



Taking Action!

Teacher and Student Guide



Wetlands Centres of Excellence



Ducks Unlimited Canada staff work with students and educators to support Wetland Centres of Excellence whenever funding and resources allow. This program is designed to help support secondary school classes involved in their own long-term wetland conservation projects.

The range of projects undertaken is diverse and includes:

- studies or monitoring (water quality, species inventories, bird banding);
- stewardship (nest boxes, wetland creation, planting, annual cleanups);
- and interpretation (interpretive trails, educational signs, construction of a small nature centre or mentoring elementary school students).

For more information visit our website at education.ducks.ca or contact us at project_webfoot@ducks.ca.



Above & Centre: Students at several Wetland Centres of Excellence are involved in bird banding and provide this information to researchers. The students at Timiskaming Secondary School in northern Ontario have built special bird banding stations for their on-going program.



Secondary school students share their knowledge and enthusiasm with the students they mentor.

"I can just remember the high school students delivering the program. They seemed excited and the things they were showing us were really awesome . . . as soon as I got back to school, I knew it was something I wanted to do."

- Reflection from a 2nd year Fish and Wildlife Technician studies student about his Grade 4 Field trip to the Tantramar Wetland Centre in Sackville, N.B.

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Photos

DUC staff
Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA)
Credit Valley Conservation (CVC)
Beach Grove Elementary School
Brendan Kelly
Clarence Fulton Secondary School
East Elgin Secondary School
The Strathmore Standard
Tantramar Regional High School and Wetland Centre
Timiskaming Secondary School
The Wallaceburg News.

Thank You

Thank you to the BC Conservation Foundation and its partners for allowing us to adapt sections of their publication, *Leap Into Action! Simple Steps to Environmental Action*®



Wetlands



One of the Most Important Ecosystems on Earth

Wetlands are one of the earth's most productive ecosystems and an essential part of the water cycle upon which all life depends.

- Wetlands rank with tropical rainforests in the diversity and productivity of plants and animals that they support. They are found in every part of the world—except Antarctica.
- Canada has more than 1,270,000 square kilometres (127 million hectares) of wetlands. That's nearly 25 per cent of all the wetlands on Earth!
- Over 600 species of plants and animals live in Canadian wetlands—including more than one-third of Canada's species at risk.
- Mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish and invertebrates use wetlands for food, water, breeding and nesting grounds, resting areas and shelter.
- Wetlands are nature's water filters. Many wetland plants and animals, including microorganisms, remove harmful impurities from our water and keep it clean naturally. Some communities and businesses even use managed wetlands to purify their wastewater.
- Spring runoff and heavy rains can create too much water for the land to absorb. Wetlands can store excess water and slow its flow, reducing the risk and severity of flooding.
- Wetlands release stored water slowly back into the ground—filtering it and purifying. This creates a clean groundwater supply for humans.
- Wetlands are an important source of water for wildlife, plants including crops, and people during droughts or dry spells.
- Wetland plants stabilize the soil, holding it in place and preventing erosion. And they trap sediments helping to create a rich fertile habitat for plants and animals.
- Wetlands on the coasts of lakes and oceans can minimize the impact of waves, currents and even storms that can cause erosion and flooding.
- Wetlands store carbon and other greenhouse gases and reduce their impact on climate change.
- Wetland plants create oxygen.
- Wetlands provide important economic benefits through the **Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S)** they provide. For fact sheets about EG&S and to find out more visit [www.ducks.ca/conservewetland_values/conservewetlandvalues.html](http://www.ducks.ca/conservewetlandvalues/conservewetlandvalues.html)
- Wetlands support biodiversity and are full of life. They make great places to learn about biology and the environment!

Despite these benefits, wetlands are also one of the Earth's most vulnerable and threatened ecosystems. Even in "wetland rich" Canada, wetlands are disappearing at an alarming rate. Seventy per cent or more of wetlands have been lost in settled areas of Canada and more have been damaged. This trend continues across Canada but Ducks Unlimited Canada and others are working to reverse this. Conservation work, based on science, and encouraging governments to implement strong policies for wetland protection are making a difference. PLEASE HELP US IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY.

NEWALTA WETLAND HEROES

Newalta Wetland Heroes supports Ducks Unlimited Canada's (DUC) conservation mission to conserve, restore and manage wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl by encouraging young people to undertake conservation actions.



- **Grade 3 students in BC wrote letters which encouraged politicians to create a new bird nesting area and increase protection for a wetland near a new subdivision.**
- **Grade 4 students wrote their Minister of Conservation asking him to safeguard all of Manitoba's wetlands by enacting a new wetland policy.**
- **The winner of a school poster contest met with the Saskatchewan premier to discuss ways to improve protection for wetlands and wildlife.**
- **Teenagers in Newfoundland and Quebec raised funds for Ducks Unlimited's conservation work in their provinces.**
- **Thousands of secondary school students at DUC-recognized Wetland Centres of Excellence have cleaned up and even created wetlands, installed nest boxes, built boardwalks, banded and studied birds, and shared their enthusiasm and knowledge with younger students as peer teachers.**

These are only a few of the many wonderful young people from across Canada who are undertaking action projects and playing an important role in protecting wetlands for wildlife and people in their local community.

