

Wetlands

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Geographic Theme:

Environment

Purpose:

These activities will introduce students to wetlands.

Objective:

To increase students knowledge of one of the important environmental features in Florida.

Activity 1: Wetlands Succession

Materials:

- Pint or quart jars (either one per student or small group, or one for the entire class). You can use a soda bottle after cutting the top portion off.
- Water
- Soil
- Aquatic or wetland plants (one per jar). You can obtain these plants from a local pond, lake, marsh, or wetland area.
- Two cups of bird seed
- Sunflower seeds (optional)

Procedures:

1. Make a miniature swamp. Place two inches of soil in each jar with three or more inches of water.
2. Place the jars without lids at a window. Allow them to settle overnight.
3. Plant one of your plants in each jar. It should grow well in this environment. If your classroom has no windows for light, substitute a grow light. Do not replace the water in the jars as it evaporates.
4. Once or twice a week, have students add three or four bird seeds to the jar. While there is still water in the jar, the seeds should germinate and then rot. Continue adding seeds even after the water evaporates.

5. As the water evaporates down to the level of the soil, the aquatic plant will die. The bird seeds will now find the environment suitable for successful growth. Sunflower seeds can now be added to represent large trees in a forest.
6. You will now need to add water, as a substitute for rainfall, to keep the soil damp for growing things.
7. Have the students keep a journal of observations during the weeks of the wetland succession. Explain this is what happens when the water is taken out of the system through development, draining, or channeling. Students can develop posters to visually illustrate what happened to their wetland or describe three changes that happened to the wetlands inside their jars.

Activity 2: Swamp Tromp

Procedures:

1. Take a trip to a local swamp, marsh, estuary, or wetland. Have the students observe the plants growing in different areas. Do they notice any patterns of growth? What might be the causes? These patterns may be caused by depth of water, water flows, soil types, etc. What wildlife is observed – insects, critters, and birds? Is there any evidence of wildlife – tracks, scat, nests, etc.?
2. When they return have them list the plants, animals, etc. they observed. Have them draw posters individually or as a group. You can construct a life size (scale down to fit classroom) wetlands area in the classroom. You can construct a “lifesize” wetlands mural. This wetland can be constructed with brown newspaper rolls, recycled paper, etc. You can draw the plants and critters directly onto the paper or cut out the elements from magazines and publications and tape them to the wall. Place a wetland tree on the wall first, then place grasses and wetland plants around the base of the tree. Finish by placing animals and fish among the grasses, plants and trees.