

Wetland Metaphors

What better way to learn about all of the great things wetlands provide than a game of metaphors!

Background: Wetlands provide for a great diversity of plants and animals. They are nurseries for countless life forms. Wetlands often act as buffers in times of both flood and drought. Absorbing overflow from flooding, wetlands often swell with runoff water and reduce potential flooding downstream. In drier periods, wetlands hold precious moisture after other ponds and lakes have disappeared. Wetlands have a unique ability to trap silt and other solids, promoting the decomposition of many toxic substances, extra nutrients, and the neutralization of sewage wastes by microorganisms that live there. Wetlands are remarkable.

**Place all items into the large container (Mystery Metaphor Container)*

Steps:

1. Discuss wetland functions and the meaning of metaphor. Metaphors offer a dramatic way of drawing a comparison. For example: "Robin is a chip off the old block" or "Wes is a barrel of laughs."
What is a metaphor? A word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing to show or suggest that they are similar
2. Tell visitors that objects can be used to represent wetland functions.
3. Now bring out the Mystery Metaphor Container. Tell the visitors that everything in the container can be a metaphor that relates to the functions of wetlands.
4. Have the designated visitor reach into the container and withdraw one object.
5. Ask the visitor to describe and demonstrate the relationships between their object and wetlands. Encourage the visitors to build on each other's ideas. You can also assist by strengthening their connections.
6. Have visitor read the label to reveal how the item related to a wetland.
7. Ask visitors to summarize the way wetlands contribute to a health habitat for wildlife. Ask them if their own attitudes about wetlands are different because of doing this activity. If so, how?

Materials:

Large concealing container (pillowcase, bag, or box), sponge, small pillow/toy bed, whisk, toy doll's cradle or baby doll, strainer, flower, can of soup or whole-grain cereal, information cards

Wetland Mystery Metaphors Chart

Object Metaphorical Wetland Function: Wetlands...

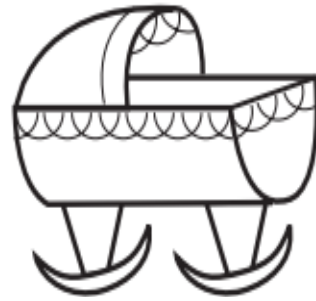
Sponge	...absorb excess water which helps to prevent flooding; and absorb excess, harmful nutrients from fertilizers and other sources that may cause contamination downstream (related also to filtering--see "Sieve" below).
Pillow or bed	...provide a resting place for migratory birds; and provide a home for resident microorganisms, fish, birds, and wildlife.
Egg beater or whisk	...mix nutrients and oxygen into water.
Cradle or baby doll	...provide shelter and protection (like a nursery) for young fish, insects, mammals, and birds. Have you seen mosquito larvae, dragonfly nymphs, frog eggs, duck nests, or moose calves in wetlands?
Sieve (strainer)	...can strain or filter debris and suspended material such as soil from erosion out of the water..
Can of soup (or whole-grain cereal)	...provide food for many animals in the form of <i>phytoplankton</i> , <i>algae</i> , tiny <i>zooplankton</i> , insects, and fish.
Soap	...clean polluted water that enters. Of course, even wetlands can be overpowered by too much pollution.
Flower	...are beautiful places.
	Add your own objects and ideas.

Summary: Wetlands help prevent floods, absorb water and hold moisture. Wetlands provide shelter for young animals. They provide a resting place for migratory birds. Wetlands strain out debris and pollution and clean water. Plus, they are beautiful places to visit and recreate in!

Sponge



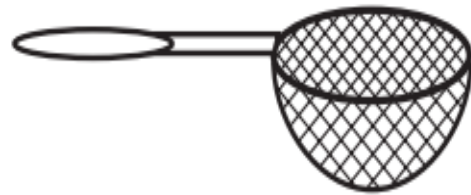
Cradle



Pillow



Strainer



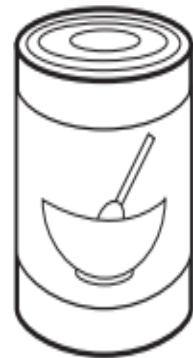
Egg beater



Flower



Can of soup

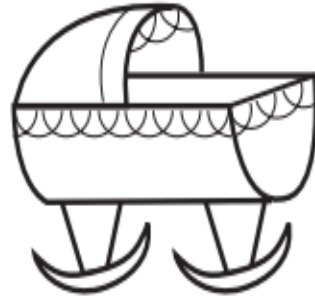


Sponge



help prevent floods,
absorbs water, holds moisture

Cradle



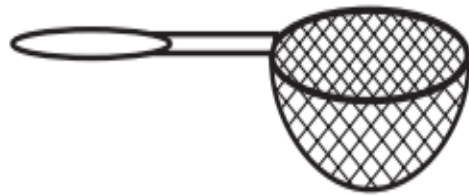
raise young, provide shelter

Pillow



a resting place for migratory birds,
home for resident wildlife

Strainer



strain out debris and pollution

Egg beater



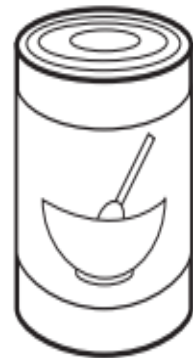
mix and cycle nutrients

Flower



beautiful places

Can of soup



food, nutrients