Whether you are one person, a group of friends, a class, club or school, we would like to recognize your efforts. Tell us about your activities and let us acknowledge you as a NEWALTA Wetland Hero.

Use the form included in the **Taking Action!** Guide or email us at project_webfoot@ducks.ca to let us know about your activities. **NEWALTA Wetland Heroes** receive a certificate and special token of our appreciation. Apply for a special \$500 Award of Merit to help with a future conservation or education project. Award of Merit applications are due January 15th each year and winners will be announced on World Wetlands Day, February 2nd.



Ducks Unlimited Canada
Conserving Canada's Wetlands

Benefits of involving students in action projects

Action projects are an effective way to meet the learning expectations for your students and they are proven to be highly motivational to the students that undertake them. As students are continually exposed to the challenges of our modern world, action projects allow them to experience positive changes that they can help to create.

Meets curriculum objectives and integrates diverse subjects

The study of habitats, communities, biodiversity, adaptations and other topics through wetlands are an easy fit for science curriculum. When you extend them to include an action project, students can apply classroom learning to real-world experiences where you can integrate many other subject areas including language arts, social studies, visual arts, environmental studies, technical education, career studies, literacy and numeracy, civics, education for sustainability and other topics.

Empowers students

Taking action shows students that they have the power to create change. Even on small scale projects, they learn how to approach problems in constructive ways and they connect with the ideas and people who are working for positive change.

Job Skills and Career Planning

Organization, planning, presentation skills, letter and report writing, research, and strategizing are only some of the skills that can help students in a future career. They may also develop new, hands-on skills, whether it be mastering computer presentation software, handling money, or learning how to plant a tree. Students may make connections and learn about different careers from the people they encounter during their project.



Even very young students can learn from and take pride in wetland planting projects in their local community.



Older students have the ability to take on bigger projects. They can also be powerful mentors sharing their enthusiasm and knowledge with younger students.

Action projects can also:

- Teach civics and connect students with their community.
- Helps students develop team work and co-operative learning skills.
- Support and showcase different learning styles and skills.
- Allow students to develop, practice and demonstrate their communications skills.



Choosing the right project

Action projects should be age and grade appropriate, corresponding to the student's developmental stage.

Early childhood is a time for simple hands-on experiences that create an emotional bond between the young child and the natural world. They can “take action” by sharing their enthusiasm for wildlife and their wetland homes by:

- writing a poem, story or simple play about animals and their wetland home
- creating a poster or storybook about the wildlife who rely wetlands
- building a diorama of a local wetland and its inhabitants using their own artwork or using some of the 3-D paper animal models provided through our “Wetlands and the World” resources

In the middle elementary years (Grades 4–6)

students are active and aware of issues in the world around them. This is the time to harness their concern about fairness and their desire to take action and solve problems with activities such as:

- constructing nest boxes
- doing a wetland cleanup, or growing and planting native trees and shrubs streamside
- getting involved in a local wetland issue through letter writing
- sharing what they've learned about wetlands and wildlife through special science projects and displays

Older students have more opportunities to organize and physically take on projects of a greater size and scope.

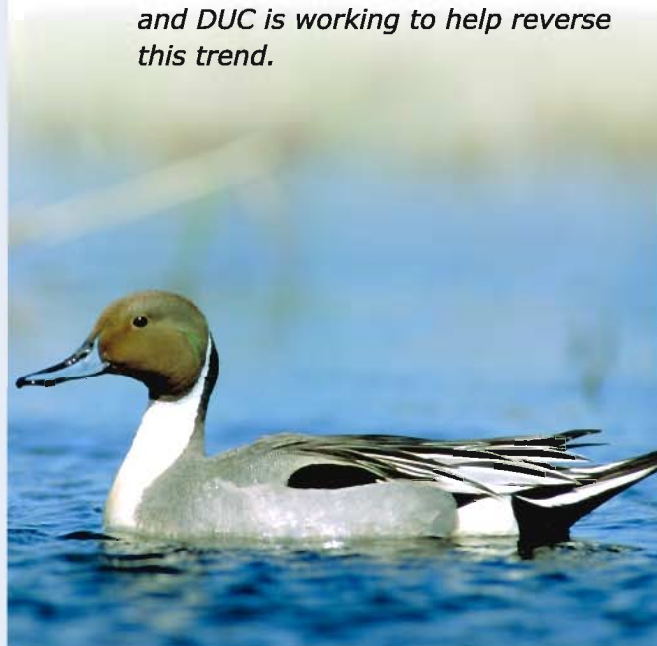
They are more able to carry out projects such as:

- building wetland trails and boardwalks
- working with others to restore a wetland
- researching and planning ways to address a local environmental concern
- seeing the bigger picture relating to policy issues—and addressing these by attending meetings, organizing rallies or taking other actions
- acting as mentors for younger students through such programs as DUC's Wetland Centres of Excellence (see page 25)
- contributing to research through bird banding and other Citizen Science programs (see page 16).

