

Wandering in a Wetland



SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 4

SUBJECTS: Science

SKILLS: observation, analysis

CORRELATION TO NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS: 4-LS1-1

Objective

Students will experience a wetland community.

Method

Students will visit a local wetland and observe its components and inhabitants. If you are unable to visit a wetland, the “Wetland Scavenger Hunt Worksheet” can be used as a research questionnaire.

Background

Take students to visit a wetland so that they can get a firsthand look at this unique aquatic community. A wetland field trip may be taken during any season. Multiple trips throughout the year can afford you with opportunities to show seasonal changes in the wetland. Summer is a good time to observe wetland activity at its peak. Migrating birds can be seen in spring and fall. Remember to have students dress appropriately and take insect repellent and sunscreen. See the Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ (IDNR) *Field Trip Tips* Web page at <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/fieldtrip.aspx> for more suggestions to help you plan for and make your visit to a wetland successful.

Materials

field guides, hand lenses; binoculars; clip boards; copies of “Wetland Scavenger Hunt Worksheet;” pencils; hand trowels; plastic spoons and jars; shallow trays; buckets NOTE: You might want to borrow one of the IDNR’s *Aquatic Illinois* resources trunks before your trip. This trunk contains much of the sampling equipment suggested in the Materials list. <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/aquatictrunk.aspx>

Procedure

1. Visit the wetland yourself to become familiar with its features. Take a few photographs to show the students what the area looks like. Before you go, consider these points.

- What type of wetland are you visiting?
- Have you asked for permission to visit this wetland?
- If it is in a park, contact the manager. Is there an interpreter to lead your group?
- Is there parking nearby? Does it accommodate a school bus?
- Are there potential safety issues?
- What types of plants and animals do you expect to find?
- Is there a shelter or seating area close to the wetland for the class to hold a discussion?
- Is collection of plants and animals at the site necessary, desirable or allowed? If collection is allowed and you decide to collect, follow these rules.
 - Read the IDNR’s publication, *Wildlife in the Classroom*. <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Documents/WITC.pdf>
 - Obtain permission from the landowner.
 - Limit the amount of materials taken.
 - Never collect rare or endangered species.
 - Do not collect a plant if it is the only one of its kind growing in the area.
 - Collect only healthy plants.
 - If keeping organisms in a container, consider their needs and comfort.
 - Keep all collected organisms out of direct sunlight.
 - If collecting aquatic organisms, keep them in water from the place that they were found.
 - Return organisms to the location where they were found as soon as observations are completed.

2. Wetland communities contain a variety of species. Have students use the accompanying “Wetland Scavenger Hunt Worksheet” as a journal of their visit.
3. Encourage students to use their senses of sight, hearing and smell to learn about the wetland. Students should watch for signs of animals (tracks, droppings, nests, lodges, burrows).
4. Provide as many field guides for students as possible. Encourage students to sketch or photograph things of interest to them in the wetland.

Extensions

1. Prepare a brochure that would entice others to visit the wetland.
2. View a video of wetlands and complete the “Wetland Scavenger Hunt Worksheet.”

Evaluations

1. Students should develop a list of plants and animals seen in the wetland.

2. Students will illustrate an example of a food web that may exist in the wetland.
3. Students will note similarities and differences between the wetland and the school grounds.



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DNR 56 – 12/15 • IOCI 16-0306 

STUDENT ACTIVITY PAGE | Wetland Scavenger Hunt Worksheet

Wetland Item	Check	Description
1. a floating plant	_____	_____
2. a tree near water	_____	_____
3. a sign of a muskrat or beaver	_____	_____
4. a water bird	_____	_____
5. an insect that floats	_____	_____
6. a bird's nest	_____	_____
7. an example of water pollution	_____	_____
8. wetland soil	_____	_____
9. a predator and its prey	_____	_____
10. an animal track	_____	_____
11. a singing bird	_____	_____
12. a swimming bird	_____	_____
13. a plant with seeds	_____	_____
14. an amphibian	_____	_____
15. a fish's food	_____	_____
16. a flying insect	_____	_____
17. a sign of humans	_____	_____
18. a snail or clam shell	_____	_____
19. an animal's home	_____	_____
20. a distinctive smell	_____	_____

Additional comments:
