that
opinion is that
you're standing
in a restricted
area.



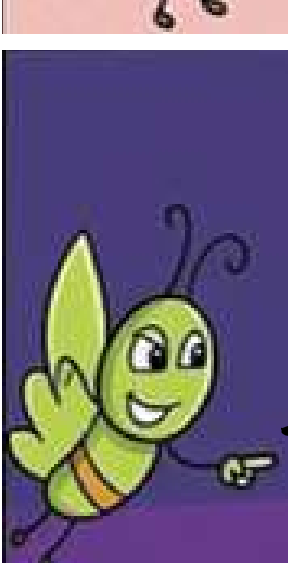
Are you
real?



As real as the
mud on your
shoes, which is,
quite a lot, by
the looks of it.



Ohh.. ok,
you are
very
funny!



Now follow
me before
Thorne's
machines
reach the
nesting
grounds.
Chop chop.



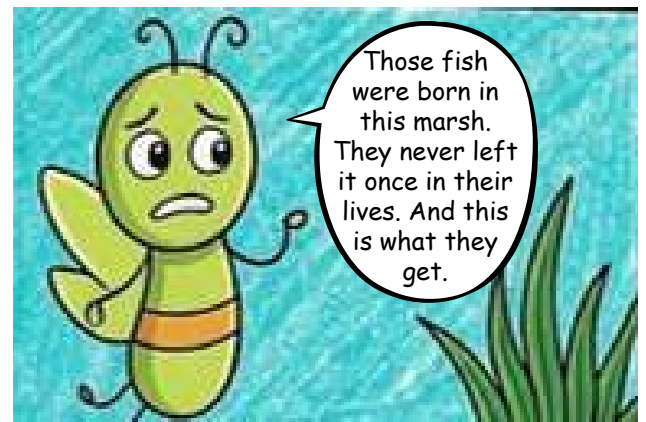
There you see...



Fireflies Need Wetlands!

Firefly larvae live in moist soil, leaf litter, and near the edges of wetlands. Draining wetlands destroys firefly habitat. In many parts of the world, firefly populations are falling rapidly due to habitat loss and light pollution.

Pip leads the twins deeper into the marsh. They stop short when they see the damage Thorne's machines have already caused.



We have to tell someone.



Wise thought, young hero. But first, sketch everything on a paper.



Meera quickly sketches the broken pipes, the oily water, and the locations of the stone figures that she can spot in the distance. Suddenly, a deep, rumbling CROAK echoes through the reeds.



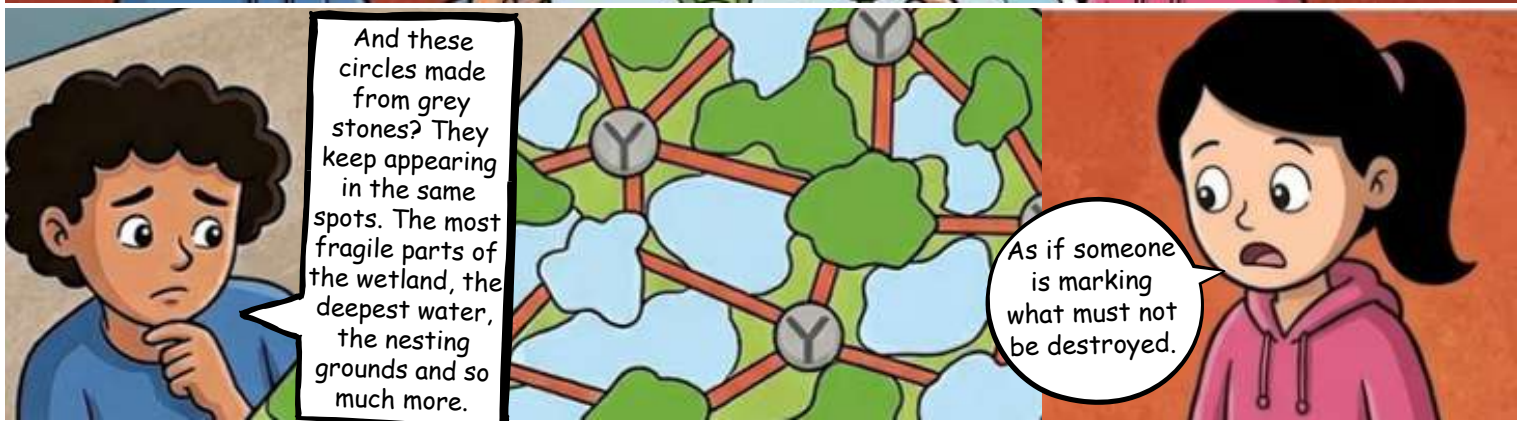
Meera!!!, careful, i think that was NOT a regular frog.



Water Pollution Kills Wetlands Fast!

Even small amounts of chemical or oil pollution can be devastating for a wetland. Pollutants reduce oxygen in the water, killing fish and insects and other little creatures. A single factory discharge can wipe out an entire wetland ecosystem within weeks.

Back at home that evening, Meera spreads her sketches on the floor and stares at them, as if studying minute details.