Not everyone has a wetland next door!

But that doesn't mean you and your students can't help protect wetlands and wildlife. You might want to learn about conservation issues in your province. For example,

- Does your province have policy to protect water and wetlands? If not, what could your students do to make a difference? Write letters? Arrange a meeting with decision-makers? Write articles or create a display to inform others?
- What wildlife species in your province depend on wetlands? Are any of these “species at risk” in need of special protection? What projects could your students undertake to help out? *Pictured below, a Northern Pintail. The numbers of this once common duck have been dwindling rapidly and DUC is working to help reverse this trend.*



Other ideas to match the age, skills and interest of your students may be found throughout this book.

Group Action Projects some helpful hints

The Teachers' Role

In an action project the teacher is a facilitator, helping the students to have a positive learning experience.

It should be their project—

- Help them identify an appropriate project for their age, their resources, and the timeframe. Be practical but don't let practicality snuff out the flames of enthusiasm—their passion may take them to unexpected places!

Guide them—

- Help them to plan realistically, using bite-sized manageable pieces where they can see their results.
- Keep their planning and activities on track. Regular updates will ensure this.
- Help them to find and process information, and to critically assess the quality of their information sources!

Coach them—

- Help them explore and practice the skills they need to undertake their project. Are the skills they require out-of-the-ordinary? Many organizations are prepared to share their expertise—especially if your students' efforts will help them address something of importance to them. You may also find advice on-line.
- Your students may encounter challenges as their project progresses and they may not always experience the success they hope for. But they will learn from their experience. Teach them to celebrate their successes—large or small.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of education and helps in assessing one's impact in creating change. No matter the size of the project your students undertake, there are ways to evaluate.

- A project scrapbook or journal (page 8) can be used as an assessment tool for the project.
- The Planning Sheet (pages 9/10) and the form to become a Wetland Hero (pg. 23/24) ask students to state their goals and evaluate for themselves their effectiveness.
- Components of the different projects can be assessed against the related learning expectations or outcomes in your curriculum, such as : "Use a variety of media to present information", "Organize and interpret/analyze information in table/graphs", "Outline progress in meeting short- and long-term goals", "Practice responsible decision-making", "Follow established safety procedures for working with soils and natural materials", "Use appropriate science and technology vocabulary in oral and written communication".
- Check out DUC's website at education.ducks.ca for learning rubrics associated with our educational resources and, if you have developed assessment tools for your own project we would be happy to share them with others through our website.

"Acts of conservation without the requisite skills and desires are futile. To create these desires and skills, and the community motive, is the task of education."

Aldo Leopold, 1944



Taking Action! Getting started...

You've learned about wetlands and now you want to take action! It is easy. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

First, you don't need to reinvent the wheel.

There are examples of projects throughout this booklet and there are plenty of things that need to be done everywhere to conserve wetlands and wildlife.

- Check out our website at education.ducks.ca to learn about our Wetland Heroes and some of the individuals and groups that are making a difference.
- Speak to conservation groups in your community. They can tell you about local issues and you may be able to help with one of their projects. Many are happy to provide advice or help you to start your own project. Some even welcome youth volunteers.

Do your research and know your facts:

Whether you work alone or in a group, and no matter what project you choose, you will need to do research. It is important to know your facts and to be prepared to answer questions about the importance of wetlands and why you have chosen to take action.

Get permission:

If you are doing a project at home, check with your parents first to make sure they agree and understand what it will involve. If you are planning a project at your school make sure your teacher and principal are on-board and if it is an outdoor project - such as a cleanup or tree planting - make sure you have permission from the landowner.

Choosing Your Issue:

Are there plans for draining or filling in a local wetland?

Is it damaged —littered, overgrown with weeds or invasive plants like loosestrife?

Have people dumped larger items such as tires, shopping carts and other things here?

Are chemicals or other pollutants being allowed to seep into it?

Is there a plan to mine peat moss from a local site?

Is a local shoreline or wetland being damaged by such things as people driving ATVs there or cattle wading in the water?

Check with you family, friends and teachers for other issues that you might be able to address.



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

Action Projects the right approach

Organize and Develop a Plan:

Projects work better and are a lot more fun when you're organized. Think about what steps to take, what support you might need, whether you need some expert advice, how long it will take, and so on. The planning sheets on the next pages will help you to get started.

Offer Ideas and Solutions:

It is always easy to say what you are against but this doesn't solve the problem. Learn about the issue and think about the solutions. Look for ways to work together—it is likely you can come up with even better ways to address the challenge!

Follow the "Golden Rule":

Think of how you want to be treated and treat others the same way. How do you feel when someone is rude to you or critical of something you have done? Even if you are telling someone they have done something wrong, be polite and listen to their point of view. Look for solutions that will work for everyone.

How do you eat an elephant?

