



## Wetland Explorations

Grades K-4

### What to Expect

This program is designed to provide elementary students with a first-hand opportunity to learn about the different types of wetlands we have in Vermont, and the habitats they provide for a diversity of plants and animals. Guided by a professional Teacher/Naturalist, your students will follow water on its journey through a series of different wetlands at the Green Mountain Audubon Center. Along the way, we stop to play a game that introduces students to the diversity of animals and plants in a wetland food web. In the hemlock swamp, we sample some wetland soil and take a close look at wetland plants. In the spring, we focus on the importance of wetlands as breeding habitat and visit the Peeper and Beavers Ponds to look for nesting birds, frog and salamander eggs, tadpoles, and insect larvae. In the fall, we look for activity around the beaver ponds as the beavers are busy storing food for the winter and migrant birds are stopping over on their way south. Depending on what we see and your students' interests and questions, each trip will be a little different, but every program delivers plenty of age-appropriate activities that connect to the essential questions and understandings listed below.

### Essential Question and Understandings



#### What makes wetlands unique?

- All wetlands are wet (or seasonally wet), have special (hydric) soils, and have special plants that can survive wet conditions.
- Many different plants and animals rely on wetland habitats as sources of food, breeding and nesting sites, and safe stop-overs during migration.
- Wetlands change over time (i.e. Beavers can change wetland habitats for other plants and animals when they build and abandon ponds).
- Wetland food webs are supported by aquatic plants.

### Vermont Grade Expectations

**S1: Scientific Questioning** – Students work with the Teacher/Naturalist to observe and ask questions about wetlands (i.e. “I wonder why trees aren’t growing in the marsh?”)

**S30: Structure and Function – Survival Requirements** – Students learn about and observe different structures that certain plants and animals have that allow them to survive in wetlands.

**S31: Life Cycles and Reproduction** – Students observe wetland animals in different life stages (i.e. egg, tadpole, and frog) and discuss the importance of wetland habitats for reproduction.

**S35: Food Webs** - Students learn about and observe different plants and animals within a wetland food web, and discuss why wetlands provide so much food for so many species.

**S36: Equilibrium** – Students observe how many animals (birds, fish, frogs, turtles etc.) depend on the pond and wetland habitats created by beavers to survive.

### Key Words

- |                       |                    |                   |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Swamp              | 7. Food web        | 13. Flood         |
| 2. Marsh              | 8. Cattail         | 14. Decomposition |
| 3. Beaver pond/meadow | 9. Eastern Hemlock | 15. Migration     |
| 4. Vernal pool        | 10. Habitat        | 16. Life cycle    |
| 5. Soil               | 11. Beaver dam     | 17. Salamander    |
| 6. Aquatic            | 12. Beaver lodge   | 18. Mink          |



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## **Recommended Resources for Trees**

Coming soon....