

## Wetlands



### What is a wetland?

A wetland is an area that usually holds shallow, slow-moving, or stationary water. Animals and plants living in or near wetlands are adapted to and often dependent on wet conditions for at least one part of their life cycle. An area does not need to be wet constantly to be considered a wetland. Water and soil moisture levels change and wetlands can sometimes even be dry for part of the year.

### Why are wetlands important?

There are many reasons wetlands are important. Most obviously, wetlands provide essential breeding, nesting, feeding, and cover habitat for many species of wildlife, especially migratory birds and amphibians. Wetlands also act as giant filters and clean the water that will eventually enter streams, rivers and underground aquifers by absorbing silt, sediments and decomposing organic matter. Erosion and flooding is held in check by wetlands slowing down, holding and then slowly releasing water. In these ways, wetlands benefit all other habitats.

### Where are wetlands in Wyoming?

Wetlands occur on the prairies, between the rolling hills, in the mountains and they even occur in the deserts. Wetlands make up only 2% of Wyoming's land area but they provide food, water and shelter for over 80% of Wyoming's wildlife.

Wetland Habitat Flashcards

Raccoon



Muskrat



Western Grebe



Sandhill Crane



Mallard



Red-winged Blackbird



Wetland Habitat Flashcards

American Avocet



Fathead Minnow



Northern Leopard Frog



Tiger Salamander



Painted Turtle



Blue Darner (larvae)



Wetland Habitat Flashcards

Blue Darner (adult)



Crayfish



Broadleaf cattail



Pondweed



The Sun



Wetland Habitat Flashcards

Raccoon

Name: Raccoon  
Scientific Name: *Procyon lotor*  
Predators: Raptors, fox  
Prey or Food: Eggs, crayfish, berries, garbage

Did you know? Raccoons will "wash" their hands and food before eating

Muskrat

Name: Muskrat  
Scientific Name: *Ondatra zibethicus*  
Predators: Raccoons, Fox, Raptors  
Prey or Food: Cattails, sedges, crayfish

Did you know? You can tell a muskrat den from a beaver den because they use only leaves not branches.

Western Grebe

Name: Western Grebe  
Scientific Name: *Aechmophorus occidentalis*  
Predators: Raccoons will eat eggs  
Prey or Food: Fish, aquatic insects

Did you know? These birds build floating nests.

Sandhill Crane

Name: Sandhill Crane  
Scientific Name: *Grus canadensis*  
Predators: Raccoons, raptors  
Prey or Food: Grains, insects, frogs

Did you know? These birds have a beautiful courtship "dance" with leaps, hops, and bowing with wings outstretched.

Mallard

Name: Mallard  
Scientific Name: *Anas platyrhynchos*  
Predators: Coyotes, humans  
Prey or Food: Aquatic plants/algae

Did you know? Only male mallards have the signature green head, the females are a drab brown.

Red-winged Blackbird

Name: Red-winged Blackbird  
Scientific Name: *Agelaius phoeniceus*  
Predators: Raccoons, snakes, raptors, fox, coyote  
Prey or Food: Insects, seeds

Did you know? These birds are very protective of their nests, they'll chase away much larger birds and other predators.

Wetland Habitat Flashcards

American Avocet

Name: American Avocet  
Scientific Name: *Recurvirostra americana*  
Predators: Dogs, raptors, raccoons and foxes eat eggs  
Prey or Food: Aquatic insects

Did you know? Avocets use their long up-curved bills to probe mud and shallow water for food.

Fathead Minnow

Name: Fathead Minnow  
Scientific Name: *Pimephales promelas*  
Predators: Fish, snakes, birds, salamanders  
Prey or Food: Aquatic insects, algae

Did you know? This minnows are a great biological control of mosquito larvae.

Northern Leopard Frog

Name: Northern Leopard Frog  
Scientific Name: *Rana pipiens*  
Predators: Fish, snakes, birds, salamanders  
Prey or Food: Insects, small birds, snakes

Did you know? Much of Wyoming's leopard frog population is suffering from a infectious disease caused by a fungus.

Tiger Salamander

Name: Tiger Salamander  
Scientific Name: *Ambystoma tigrinum*  
Predators: Raccoons, turtles, birds  
Prey or Food: Aquatic insects

Did you know? Some tiger salamanders live their entire lives underwater while others live in moist areas above ground.

Painted Turtle

Name: Painted Turtle  
Scientific Name: *Chrysemys picta bellii*  
Predators: Fox (eggs), raccoon (adults)  
Prey or Food: Crayfish, aquatic insects and plants

Did you know? Painted turtles get their name from their brightly colored carapace, or shell.

Blue Darner (larvae)

Name: Blue Darner (larvae)  
Scientific Name: *Aeshna multicolor*  
Predators: Frogs, turtles, snakes, water birds, fish  
Prey or Food: Aquatic insects

Did you know? These juvenile dragonflies are voracious predators of water insects.

Blue Darner (adult)

Name: Blue Darner (adult)  
Scientific Name: *Aeshna multicolor*  
Predators: Frogs, turtles, snakes, water birds, fish  
Prey or Food: Mosquitos, flies, gnats

Did you know? The adult dragonfly is a voracious predator of other flying insects.

Crayfish

Name: Crayfish  
Scientific Name: *Orconectus* spp.  
Predators: Racoons, turtles, birds, fish, frogs, humans  
Prey or Food: Aquatic plants, snails, decomposing matter

Did you know? Crayfish, or crawdads, are related to lobsters, shrimp, and crabs.

Broadleaf cattail

Name: Broadleaf cattail  
Scientific Name: *Typha latifolia*  
Predators: Muskrat, ducks, geese, birds (seed)  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? Cattails are important hunting perches for many wetland birds.

Pondweed

Name: Pondweed  
Scientific Name: *Potamogeton* spp.  
Predators: Fish, waterfowl, turtles  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? In spring, wetlands will be brown from rain and snowmelt, but as summer comes, algae growing in ponds turn waters green.

The Sun

Plants use the sun's energy to grow through a process known as photosynthesis. Because plants are the beginning of all food chains, all plants and animals transfer the sun's energy when they eat.