



Lesson 1: Wading Through Freshwater Wetlands

Theme

Wetlands are diverse and they are sensitive to change, therefore scientists must closely observe them in order to protect them.

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will learn how observation connects to conservation and the importance of wetlands in Rhode Island. Students will practice their observational skills and understand the importance of classification in conservation. Students will be able to define the term “wetland” and will gain awareness of how the RIDEM Division of Fish & Wildlife helps protect Rhode Island’s natural resources.

Corresponding Activities for this Lesson

- Eye of a Scientist

Materials

- Wading Through Freshwater Wetlands PowerPoint
- Wetland plant photos
- Laminated plant specimens

Lesson

- 1. Explain to students that today we will be learning about the difference between freshwater wetland types in Rhode Island and how biologists at the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife are protecting them.**
 - Explain that a wetland is a kind of habitat. Ask students what is a habitat? What are four things that all animals need in their habitat to survive? (food, water, shelter and space)
- 2. Many habitats are sensitive to change, especially wetlands, therefore scientists must closely observe them in order to protect them.**
 - Play “Eye of a Scientist” observation game.



- 3. After playing the game, ask students if anyone has ever seen a freshwater wetland.**
 - After students have had a chance to share their thoughts, explain that wetlands, are areas of the land that are wet! They can be spongy or mucky and shallow or deep and usually lie in a lower part of the land.
 - Have students close their eyes and try to remember what the wetland looked like, sounded like, smelled like. Was the water still? Running? Muddy? Clear? Were there trees or was it open? Was the ground soft or hard? Ask students to share out their memories of wetlands.

- 4. Explain that by observing these different traits, just like you did, scientists can classify wetlands, or organize them, into different groups.**
 - Only special kinds of water-loving plants grow in wetlands, and some of them are truly strange and amazing! Taking a closer look at these plants can give scientists a lot of clues as to what kind of wetland they are surveying and what they need to do to protect it.
 - Pass around photos and laminated specimens of wetland plants and read descriptions. Ask if anyone recognizes any of these plants.

- 5. Ask students if they know the names of some different types of freshwater wetlands that can be found in RI.**
 - Walk through each habitat: swamps, ponds, rivers, vernal pools and bogs on the PowerPoint.

- 6. Walk through the slides about creating, protecting, and restoring wetland habitats in Rhode Island.**