

Ontario's Wetlands

COOL FACTS:

Wetlands by definition are areas of land that are saturated by water. This saturation can be permanent or seasonal. These areas have hydric soil, which grows specific plants that have adapted to it. Wetlands provide food, water and protection to hundreds of species of wildlife, plants and insects.

Wetlands cover about 14% of Canada's land area. There are over 100 million hectares of wetlands in Canada. The majority of the wetlands are in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Seventy-two percent of Southern Ontario's wetlands have already been lost through human intervention such as land clearing, development, and agricultural drainage.

Wetlands are among the most biologically diverse and productive of all ecosystems — including rainforests and coral reefs.

Wetlands are not only important to a diverse range of wildlife and plant species, they also help protect shorelines, help control flooding, and clean and filter water, as well as help replace ground water. Wetlands also play a part in global warming, as they can store carbon.

Canada is home to 25% of the world's wetlands, more than any other country.



Types of wetlands in Ontario:

- Bogs and fens, often called peatlands, are common in Northern Ontario.
- Marshes, the most common type, are periodically or permanently flooded with water. They contain plants like cattails and water lilies.
- Swamps are wooded wetlands, and they can be found across the province.

WILDLIFE FOUND IN WETLANDS:

- salamanders
- frogs
- ducks
- hawks
- herons
- owls
- coyotes
- snowshoe hares
- black bears
- muskrats
- minks
- beavers
- otters
- turtles
- frogs
- kingfishers
- osprey
- Muskellunge
- Largemouth Bass
- minnows
- sunfish

PLANT LIFE FOUND IN WETLANDS:

- cattails
- Pickerel weed
- arrowheads
- pond lilies
- coontails
- red maple
- ash
- birch
- silver maple
- blueberries
- ferns
- skunk cabbage
- willow
- alder
- buttonbush
- red osier dogwood

This is just a sample. There are hundreds more species of plants, insects and animals that use wetlands as their habitat.

Like super-sized Brita filters, wetlands have chemical-absorbing, bacteria-neutralizing powers!