Answer: One bite at a time! Sometimes when we have really big problems we think we need to fix them all at once. But most problems happen over time with many little steps. The solution may take some time too. Be patient—plan and look for the small steps you can take to solve the problem. And be proud of each success.

If other problems crop up, be patient. Step back and look for a way around them. And, make a note of them—you may not be able to solve them now but they may be a project you want to tackle in the future!



Track Your Efforts

It is always good to be able to share your experiences with others and to learn from what you've done. And your records will help you when you apply to be recognized as one of Ducks Unlimited's "Wetland Heroes" - see pages 23, 24.

Take photographs or video clips. Before and after photos are great—they can show the problem and then the benefits of your efforts.

Keep copies of letters, newspaper articles, blogs, web pages or other things relating to your project.

Create a scrapbook! Include your plan, notes about why you chose this project, outline things that were challenging and how you tackled them. Include photos, drawings and other visual records. And don't forget to include any notes of praise, congratulations or appreciation that you receive.

Keep a Journal. Create a personal journal or one for your whole group or class to use. Write in it regularly. What happened as your project progressed? How did you feel at different times during the project? How did you handle problems? How did you celebrate success?

Your Project Plan Summary

(Use extra pages to develop and detail your plans. Keep all your planning pieces together in a binder or folder so nothing is lost and you can keep your planning on track.)

Group Name:

State the Problem:

Goal: Briefly, what do you want to achieve with your project?

Strategy: Take some time to generate ideas about the ways you might accomplish this. Think about the tasks you need to do, what resources you have (people, money, etc.), how much time you can spend, and the pros and cons of your ideas. Write your top ideas below so you can discuss them with your teacher and decide which one to choose for your action project:

Idea	Pros	Cons

Our Chosen Strategy:

Describe how you will measure your success—in steps or altogether: (e.g. the wetland will be clean and six months later people will still be using the garbage bin we installed; or the mayor will have answered our letter and agreed to meet about our concern to protect the wetland, etc.)

Plan Your Steps

Break down your project into steps and use a calendar to plan your time. Think about the time each task will take and remember that holidays, school events and other things may affect your plans.

Activity	Resources	Responsibility	Target Date

Funding? Do you need money to carry out any parts of your plan? If so, you will need to draw up a budget and list ideas for how you might raise funds. Are there things that people might donate or share to help you out? If you do need to do fundraising you should draw up a plan for this as part of your project.

Sharing your story.

How will you publicize your efforts (in the newspaper, on-line, television, poster?)

How will you share your experience with others? (send it in to DUC's wetlands heroes, write a story for your school paper, other?)

Fundraising

You may need to raise funds to do your project or you may decide that you want to raise money to support a conservation project in your community or to support an organization that is doing valuable work. Here are a few quick ideas to help you:

- Be creative— fun events attract people. How about a “Whacky Waddle for the Ducks” race in your school or selling “Marsh Muffins”. Look around for other fun ideas. Put out a donation box at your event too—people may place extra donations there too!
- If you are asking for funds for a specific project, draw up a budget outlining what you need to spend money on. This lets people know how their money will be spent and they may recognize things that they can donate to save you money (e.g. a local store might provide drinks & snacks, a printer might give you paper for posters or you might receive items for prizes).
- Promote your fundraiser—if it is a school event don't forget the posters, announcements and web postings. How about inviting the media or inviting a special guest to take part?
- Look for organizations that fund school action projects—your project may qualify. You will likely need to submit a proposal—but this is a great skill to learn. Get help from your teacher or another adult.

Create or Take Part in a Special Event

On World Wetlands Day (February 2) students all over the world celebrate the importance of wetlands. In Hong Kong students performed a play to show people how important wetlands are for the foods they provide. Perhaps you could create your own celebration based on one of the Special Dates listed here or you could be involved in an event in your local community.

Many communities host environmental events, community “open houses” or other celebrations and festivals that welcome groups from their communities. Could your group perform a play or create a display to share with others?

Some communities work together to create “water festivals” to celebrate and teach about the importance of water. Could you help with one of these or create your own activity centre? In Ontario, the Children's Water Education Council (www.cwec.ca) links more than 20 of these festivals, and it provides help and a handbook on how to start your own event.

Special Dates

February 2	World Wetlands Day
March 22	World Water Day
April (2nd week)	National Wildlife Week
April 22	Earth Day
May (2nd Saturday)	Migratory Bird Day
May 22	Biodiversity Day
June (1st week)	Canadian Environment Week
September (3rd week)	National Forest Week



Ontario students work on a boardwalk so people can visit a wetland without damaging the sensitive soils and plants. And it will prevent wet feet too!



This Grade 4 French-immersion student won a Silver Medal at the Nova Scotia Science Fair for her project on wetlands.



Fifteen-year-old Jocelyn P. raised funds for DUC's conservation work in Quebec through a posting on the Internet and sales of special "duck pins" to his friends.



Students young and old perform plays and music to share wetland stories and conservation messages.



