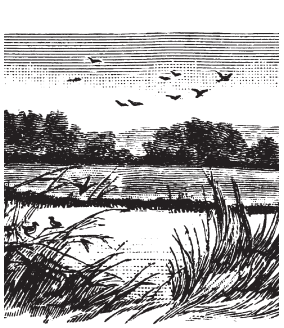
THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

Self-Guided Visit: *Mitsubishi Wild Wetlands Trail*



Facts and Children's Activities

Suggested Route:

Students review the scientific method Use the instructions below as well as your School Group Map and the directional signs posted throughout the grounds to help facilitate your tour. Estimated walking times between each destination point are noted.

1. After you check in at the School Group Check-In booth, encourage your group to use the restrooms and water fountains before you begin your journey.

2.Follow the signs to the **Clay Family Picnic Pavilions**, stay to the left on the paved pathway and walk past the picnic pavilions, which will be on your right (estimated walking time is 2 minutes). You can stop here for lunch at this point or at the conclusion of your self-guided visit.

3.Stay on the left path where the trail forks, and follow the **Mitsubishi Wild Wetland Trail**. Take a left at the Gazebo, and continue walking along the trail.

4. Once you have finished your wetland exploration, feel free to walk The New York Botanical Garden grounds. To return to your school bus, turn right, walking south along **Azalea Way**. When you come to the three-way intersection at the end of the road, turn right and follow the sign for **Daffodil Hill Way**. Follow this main road back up to the **School Group Exit**, the beginning of your journey! (Estimated walking time about 10 min.). Restrooms and the **Clay Family Picnic Pavilions** are in this vicinity as well.

What are wetlands?

Students will learn how to identify plants by examining leaves up close and learning the appropriate botanical terminology used to describe plant characteristics.

Wetlands are exactly what they say they are: lands that are wet, at least for some time during the year. But they are also wild, diverse, and dynamic ecosystems. Wetlands occur throughout the world and in many forms, including swamps, marshes, and bogs. They are among the richest and most biologically productive habitats on Earth.

The Mitsubishi Wild Wetland Trail runs along a freshwater marsh, which is a type of wetland with standing water year-round, except during unusually dry periods.

Why are wetlands important?

In addition to supporting a wide diversity of plants and wildlife, wetlands are capable of amazing acts such as removing and breaking down pesticides and sediments from our water supply. In fact, many towns use created wetlands in combination with basic sewage treatment plants to help filter their water supplies. Arrowhead, a plant growing along the Mitsubishi Wild Wetland Trail, is often planted for wastewater treatment because it can absorb large amounts of ammonia.

Wetland soils also provide perfect living conditions for microscopic organisms. Many of these microorganisms facilitate the decomposition or breaking down of dead plants and animals, making wetlands one of nature's most efficient ecosystems.

What kinds of plants and wildlife live in wetlands?

With an abundance of vegetative cover, food, and water, wetlands are rich with diverse wildlife species, including waterfowl, migratory birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. Biologists estimate that one third to one half of the country's threatened or endangered species live in wetlands.

Most wetland plants have special adaptations to help them cope with the presence of water. Waterlilies, for example, are known as floaters because they anchor their roots in mucky wetland soil and float their leaves and flowers on top of the water. Their stems have adapted to become soft and flexible, allowing them to keep their leaves and flowers afloat even when the water level changes.

Plants and animals are very important to each other in a wetland ecosystem. For example, muskrats eat cattails and use other wetland plants to build their homes; the tunnels built by muskrats make small pockets of water that shelter animals like frogs, turtles, snails, dragonflies, and butterflies; and these animals are food for birds like geese, ducks, red-winged blackbirds, and hawks.

Play wetland bingo and see how many of these plants and animals you can spot as you walk along the Mitsubishi Wild Wetland Trail.

FUN FACT!

Wetlands in the United States support about 5,000 plants species, 190 amphibian species, and one-third of all bird species.

Source: "Wetlands: Values and Trends." NRCS/RCA Issue Brief 4. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Natural Resources Inventory Division, November 1995.

Resources

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The New York Botanical Garden is grateful to the Mitsubishi International Corporation Foundation for making possible the Mitsubishi Wild Wetland Trail.