

Marshes

Marshes are often a transition zone between open water and shorelines of lakes and river systems. They are shallow wetlands with water levels that fluctuate seasonally. Marshes receive water from precipitation, groundwater, and stream inflow.

Identifying Characteristics

- Permanently or seasonally flooded
- Displays an abundance of submerged and emergent aquatic vegetation
- High nutrient content and low acidity
- Plants are adapted to fluctuating water levels
- High diversity of aquatic invertebrates
- Commonly associated with shallow open water wetlands

Benefits and Functions

- Plants filter and trap pollutants from the water
- Great place for wildlife viewing
- Provides food and shelter for many different species of birds and mammals
- Moderates flooding and erosion by slowing down water flow
- Provide habitat for wildlife species important for trapping, such as muskrat

Types of Marshes

- **Freshwater marshes** are very productive and a variety of plants thrive on the high nutrient levels
- **Saltwater marshes** are normally associated with coastlines and fewer plants can tolerate the saline conditions



Freshwater marsh near Pickhandle Lakes—D. van de Wetering



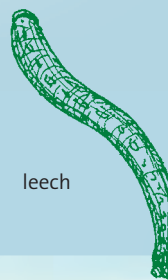
giant water bug



freshwater shrimp



whirligig beetle



leech



caddisfly larva

Aquatic Invertebrates

Aquatic Invertebrates are an important part of the food chain for birds and fish. They can be used as an indicator for water quality. For example, caddisfly larvae are present in healthy water systems.



Coastal marsh, Pauline Cove on Herschel Island—P. Sinclair

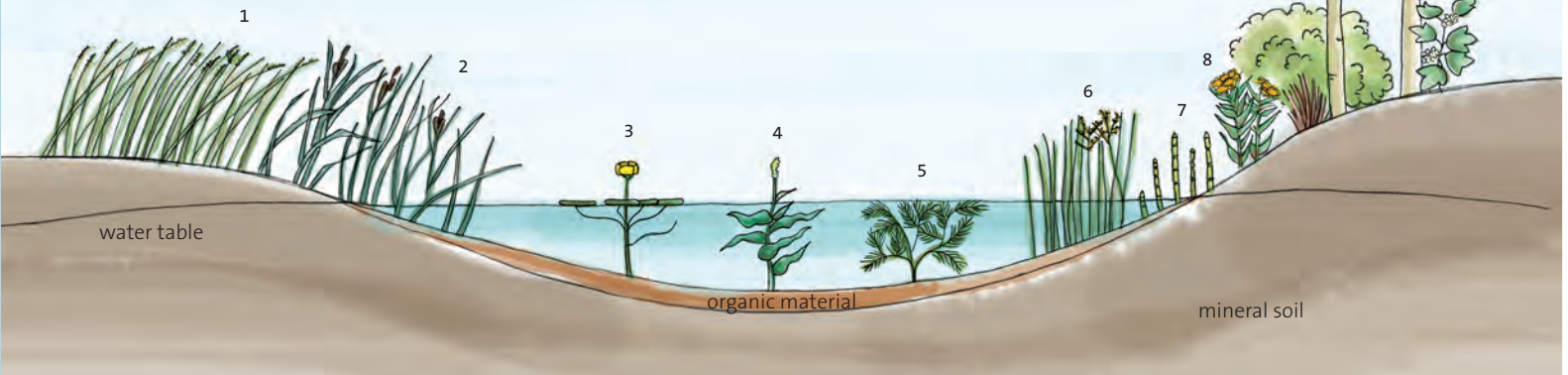


Swallow—J. Jantunen



Yukon Wetlands Marshes

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 slough grass | 5 spiked water-milfoil |
| 2 water sedge | 6 bulrush |
| 3 small yellow pond-lily | 7 scouring rush |
| 4 clasping leaf pondweed | 8 marsh ragwort |



Ducklings face extraordinary odds to survive different predators. Foxes and coyotes stalk ducklings at the water's edge, northern pike ambush from below, and gulls and raptors swoop from above. Marsh vegetation provides excellent cover for ducklings to escape these predators.

Emergent and submergent plants including rushes, sedges, and milfoil grow in flooded and exposed marsh soil. Floating vegetation like pond-lilies are also present. Vegetation is arranged in zones delineated by water depth, water chemistry or disturbance.

Marshes make great outdoor classrooms with an abundance of plants, invertebrates, birds, and mammals.



Top: Muskrat
—J. Jantunen

Middle: Submergent plants
—J. Hawkings

Bottom: Emergent plants
—J. Hawkings



Mallard ducklings