

Wetlands

- an oasis of life



reef beat
river to reef

WETLANDS are amazing and complex waterways that occur in many different sizes and forms.

Wetlands are land areas either temporarily or permanently covered by water. Types of wetlands include swamps, marshes, billabongs, saltmarshes, mudflats, coral reefs, mangroves, lakes and peatlands.

Marine habitats like coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mudflats, mangrove estuaries, samphire salt marshes, rocky marine shores and sand or pebble beaches are common forms of marine wetlands found in and around the Great Barrier Reef.

Wetlands are often areas of great beauty where people enjoy the scenery and gather

for recreation.

In all their forms, wetlands are very special places.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS

Wetlands in catchments along the coast next to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park are vital for the long-term protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

Wetlands support a diverse range of marine life and provide habitat, breeding and nursery areas for birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and many fish species such as barramundi and mangrove jack.

Wetlands play an important role in protecting water quality in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by helping to filter the sediment, nutrients and other pollutants from the waters that enter the Great



Barrier Reef.

They are also important in:

- preventing erosion
- allowing sediments and nutrients to settle out before entering the Great Barrier Reef
- protecting the coastline from erosion and during destructive events such as cyclones.

Wetlands are significant habitats for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as part of their cultural heritage, spiritual values and day-to-day living. Wetlands also provide for recreational and tourism opportunities such as fishing and guided tours.

Wetlands on farms buffer the effects of floods by holding excess water for a short time, reducing the severity of flooding downstream.

Wetlands provide diverse habitats for plants, birds and animals, many of which feed on agricultural pests.

Wetlands also make a farm a more interesting and pleasant place for people to work and live and they provide for added recreational opportunities such as fishing.

WETLANDS IN DANGER

More than 50 per cent of our wetlands have been significantly affected through degradation or loss since European settlement.

Catchments adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef have been extensively cleared and modified for urban development, aquaculture development and agricultural activities such as cattle grazing and cropping.

PROTECTING WETLANDS

The protection of wetlands is critical to help ensure the survival of the Great Barrier Reef.

The preservation and rehabilitation of wetland areas is a major environmental priority for the Australian and Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

Communities, industries and governments are working together to raise awareness of the effects of wetland clearing and to help protect wetland areas for the future.

A number of community projects have been developed to

help prevent the decline of these important environments.

For information about how you can become involved in a wetland protection project in your area, contact your local Council or your local Regional Natural Resource Management Group at <http://regionalnrm.qld.gov.au/about/regional>.

DOING THEIR BIT TO LOOK AFTER IT

Many communities and farmers are working together to rehabilitate and revegetate natural environments like wetlands.

By revegetating riverbanks, wetlands and other areas around their farms, land managers are helping to decrease the amount of nutrients and sediments that are discharged into surrounding waterways and in turn are helping to improve the quality of water in the Great Barrier Reef.

These actions will help to ensure the survival of the Great Barrier Reef and all of the habitats, plants, animals and industries it supports.



Wetlands are peaceful places of great beauty.



The wetlands are a haven for diversity.



Marine life relies heavily on the pristine wetlands for survival.