That night, a drilling machine sinks halfway into the marsh mud, and no one can explain how. The village gathers in the morning, murmuring.



In the fog beyond the crowd, for just a moment, the twins spot a massive silhouette at the water's edge. Tall. Still. Watching. With glowing green eyes.



Marshes Have Natural 'Traps'!

Wetland mud can sometimes be extremely deep and unstable. Heavy machinery that ignores natural wetland boundaries can sink suddenly. This is one reason responsible engineers always study wetland maps before planning any construction nearby.

The monsoon rains arrive early and fiercely. Without the wetland's natural sponge to absorb the water, Thorne's construction sites begin to flood.



Destroying Wetlands Floods Cities!

Wetlands act like nature's giant sponges, absorbing excess rainwater and reducing the impact of floods. When these wetlands are drained or destroyed for construction and urban development, cities lose their natural flood barriers. As a result, rainwater flows rapidly into roads, homes, and drainage systems, causing severe urban flooding during heavy rains. Studies have shown that areas near destroyed wetlands experience more frequent and intense floods, which is why restoring and protecting wetlands is now considered one of the most effective natural flood-prevention strategies around the world.



Meera presents her notebook, full of sketches, maps and evidence of pollution, to the village council and environmental officers.



Going through all the details, the Environmental Officer starts his investigation. He gathers more witnesses, testimonies and summons Viraj Thorne to his office.

When Viraj arrives at his office, the officer scolds him, as he was going against the law, he is destroying nature and working for his own benefit, which is totally wrong.

The officer gives him a warning, and asks him to cancel the project and take back all his machines. He is asked to compensate for the damage that he has caused to the marsh.



Did he just say he'd pay for the clean-up? I've never been so satisfied in my 47-day lifespan.



Pip...shhh

Wetlands Are Protected by Law!

In India and many countries, wetlands are legally protected ecosystems. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 require environmental impact assessments before any construction near wetlands. Violators can face heavy fines and even imprisonment.

Weeks pass. The restoration begins. Native vegetation is replanted. Pipes are cleared. Slowly, the marsh heals.



Wetlands Can Recover!

With proper protection and active restoration efforts, wetlands have an incredible ability to recover and thrive again over time. Native plants slowly begin to grow back, water quality improves as pollutants are naturally filtered, and many species of birds, fish, amphibians, and insects return to their natural habitats. As wetlands recover, they also regain their ability to absorb floodwater, store carbon, recharge groundwater, and support surrounding ecosystems and communities. Around the world, successful restoration projects have shown that even heavily damaged wetlands can be revived with care, scientific planning, and long-term conservation efforts. However, restoring a destroyed wetland can take years or even decades, which is why preventing their destruction in the first place is always more effective, affordable, and sustainable.

On a golden afternoon, the twins make one final visit to the marsh. Pip floats ahead of them on the trail, quieter than usual.



They arrive at a serene clearing by the water's edge. There, next to a blossoming lotus, stands a figure resembling a large frog. Above him, a tiny, flawless firefly hovers, crafted from a single glowing river stone. In this moment, they knew they had discovered a divine angel whose magic still lingered in this whispering marsh unfolding the tale of the untamed allies.



From the deep reeds, one slow, deep CROAK drifts across the water. The fireflies rise. The lotus blooms shimmer. Neelvan Marsh breathes again.

YOU Can Protect Wetlands!

Never dump waste near ponds, rivers, or marshes. Learn which wetlands are in your area. Support tree planting near water bodies. Spread the word: wetlands are not 'useless swamps'. They are the lungs, kidneys, and heart of the land.

F U N F A C T S



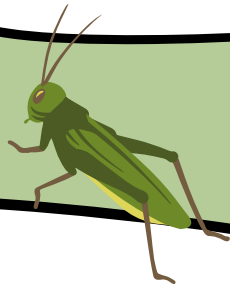
CAN A WETLAND BE A GIANT SPONGE?

Yes! Wetlands soak up extra rainwater like huge natural sponges and slowly release it later, helping reduce floods.



CAN WETLANDS CLEAN DIRTY WATER ON THEIR OWN?

Yes! Wetland plants and soil trap dirt and harmful substances, helping clean water naturally.



WHY DO BIRDS TRAVEL SO FAR TO VISIT WETLANDS?

Wetlands are like rest stops for migratory birds, giving them food and shelter during long journeys.



