

ACTIVITY ONE: WETLANDS ARE WONDERFUL!

During these **LANGUAGES** activities, learners find out more about wetlands. A reading activity introduces the importance of wetlands, followed by a word search, a comprehension and a fun way of writing poetry.



Wetlands are often thought of only in terms of their hydrological importance, but they also hold great cultural significance. Many cultures have developed traditional practices and belief systems for regulating the use of wetlands and to protect these valuable ecosystems.

Wetlands are also known as *vleis*, *bogs*, *swamps*, *marshes* or *sponges*. They are regarded as some of the most productive ecosystems in the world because they serve as sponges that regulate river flow, they provide habitats for a variety of plant and animal species and they help to absorb silt and cleanse water of pollutants.

Wetlands are at risk all around the world due to practices of draining the land for alternative use. Construction of dams, removal of plants, waste water pumped into the area by industries, seepage of agricultural fertilisers and mining are all threats to these sensitive ecosystems.

Each year, government departments, non-governmental organisations, schools and groups of individuals undertake actions to raise awareness of the values and benefits of wetlands as well as the important role they play in sustainable freshwater use.

2 February is the anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention in 1971. The Convention took place in the Iranian city of Ramsar and is an inter-governmental treaty to promote national action and international co-operation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are presently 153 Contracting Parties to the Convention with 1 629 wetlands sites, totalling 145.6 million hectares.



ACTIVITY: UNDERSTANDING THE VOCABULARY:

- All the words in the crossword on the next page can be found in the text above. Use the clues given (across and down) to fill in the spaces.