



## ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS FOR WETLAND ADOPTERS

- Learn about wetland characteristics by looking for evidence of the three characteristics that determine a wetland. These are: hydric soils (saturated and lacking oxygen for certain periods), hydrophytes (vegetation adapted to wetness), and hydrology (having the water necessary to support these plants).
- Introduce wetland functions and values by doing the 'Wetland Metaphors' activity (from the *WOW: Wonders of Wetlands* book, available from the ARE Center). Follow this up by using the Visual Assessment Form featured later in this section, as a guide for observing the various functions and values at your adopted wetland.
- Clean up your wetland area - remove any debris or trash.
- Conduct seasonal water quality sampling tests of your adopted site. Refer to the 'Testing the Waters' section of your Adopter's Guidebook, and make arrangements to borrow the accompanying loan kit, to help you get started.
- Carry out a Biological Inventory of your adopted wetland. Helpful aides to species identification for macroinvertebrates, reptiles & amphibians, other wildlife forms, plants and invasive species are available in the loan kits (described in the monitoring part of your guidebook) that your group leader may borrow from the ARE Center. Forms for reporting the occurrence of rare, threatened or endangered plants and animals are also provided.
- Use this areas as a place to go for quiet time and to listen to nature.
- Do a habitat study and evaluation for different species of plants and animals.
- Plan for habitat improvement measures, such as the construction and erection of nesting boxes for birds and bats. See the 'Watching Wetland Wildlife' section of the Adopter's Guidebook for more information on how to go about this.
- Explore the unique properties of wetland soils by immersing your group in the "Do you dig wetland soils?" activity in the *WOW! Wonders of Wetlands* book.
- Explore changes in the hydrology of your wetland from season-to-season and year-to-year, and how this might affect use of the wetlands by various animals. Plans for how to construct test wells for measuring ground water rise and fall are available from the ARE Center.

- Do leaf pressings and/or drawings to create a field guide to the plants that are found in your adopted wetland.
- Determine what edible resources exist in the wetland area.
- Discuss the functions of wetland plants in the system (uptake and uses of pollutants and nutrients, filters, sediment traps). Create and demonstrate in lab experiment.
- Set up a wetland aquarium or terrarium for study.
- Design a habitat flow chart and food chain or web for your wetland.
- Determine and discuss physiological adaptations that animals and plants may have as a result of living in wetlands (buttressed tree trunks, salt excretion in tidal marsh plants, specialized breathing structures in aquatic insects, webbed feet, etc.).
- Discover and delight in the recreational opportunities provided by your wetland.
- Determine the wetland boundary and discuss the differences between the wetland and upland.
- If yours is a tidal wetland, measure tidal changes and flows. Observe and see if you can deduce patterns of animal and fish movements in relation to tidal changes.
- Discuss and possibly do an experiment about the consequences of excess nutrients in water. What effect does this have on the wetland system?
- Understand and draw the hydrologic cycle as it relates to wetland areas. Emphasize the importance of wetland areas for ground water recharge, and as reservoirs for water supply in times of drought.
- Look for places where water enters and/or exits your wetland system and how this connects with other water bodies in the watershed. Consider land uses surrounding the wetlands in terms of how nutrients and other pollutants could find their way into and through the wetland.
- Observe the organic matter layer and the process of decomposition.
- Keep informed about wetland issues in your locality, state and region. Web sites and other resources for doing this are available in the 'Resources' section of your Adopter's Guidebook. Determine what you can do for your community to support wetland conservation.