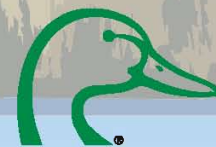
Save our wetlands

June Urbanic, above, makes her statements in favour of returning the wetlands to duck Grade 11 students (right) Gabe Lukone (11) and Taylor Shultz (with help from Tammy LaMoine who also made a presentation, (below) Gregoire Warren (above) the poster and is accompanied by Tessa and Mirna Warren (8) and Kase Diggins in their effort to voice their views at the Wetland public hearing held in the Cambridge Civic Centre May 3.



The Strathmore Standard

Saskatchewan students worked with a local conservation group to provide artwork for interpretive signs at a local wetland.



Ducks Unlimited Canada
Conserving Canada's Wetlands

Ideas



Toronto students grow plants to help the local conservation authority's planting program for local wetlands.



Students sometimes work with local Ducks Unlimited volunteers to install nest boxes or help with other conservation projects.



Delta, BC students from Beach Grove Elementary School studied the nearby intertidal mudflats and eelgrass habitats of Boundary Bay and hosted classes from other schools as part of "Beach School".

A local paper reports on the efforts of Alberta students to support the concerns of their local community and speak out for wetland protection.



These grade 7 and 8 Manitoba students are in the first stages of creating a new wetland next to their school. They are transplanting marsh plants to add food and cover for wildlife. The wetland will help to purify the school's greywater and create an outdoor classroom.



Each year students in the Environmental Leadership Program at East Elgin Secondary School in Ontario offer a wetland field day to dozens of local grade 4 classes.

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



Tantramar Regional High School is situated in the heart of the world-famous Tantramar 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.

Help Researchers Learn More About Wetlands

You may be able to do your own science-based research and share your data with researchers. Below are a few examples that might interest you:

Citizen science programs such as FrogWatch, Turtle Tally and the Marsh Monitoring Program, are chances to study wildlife right in your own community. Your data will be used by researchers to understand more about biodiversity, the impacts of climate change, species at risk and other important issues. Your class or group can take part or you can participate on your own. To learn more about these programs connect with:

- www.naturewatch.ca - FrogWatch, WormWatch, PlantWatch and IceWatch.
- www.bsc-eoc.org/mmpmain.html - Bird Studies Canada oversees a "Marsh Monitoring Program" which includes different studies that are done several times each year in the same place.
- www.torontozoo.com/AdoptAPond - the Adopt-A-Pond Program links you to Ontario's Turtle Tally and Wetland Guardians programs, as well as to Frogwatch.

Bird banding is carried out by secondary students at some of Ducks Unlimited's Wetland Centres of Excellence and the information is then made available to researchers across North America through computer databases.

Bird banding can only be done with someone who is specially trained and licensed to do this. Sometimes elementary students can take part in special banding programs. For more information on banding, visit education.ducks.ca.



Secondary school students monitor water quality in a wetland behind their school.

Older students help biologists to study the numbers and kinds of fish in a wetland stream (right). There may be similar opportunities in your community.



Connect with People to Create Change

"The care of rivers is not a question of rivers, but of the human heart."

Tanaka Shozo
(1841- 1913), Japanese politician
and conservationist

People are a powerful force to correct or prevent environmental problems.

Sometimes they may not be aware of an issue but there are ways that you can be heard.

Write a Letter or Arrange a Meeting with the decision-makers. They need to know your concerns and hear about your ideas to deal with the challenge.

Organize a Petition to be signed by other people who share your concern.

Approach the Media or Get Your Message Out On-Line to reach more people.

Who should you contact?

If you are writing a letter, organizing a petition or want to meet with someone with the power to help you create change, you will need to do research. Whatever your project you need to connect with the right person and address them directly. A few leads—

- For a project in your community — a wetland clean-up, conserving a local wetland or wildlife habitat — a local politician, like a councilor or mayor, may be able to provide support or help
- For a bigger issue, such as the conservation of wildlife or wetlands in your province — contact the head of one of the provincial government ministries involved or even the premier. The students on page 19 chose to write their Minister of Conservation to ask him to protect Manitoba's wetlands.
- Members of the media—newspapers, television, radio - can help you get your message out. See page 21 for more about how to reach them.

Visit the **Wetland Heroes** section of Ducks Unlimited Canada's education website education.ducks.ca for names and addresses of who you can contact in your province.



Tanya V., a Grade 5 Saskatchewan student, presented her prize-winning speech to her Premier. Her ideas for protecting the province's valuable wetlands included tax breaks for farmers who protect wetlands, hiring of more conservation officers and supporting student conservation volunteers.

Steps for writing a letter

Texting and emails are great tools but letters have a higher impact. They can let people know what you think, be used to gain support for an idea or provide an important thank you to a person or group that have helped you.

