



Newfoundland and Labrador's Wetlands


SAM is a network of municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador that are committed to conserving wildlife habitat and practicing environmental stewardship. Find more wildlife and habitat resources at samnl.org.


What is a wetland?


 Wetlands are defined as land that is saturated with water long enough to promote wetland or aquatic processes. These processes include poorly drained soils, hydrophytic vegetation, and biological activity that are associated with a wet environment.

 85% of Canada's wetlands are in the boreal forest.

 The Canadian Wetland Classification system identifies 5 different wetland types: marsh, shallow open water (pond), fen, bog, and swamp.

 Classification includes water depth, mineral and organic deposits, and vegetation types. Organic wetlands include fens and bogs. Mineral wetlands are usually swamps, marshes, and shallow open water.

 Wetlands are second only to rainforests in biodiversity. From large mammals, to beautiful orchids, to tiny insects, wetlands are full of life!

 Fens and bogs are peatlands. Peat is a thick layer of decomposing and decaying plant material. It is a natural carbon sink and very important for climate change mitigation.



Marsh



Shallow open water



Fen



Bog



Swamp

Fens and bogs accumulate peat at a rate of 1.5 - 2.3 m per 1000 years. The peatlands in NL were formed after the last ice age, 15,000 years ago.

Wetlands have many environmental & social benefits including:

- Supporting wildlife biodiversity
- Storing large amounts of carbon
- Minimizing soil erosion
- Filtering and transporting water
- Preventing flooding
- Holding water during droughts
- Hunting, fishing and other cultural activities



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Bog bean
Aegolius funereus

What to look out for in Newfoundland and Labrador wetlands

Bird Species

 There are over 200 native bird species in NL's boreal forest, many of them depend on wetlands for food, shelter, and water.


 Wetlands support breeding bird populations including many species of waterfowl.


 Shorebirds are commonly found in salt marshes and estuaries.




Common wetland birds:
American Black Duck
Mallard
American Wigeon
Northern Pintail
Tree Swallow
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Loon
American Bittern
Warbler spp.

Carnivorous Plants

 Wetlands are low nutrient ecosystems. Carnivorous plants have adapted to this by trapping and digesting insects to survive.


 Native species include the Purple Pitcher Plant, the Common Butterwort, 4 species of sundew, and 5 species of bladderwort.

 Our provincial flower, the Purple Pitcher Plant, has modified leaves or 'pitchers' that trap and drown insects.




Purple Pitcher Plant
Sarracinea purpurea


Climate Change Mitigation

 Peat is composed of decaying and decomposing organic matter that accumulates over time in an anoxic environment of a wetland.



In NL the most common peatland is a spagnum bog


 Climate change scientists believe peatlands are very important for carbon sequestration.


 Globally peatlands contain at least 550 GT of carbon, which is double that stored in forests.




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Salt Marshes & Estuaries

 Marshes are the most ecologically diverse type of wetland, but the least common in the boreal forest. Salt marshes are even less common, making them important for the wildlife that depend on them.

 Salt marshes and estuaries are intertidal zones that are regularly flooded by brackish water or seawater, and they are dominated by salt tolerant plants.

 Many shorebirds use salt marshes and estuaries as areas to feed, rest, and nest during the year.



Black-bellied Plover
Pluvialis squatarola

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