

What is a Wetland?

Types of Wetlands

There are 5 main types of wetlands: bog, fen, swamp, marsh, and shallow open water.

Bog and Fen

Bogs and fens are characterized by a thick layer of peat as the top layer of soil. Peat is partially decayed moss, plants, and woody debris.

Swamp

Swamps have little to no peat in the soil. Otherwise, they can look similar to bogs and fens and are usually forested or shrubby.

Marsh

Marshes are usually areas with little to no peat, and very tall grasses, reeds and sedges.

Shallow Open Water

Shallow open water is exactly like it sounds. A shallow pond would be one example of this type of wetland.

Wetlands

It's in the name! Wetlands are land that is wet. The land and soil around a wetland is wet for some or all of the year and is changed and adapted to the water. The plants that grow in wetlands like to have their roots in water. An area can have many different types of wetlands. For example, a swamp may transition into a marsh.

Did you know?

Wetlands support more than 600 species of plants in Alberta! They are also home to some species at risk: the northern leopard frog, whooping crane, and woodland caribou.



Benefits of Wetlands

Wetlands can help with flood and drought mitigation by storing and slowly releasing water.

Wetlands can help filter nutrients and contaminants out of water, which improves water quality.

They can help with groundwater recharge.

Wetland Biodiversity



Wetlands and riparian areas share some biodiversity. Wetlands are home to amphibians, water fowl (this includes birds like ducks and geese), and water-loving plants. Reeds and cattails like to grow in marshes, while bogs and fens are home to coniferous trees like black spruce.