- Plan your letter. What do you want to say? What are your key points? What do you want the reader to do after they have read your letter?
- Write a draft letter first. Read it to make sure your points are clear. This is a good time to double-check your spelling and check for errors.
- Include the date, and your name and mailing address so the person can answer you.
- Write to a specific person and include their name, title and their address at the top of the letter.
- Type or write neatly.
- Be polite and be personal—let them know why you are concerned, or why they should help you or why you really appreciate what they have done for you. And, use your own words. The letter is from you!
- If you are asking them to support you or to take some action, make sure you tell them exactly what you want them to do and why.
- Make sure to sign your letter—and if it is a letter from a group, all of you should sign it.
- When you mail it, make sure it has the proper postage and keep a copy for your records. And, if you would like, please share your letter with us to show us what you are doing. We would be happy to receive a copy of it (see our Wetland Heroes form on page 19-20).



Your Letters Have Power!

A Mayor in BC sent a letter to a Grade 3 class telling them that their letters resulted in more protection of bird nesting areas and that "with these letters fresh in our memory" the local Council increased the protection for a wetland located near a proposed new housing development.



Hampstead School
 920 Hampstead Avenue
 Winnipeg, Manitoba R2K 2A3

February 12, 2010

The Honourable Bill Blaikie
 Minister of Conservation
 330 Legislative Building
 450 Broadway
 Winnipeg, MB R3C 0VA

Dear Minister Blaikie:

We are the Grade 4 students at Hampstead School in Winnipeg and we are writing you this letter to tell you about something we care about. We are part of Project Webfoot at Ducks Unlimited Canada. As members our teacher gets lots of resources to use in class and we each get a book about wetlands called Marsh World, but the best thing of all was going on a field trip to Oak Hammock Marsh!

We had a fantastic time at the marsh! One of our favourite activities was Critter Dipping. We used nets and buckets to catch some of the creatures that in the "wet" part of the wetland. We caught some really cool critters including; water scorpions, water mites, sideswimmers, snails, water boatmen, leeches and even some stickleback minnows. On our walk on the trails around the marsh we saw a brown, lumpy toad, lots of ground squirrels, huge, honking flocks of geese, a 13-lined ground squirrel and some fuzzy woolly-bear caterpillars. There were signs of life everywhere we looked!

We think wetlands are important for animals, plants and people. We learned that wetlands help to clean and filter water and that they act like a gigantic sponge, holding onto water and letting it go more slowly. This helps to stop flooding and protects peoples' homes from being wrecked. Marshes are homes for many different wetland creatures too! Also, many species of animals need wetlands for feeding, drinking, raising their babies, shelter and as resting places during migration.

We think that all wetlands in Manitoba should be protected. We hope that as the Minister of Conservation you can help by making sure that you protect the wetlands we still have left. We thank you for supporting Oak Hammock Marsh and we would like you to use our parents' tax money to create more places like Oak Hammock. Thank you for taking the time to read our letter. We appreciate all the work you are doing for us. Please help to protect our wetlands and other wild places!

Sincerely,

Grade 4 students at Hampstead School

Jeremiah
 Athia
 Carson
 Trudora
 Ivory
 Kaiten
 Jacob
 Noah
 Paloma
 Wiana
 Robbie
 Poonam
 Adam
 Hunter
 Kyle
 Stefan
 Braden



**Your letters let people know
 your opinions and remind adults
 that they need to think about your future.**



Organize a Petition

If you want to show that your issue is important to a LOT of people you may want to organize a petition—a simple statement signed by people who share your concern. Your petition should:

Include a short title stating your concerns:

Petition to build a boardwalk in the Smith Wetland

State your purpose with a few brief facts:

Over 2,500+ visitors that walk through the wetland each spring damaging its sensitive soils.

Students at 6 local schools want to use the wetland as an outdoor classroom but worry about creating more damage.

Over 20 different birds and other animals live here, and thousands of birds use it during migration.

Get Your Message Out On-Line



In New Brunswick, Tantramar Secondary School students maintain a website about their amazing wetland program. In 2009 Maclean's magazine carried an article "Wetheads—great ambassadors for marsh conservation." Check out their website at www.weted.com to learn more.

State what action you want to see happen.

We want the city to reverse its decision and build this boardwalk as proposed by the Parks Dept. staff.

Provide plenty of space for people to sign it with their name, address and phone number.

Keep a copy of the signed petition for your records.

Getting the signatures!

Collect them at school, at a local store or mall (with their permission, of course) or even online. Are there other places where you can find people who share your concern?

Set Up a Meeting

For some issues you may want to discuss your ideas or to present your petition to a decision-maker in-person. Your town or city website may give you ideas on who to speak to. You may even be able to present your issue at a council meeting. Sometimes these meetings can be a chance to invite a local reporter to get your message out to others.

Inspire others or gain support by reaching out through the Internet.

- Setup a Facebook group or create a blog
- Share your photos or post a video telling a story about your local wetland or addressing an issue of concern.
- Create an on-line survey or petition to show that other people share your concern.

Remember Internet Safety and respect others!

Check with an adult before you start any Internet project and ask them to help you decide what should or shouldn't be posted on-line.

Always be careful what you post and never put up anyone's picture without their permission.

Connecting with Media

Media—newspapers, magazines, television, radio - can help you to get your message out. They can promote or cover your events, tell people about your concerns and get other people involved.

