



# The Mini Page

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**Next Week:**  
Meet our new president and vice president!

## Wonderful Wetlands



photo © Hollingsworth, John and Karen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### Mini Fact:

A fan boat can be used to move around in swampy waters.

Do you live near **wetlands**? These are places with waterlogged soil that may be covered by shallow water during at least part of the year. The wet soil and water make a difference to the kinds of animals and plants that live there.

Wetlands act like water filters. They trap polluting substances and release nitrogen. They're important to the health of the planet, people and animals.

### Freshwater wetlands

Most of our wetlands in the lower 48 states (about 95%) are **freshwater** wetlands. Some states are much wetter than others; for example, Florida has 20% of all the wetlands in the United States. Most of those are freshwater.

These areas include:

- **Marshes**, with plants with soft stems, grasses, rushes and sedges.
- **Bogs**, areas with a lot of **peat**, a material made up of decayed plants. Peat feels bouncy to walk on. Bogs are found in the colder climates. Cranberries are grown in bogs.



photo courtesy Oregon Department of Agriculture

This cranberry bog in Oregon is ready for harvest.

- **Swamps**, wet areas with trees and shrubs.
- **Wet meadows**, low-lying areas usually near streams and lakes.



photo courtesy NC Wetlands

A mangrove swamp in North Carolina.

### Saltwater wetlands

- **Saltwater marshes** are made up of grasses. The tide rises and falls in these marshes twice each day. They are found on the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf coasts.
- **Mangrove swamps** are where groups of mangrove trees grow in salty waters in warm tropical areas. These are mainly found in southern Florida. Their long roots trap dirt and sand and help to build up shorelines.

### Wetlands are shrinking

Today, the lower 48 states have about 110 million acres of wetlands. That's about half of the amount in the 1600s. Humans are responsible for some of that loss, because of farming, construction, pollution and building dams and dikes. Natural causes include droughts and erosion.



photo Ronald L. Bell/USFWS

Visitors come to Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri to see thousands of snow geese stop over there during their migration.

### We need wetlands!

Wetlands act as buffers to protect shore areas from waves and storms. These areas slow down the incoming waves and help spread the water out.

From wetlands, we get some of our fish, shellfish (like crabs and crayfish) and cranberries.



Hunters and fishers like to visit wetlands, and boaters can glide through them, admiring the wildlife.

Many species of animals and birds live in wetlands or stop over there as they migrate.



### Resources



#### On the Web:

- [bit.ly/MPenvironment](http://bit.ly/MPenvironment)

#### At the library:

- "Life in a Wetland" by Doris Dumrauf
- "Who Eats What? Wetland Food Chains" by Rebecca Pettiford

## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of wetlands are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



ANIMALS, BIRDS, BOG, BUFFER, COAST, CRAB, CRANBERRY, FILTER, FISH, FRESHWATER, MANGROVE, MARSH, MEADOW, MIGRATION, PEAT, SALTWATER, SOIL, SPECIES, SWAMP, WETLANDS.

Q S D N A L T E W W O D A E M  
F M R E T A W H S E R F J Y R  
U I R T A E P M D B U F F E R  
A G H S I F E V O R G N A M B  
N R E T A W T L A S P A I G A  
I A T F I L T E R C M M O J R  
M T S R B X Y R R E B N A R C  
A I A M A R S H H B O G E W K  
L O O D R S D R I B J Y S N S  
S N C S E I C E P S O I L S Z

## Cook's Corner

### Roasted Sweet Potatoes

#### You'll need:

- 3 medium sweet potatoes, peeled
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- pinch of cayenne pepper
- juice of 1/2 lime



\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Cut peeled sweet potatoes into 1-inch chunks.
2. Heat oil in 9-by-13-inch baking dish in a preheated oven (375 degrees) for 5 minutes.
3. Place cut sweet potatoes in heated oil and bake for 20 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking time. Meanwhile, mix together brown sugar and spices.
4. After 20 minutes, add brown sugar mixture and stir to coat potatoes.
5. Roast for another 10 minutes until potatoes are light brown; drain on paper towels.
6. Transfer to a serving dish and sprinkle with lime juice. Serves 6 to 8.

## 7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



1. trophy or ribbon (5) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Tiffany Haddish, for one (8) \_\_\_\_\_
3. a little wet (4) \_\_\_\_\_
4. common (8) \_\_\_\_\_
5. talk quietly (7) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Atlantic or Pacific (5) \_\_\_\_\_
7. tool to look at the stars (9) \_\_\_\_\_

MP	SPER	ORD	RY
TEL	COME	EAN	IZE
INA	PR	OPE	DIAN
ESC	WHI	OC	DA

Answers: prize, comedian, damp, ordinary, whisper, ocean, telescope.

## Mini Jokes



- Winnie:** Who gives alligators their Christmas presents?  
**Wayne:** Santa Jaws!

## Eco Note



The world's biggest iceberg is showing signs of disintegrating because of the warmer waters it is encountering, researchers say. The iceberg is riddled with cracks as it is battered by waves, shedding countless tiny icebergs around its edges. Images from an orbiting spacecraft, which can show details as small as 20 inches across, show that the iceberg is now in the shape of a hand with an outstretched index finger.

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### For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about migrating animals and birds.

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