

## WETLAND METAPHORS

(a preparation activity)

### Source:

Project WILD: Activity Guide, The Council for Environmental Education, 1999.

### Basic Description:

Students are presented with a selection of hands on objects for investigation as metaphors for natural functions of wetlands.

### Materials:

- 'Mystery Metaphor Container,' large pillowcase, bag or box (something which allows a student to reach in and pull out at least one of the following objects per group of four students)
- bag/box, sponge, small pillow, soap, eggbeater/mixer, small doll cradle, sieve/strainer, paper coffee filter, antacid tablets, small box of cereal
- 7.5 cm x 12.5 cm cards with pictures that could be used to show other wetland metaphors. (ie, a zoo, garden, vacation resort)

**Time Allotment:** one or two 30-60 minute periods

### Procedure:

#### Introduction:

1. Discuss the variety of wetlands found in your local area, province, territory, country, etc. Then invite the students to sit quietly and close their eyes. Have them imagine and visualize a wetland, and examine what it looks like. Look carefully at the plants and animals, including insects and small creatures. What does the air feel like? How does it smell? Here, you might play a recording of wetland sounds.
2. Compile a list of the imaginings, to use for defining what a wetland might actually be like, even toward classifying the plants and animals according to the type of wetland.
3. Explain that wetlands are considered to be the world's most productive ecosystems, and are always busy. We can understand how wetland work by the use of metaphors. Ask what a metaphor is, then give the example that wetlands act as sponges, filters, nutrient controllers, and nurseries, all put together and more! How does a sponge work? How might a wetland do the same thing, and why is this important?

#### Activity:

1. Bring out the 'Mystery Metaphor Container', and explain that everything in the container has something to do with a wetland.

2. Have the students divide into groups of four. Have a representative from each group will draw an object from the container.
3. As a group, they must figure out how the object could represent what a wetland is or does. Allow the students time to discuss their ideas with each other before doing so in front of the class.
4. Ask each group to report their ideas to the class.

### Follow-up/Discussions:

- Discuss and review the functions represented by each metaphor.
- Ask the students to summarize the major roles that wetlands perform in contributing to habitat for wildlife. Also, list the ways in which wetlands are important to humans. Why do humans convert wetlands to other uses?
- Discuss the connections humans have with wetland, such as recreation, aesthetics, economic and utilitarian uses, environmental quality, and nature study.

### Extensions:

- Visit a wetland to verify the appropriateness of the metaphors explored in the classroom. Identify and discuss any limitations to the appropriateness of these metaphors. Identify what seem to be the most compelling attributes of the metaphors in helping you understand the characteristics and nature of the wetland.
- Expand on your understanding of these metaphors. Identify new and appropriate metaphors.

Investigate local, provincial, territorial and federal regulations and laws that govern the use of wetlands.