- Local newspapers, television and radio stations welcome stories about local people and local happenings. Let them know about your event or issue through a media release (see below).
- Some newspapers may print student-written articles that they think will be of interest to their readers.
- Public Service Announcements or PSAs are free advertisements for upcoming events. If you are planning a free wetland education day at your school or a fundraising event for your project, this is one way to get information out.
- Letters to the editor are published in many newspapers. If you are concerned about a specific issue, especially one that's in the news, a short letter to the editor may help to get your opinion out to others.

Writing a Catchy Media Release!

The media receive LOTS of messages every day from people who want them to cover their stories too. It takes a well-written media release and effort to make sure your event stands out. Your release needs to be interesting, brief and contain all the important facts.

- Capture their attention with a catchy title that sums up your event. "Students meet with mayor to present their plan to save a local wetland." "Grade 8 students roll up their sleeves to cleanup local wetland."
- Answers to basics—the five "W"s—Who? What? When? Where? And Why? They need to know what's happening, who you are, why you are doing it and when and where the event will take place.
- Make sure your information is clear and to the point. Always provide a contact name—a student or teacher they can reach and include their daytime phone number and an email address.

Who to Contact:

Ask your teacher, family and friends what newspapers they read. All newspapers include their contact information and provide it on their website. You will want to contact their editorial department. Some larger papers may have special editors for education, life, or community. Checking the stories in these sections will give you an idea of who might be interested in yours.

Local cable television networks and local news shows are good ways to get coverage for your events or to get your story out. They may send someone out to film your event or they may even invite one of you into their studio to tell your story.

Do some of the people you know read a paper or listen to radio or television in another language? Don't forget these—they might be interested in your story too.

The Roberta Stewart Ducks Unlimited Conservation Area was the site of a recent field trip for Wallaceburg District Secondary School Grade 10 students. The area is teeming with wildlife, including nesting black birds (above), frogs (left inset) and turtles (right inset).

Students test the waters of wetlands conservation

Photos and story by Kristen Charron

Grade 10 students traveled closely to "department beyond" the confines of a classroom. A group of 40 students from Wallaceburg District Secondary School spent the water at the Roberta Stewart Ducks Unlimited Conservation Area and learned the significance of wetlands.

"Wetlands are the wetland as a nesting area for waterfowl and other birds," said David Randall, Ducks Unlimited's wildlife habitat specialist for south-western Ontario. "In the past, wetlands contained approximately 50 per cent of the water in the province."

As water begins to evaporate, the water level recedes. "You lose quite a bit of water to evaporation as we just sit in it," Randall said.

During their hour of the wetland, students filed out questions about what they were learning.

Male water, a species from Europe, have caused a lot of problems at a number of wetlands in southwestern Ontario. The birds were brought to Canada as an attempt to control the pest. Randall said.

"We have to try and manage to keep them in the best shape we can," Randall said.

He pointed out that there is no way to get rid of the animals because they are a protected species, despite the problems they are causing here.

"People like them because they are pretty," he said.

However, he pointed out the importance of properly managing the low marsh areas.

"We have to try and manage to keep them in the best shape we can," Randall said.

He said the animal is not common in the area. The students spent a portion of their time in the marsh testing the water for dissolved oxygen—a critical indicator of healthy ecosystems—streams, and lakes and rivers.

"It shows the condition of the water. If it's too cloudy, the fish can't breathe. If there isn't any dissolved oxygen, the fish will get attacked by parasites. It has to be just right."

Charron is also a volunteer of wetlands into the water.

Let's see the purpose of the field trip was to teach the importance of wetlands.

"It's not just about the water. It's about the life that lives in it. We know that there are a lot of people who don't realize there are areas close by that they have to do better. A lot of them think wetlands are just some mud and grass. It's important that we have to go to the location and try to understand what's going on."

Charron said she is excited to work about nature.

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ABOVE: WISS Grade 10 student Dave Nahler tests the water at the Roberta Stewart Wildlife Conservation Area. Approximately 50 Wallaceburg District Secondary School

Wrapping Up Your Project

Share your story with others:

- Invite people to an Open House or for a tour of your project. Should you have an official ribbon-cutting ceremony and invite someone special?
- Display your work—at school or a local mall
- Send a media release or a story to your local paper to let them know what you have accomplished!
- Take time to write a short summary about your project, what you did, who was involved to share with others and let Ducks Unlimited know about your project by completing our Wetland Heroes form.

Thank those who helped you or who supported your efforts. Make sure to let them know the outcome of your efforts and, if you are moving on to a new project, let them know that too.

Celebrate! Reward yourself for a job well-done.

These Manitoba students' thank you included presenting their framed drawings to a sponsor during a pizza party lunch.



Next Steps! What are your plans to keep things going?

