

Clean up a Local Wetland

How to get started - contact a local environmental group, naturalist club, Ducks Unlimited Canada volunteer committee or conservation authority to see if they have any wetland cleanups planned in your neighbourhood. If not, ask if they can provide you with ideas or guidelines on how to plan your own. Or, join a community cleanup as part of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup (www.vanaqua.org/cleanup/home.php) that takes place each September.

A few tips if you decide to do your own wetland cleanup:

- Make a plan.
- Ask local naturalists for advice about the best time to do a cleanup. You don't want to interfere with the animals that live in the wetland.
- Work with an adult to plan a safe event. Know what you are going to be doing and how to do it safely.
- Plan enough jobs for everyone and have all the materials you need on-hand—garbage bags, work gloves, rakes, shovels, etc.
- Make sure everyone knows to check with an adult if they find anything unusual (shopping carts, old paint cans, etc.).
- How will you dispose of the garbage after your cleanup? If it is on school grounds check with the custodians. Community, town or city staff may be able to help elsewhere.
- Want to involve others? Put up posters or make announcements to spark their interest. Give them enough notice to make their plans, and let them know when and where to meet.
- People will need sunscreen, hats and likely rubber boots but what else? They may need water or snacks. Make sure to have these on-hand or tell them to bring their own.
- Will your cleanup go ahead rain or shine? Let people know either way.

After your cleanup you may want to . . .

- Create and install signs to remind people not to litter or that tell a story about animals that live there.
- Arrange for a garbage bin to be installed and maintained.
- Plan regularly scheduled cleanups yourself.
- What else might you do to continue your work?



A simple plan to cleanup a wetland at Clarence Fulton Secondary School in Vernon, B.C. evolved into a community project to restore the wetland with boardwalks, student-created interpretive signs and improved habitat for wildlife. The final result? A place for students to learn, firsthand, about nature.

Help Restore a Local Wetland



Creating or restoring a wetland takes special know-how and often, special equipment. Some schools have restored a nearby wetland to use as an outdoor classroom. Others have naturalized their school grounds and created small wetland ponds to benefit frogs, toads, ducks and other local wildlife.

For help or advice, contact a local environmental organization, especially one involved with protecting wetlands or watersheds. There are several good guides to creating your own wetland including:

- The Urban Outback, produced by the Toronto Zoo's Adopt-A-Pond program—visit www.torontozoo.com/adoptapondUrbanoutback.asp
- Or visit Environmental Concern's website at www.wetland.org/publications_home.htm.

Get permission for your project:
If you are planning a stewardship project - such as a wetland cleanup or restoration, tree planting, installing nest boxes or other actions - make sure you have permission from the landowner before you begin.

Improve Wetland Habitat for the Ducks and other Wildlife



Tantram Regional High School is situated in the heart of the world-famous Tantram Marshes near the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick. In 1997, its students worked with Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service to restore a 15 hectare freshwater wetland on the school's property. Since then it has become an outstanding centre of excellence in wetlands education and is visited by over 4,000 people each year. Students act as mentors, conducting field trips for elementary school students. They also lead professional development workshops for teachers from across the Maritimes.

There are many ways to improve habitat for wildlife. It can be as simple as building and installing bird feeders at your school or you can explore other ideas:

- Wood ducks, common and Barrow's goldeneye, bufflehead and hooded mergansers nest in holes in trees created by woodpeckers, disease, fire or lightning but these are not as common in some places as they once were. You can build nesting boxes and install them in a local wetland. To learn more, visit education.ducks.ca.
- Planting native trees or shrubs near a stream provides shelter for animals and helps shade the water on hot summer days and prevents pollutants from washing into the water.
- Introduced plants like purple loosestrife can create problems in wetlands by taking over. They change the habitat and can choke out food plants that are important for wildlife. To learn more, visit www.invadingspecies.com.