

**Grade Levels:** 3 - 8

**Time:** 1 hour



# Wetland Exploration

**Goal:** Provide an introduction to the diversity of the Florida Wetland ecosystem using hands-on animal interaction.

**Objectives:**

- Students will understand the concept of the food chain and how everything is connected.
- Students will discover the organisms present in the wetland ecosystem
- Students will discover the importance of maintaining ecological balance.
- Students will recognize how our actions can alter an ecosystem and learn what can be done to assist in conservation efforts.

## PLANNING YOUR RESERVATION

°Fall and spring fill quickly  
**PLEASE REGISTER EARLY**

°Groups must register  
**2 WEEKS IN ADVANCE**

°Programs require a  
**MINIMUM OF 15 PEOPLE**

°Programs are available  
**ON AND OFF-SITE**

°Visit our website for  
**EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES**

°Proper adult supervision  
**REQUIRED AT ALL TIMES**

Discover the Brevard Zoo’s diverse wetlands. Students will become familiar with animals and plants they might find in their own back yard and the importance of the wetland.

### Curriculum Alignment:

SC.3.N.1.4; SC.3.N.1.5; SC.3.N.1.6; SC.3.L.14.1; SC.3.L.17.1; SC.4.N.1.7; SC.4.L.16.2; SC.4.L.16.3; SC.4.L.17.1; SC.4.L.17.2; SC.4.L.17.4; SC.4.E.6.3; SC.5.L.15.1; SC.5.L.17.1; SC.5.E.7.5; SC.6.N.2.2; SC.6.N.2.3; SC.6.E.6.2; SC.6.E.7.6; SC.7.N.1.6; SC.7.N.1.7; SC.7.L.15.3; SC.7.L.17.2; SC.7.L.17.3; SC.7.E.6.6; SC.8.N.2.2; SC.8.N.4.1; SC.8.N.4.2

### Where education and conservation collide!

This program, presented by Brevard Zoo Education staff, is an enhanced experience of the distinct and unique wetland habitat found at Brevard Zoo.

Students delve into the concept through fun, interactive activities, questions and participatory responses, and hands-on activities. Programs are designed to supplement in-class learning. Depth and structure vary depending on grade and age range.

**Keywords:**

Wetlands, Habitat, Ecosystem, Environment, Food Chain, Megafauna, Microfauna, Zooplankton, Phytoplankton, Organisms

### The Ecosystem of the Wetlands

Wetlands are ecosystems teeming with life. The vast and diverse environment makes it ideal for plants and animals alike. All living things rely on the land, which is inundated with water. From providing nurseries to young crustaceans, birds, reptiles, and mammals, to preventing floods and purifying water, the wetlands are places like no other.

Within the wetlands, a unique food chain exists. At the base of this food chain are tiny microscopic organisms known as plankton. Plankton, which came from the Greek word planktos meaning “wanderer” or “drifter”, are free floating organisms that float in the water column. Phytoplankton or plant plankton play a key role in removing carbon dioxide from the air, while producing 50 to 85 percent of the world’s oxygen by the process of photosynthesis. Zooplankton or animal plankton are comprised of many species of animals, including dinoflagellates, marine worms, mollusks, sea stars, and even fish. Many of these animals are fundamental primary consumers who feed on the extensive amounts of phytoplankton.

Currently wetland habitats are at risk of disappearing. It has been estimated that in the United States alone, up to fifty percent of wetlands have disappeared due to human expansion and interference. Wetlands provide buffers from hurricanes and flooding, so learning about and protecting these important ecosystems go beyond saving the wildlife within them, to possibly protecting our everyday life.