- Did you plan for the future of your project? Some projects will be finished when you do your wrap-up while others may need to continue. What can you do to make sure your good work continues? Will your class, school or community make it an annual event? Will someone continue to care for the wetland when you move on? Think about what things you can do to make sure this happens.
- Did you accomplish everything you wanted to? If not, are there more things that you need to do to make the most impact with your wetland project? If so, start to think about the next steps you may want to take either now or sometime in the near future.
- Now that you have taken on an action project what will you do next? Did you learn about other things that need to be done?

Taking simple actions to change the world for the better can become a habit and your enthusiasm can spread to others! So share your story and your experiences!

Share your experience with DUCKS and become a Wetland Hero!

Mail, fax or email these pages to:
Education Department
Ducks Unlimited Canada
c/o Oak Hammock Marsh Conservation
P.O. Box 1160
Stonewall, MB R0C 2Z0

FAX: 1-204-467-9028
Email: project_webfoot@ducks.ca

Project Title: _____

Briefly describe your project: (short, 2 to 3 sentences)

Start date: _____ **Is your project:** completed or on-going?

Who took part?

Individual Group/Club Class School
 Other _____

Names of members of your group or organizations that worked together:

This program encourages elementary/secondary teachers and students to undertake action projects to conserve wetlands and related habitats. Activities include, but are not limited to, the kinds of projects in DUC's "Taking Action" book or on its website.

The personal information shared on this application will be used only by DUC to process this information and contact you.

Contact Information: (a person we can speak to if we have questions or want to learn more)

Name

Address

Community/Town/City

Province/Territory

Postal Code

Email Address

Daytime Phone Number

Project Results: (Please attach extra pages if you need to)

1. Why did you choose this project and how do you hope it will help (e.g. protect wetlands, conserve wildlife; help you, your school or your community; help the conservation efforts of Ducks Unlimited Canada or others in your community)?

2. What are some of the positive results of your efforts? What are you most proud of?

3. Did you encounter problems? What were they and how did you overcome them?

4. How did you celebrate your project and your success?

We would love to know more about your project! Feel free to send copies of photos, stories or letters you have written, newspaper articles, direct us to a website or include other things you think will help us to understand your project! We may publish your story on our website or in our Conservator magazine!

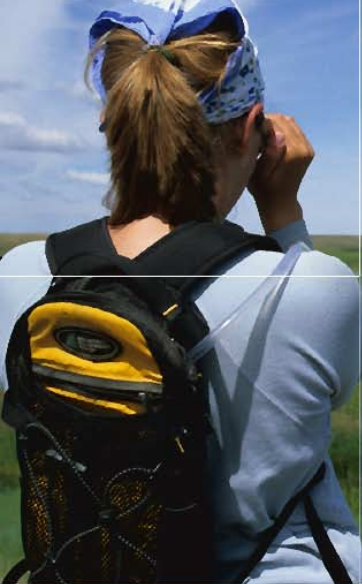
Award of Merit You could win \$500 toward your next project!

Do you have a new project that you would like us to consider for the 'Award of Merit'? Each year, we select outstanding **NEWALTA Wetland Heroes** for special recognition. These Heroes receive a financial award (\$500) to continue their work or studies relating to wetland conservation. Award winners will be asked to provide a video report when they complete their project.

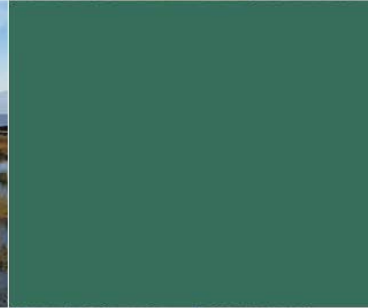
1. Briefly describe your new idea.

2. How do you hope it will help wetland conservation?

3. How would the \$500 award be used in your project? Provide a simple budget.



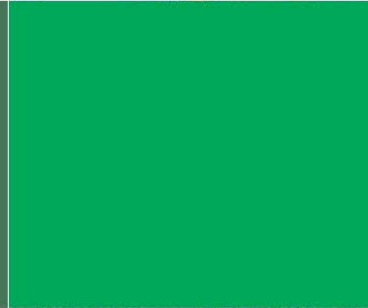
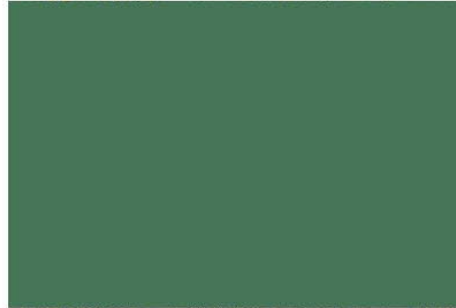
**Ducks Unlimited Canada
conservation efforts take
many forms.**



**DUC conducts research
to guide its on-the-
ground conservation
efforts.**



**DUC works with
governments and other
groups to change policy
in favour of wetland and
habitat conservation.**



**DUC has programs to
encourage landowners to
manage their lands in
ways that benefit them
while conserving
wetlands and creating
habitats more favourable
to wildlife.**

**DUC delivers wetland
and environmental
education programs to
teach Canadians about
wetlands and the need to
conserve them.**



**We encourage you and
your students to help us in
our conservation efforts.**