FUN FACTS



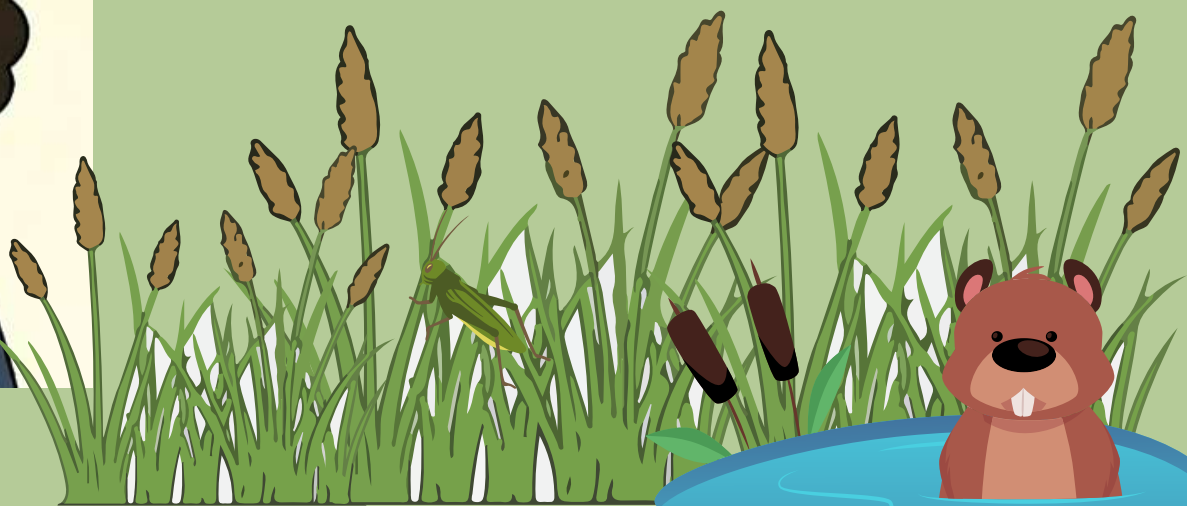
CAN A QUIET WETLAND BE FULL OF LIFE?

Absolutely! Beneath the water, inside mud, and among plants, thousands of living creatures may be hiding.



WHY DO FROGS LOVE WETLANDS SO MUCH?

Wetlands are perfect frog homes! They provide water, food, hiding places, and safe spots for frog eggs to grow.



Riddles



Riddle 1

I act like a sponge when the heavy rains fall, holding onto the water to protect you all. I filter the dirt, and I keep the rivers clean, making me the most helpful ecosystem you've seen! What am I?

wetland



Riddle 2



I am not a river, and I am not a lake, but a soggy, wet blanket is the shape that I take. I am filled with tall trees, draped in mossy green gowns, and I'm home to the gators outside of the towns. What am I?

swamps



Riddle 3

I am a wetland, but you won't find many trees, just tall waving grasses that dance in the breeze. Frogs love to leap here, but if you try to walk here, you might need a boat! What am I?

marsh



Riddle 4



My ground is quite squishy; made of moss and of peat, it feels like a mattress underneath your feet. The water is acidic, the water is cool, I'm a very unique kind of watery pool. What am I?

bog





WETLANDS VOCABULARY

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



M	A	N	G	R	O	V	E	E	X	Y	Z	C
R	M	Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	O
S	P	L	K	J	H	G	F	D	S	A	Z	N
H	H	N	B	V	C	X	Z	L	M	Q	W	S
E	I	R	T	Y	P	U	I	J	K	K	D	E
D	B	F	G	H	E	L	M	N	I	I	V	R
U	I	J	P	E	A	T	L	A	N	D	X	V
D	A	O	P	Q	T	R	S	U	N	N	B	A
J	N	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	E	E	K	T
D	S	L	M	E	S	T	U	A	R	Y	P	I
N	N	Z	I	D	T	O	Q	B	I	T	L	O
J	I	N	F	I	L	T	R	A	T	I	O	N
F	A	S	O	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	Z	U
H	X	C	N	H	H	V	M	Q	W	E	R	I
M	V	B	S	Y	A	K	H	A	N	A	T	D
I	G	H	E	A	B	N	M	L	K	J	H	K
G	Y	U	R	G	I	N	V	A	S	I	V	E
R	I	O	A	F	T	Y	U	I	O	P	L	R
A	P	A	A	J	A	D	F	G	H	J	K	D
T	L	Z	N	K	T	X	C	V	B	N	M	L
O	K	J	I	D	P	M	A	K	H	A	N	A
R	H	G	S	L	Y	Q	W	E	R	T	Y	B
Y	R	S	N	S	D	U	D	J	D	I	R	D



Across

1. What is a wetland dominated by trees and standing water called?
2. What is a treeless wetland with soft, bouncy ground called that stores carbon?
3. Water reaches the aquifer below the surface; what is the process called?
4. What is a superfood we get from wetlands?
5. What word describes a plant or animal that comes from another place and spreads quickly, harming native species?
6. Which wetland ecosystem occurs where rivers meet the sea?



Down

1. What do we call the natural home where an animal lives, eats, and finds shelter?
2. Wetlands purify water, and that's why they are called ----- of the landscape?
3. Birds that fly long distances to wetlands are called?
4. Which one-word term means protection of wetlands and wildlife?
5. What is the layer of partially decayed organic matter found in wetlands?
6. What do we call animals that live both on land and in water near wetlands?

Peatland

Invasive

Estuary

Peat

Habitat

Makhana

Mangrove

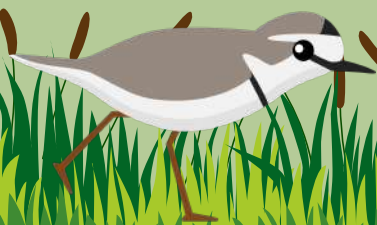
Infiltration

Kidney

Migratory

Conservation

Amphibians





Stay in touch

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