



Term 1, Lesson 3

Flora & Fauna

Learning Objectives:

1. Define flora and fauna;
2. Research different flora and fauna in the wetland environment;
3. Demonstrate knowledge by presenting findings to the class.



What are flora and fauna?



Flora - plants



Fauna - animals

Scientific name - the taxonomic name of the organism. It includes the genus and species and is mainly used by scientists.

Common name - the name of an organism generally used by the community.

Freshwater Flora

Submerged vegetation: consists of plants that grow entirely or partially underwater. Some species may have floating leaves and flowers.

Example -

Red Water-Milfoil (*Myriophyllum verrucosum*): native submerged plant. The stem can grow up to 4m long and has feathery-like leaves. The species can be green to purple in colour.



Freshwater Flora

Emergent plants: consists of plants rooted in the substrate underwater but with their stems and leaves extending above the water surface. These plants are often found along the edges of water bodies.

Example -

Southern Cattail (*Typha domingensis*):

commonly grows along the waters edge.

Cattails have tall rigid reeds, with flowers in a cylindrical brown-fluffy spike.



Freshwater Flora

Riparian (fringing) plants: vegetation that grows along the margins of water bodies, including the banks of rivers, lakeshores, and wetland edges.

Example -

Paperbarks (*Melaleuca* spp.): commonly found in swampy areas, paperbarks have spongy, paper-like bark.



Freshwater Fauna

Amphibians: Many amphibians rely on wetlands for breeding. They lay their eggs in water or in moist areas near water bodies. Wetlands provide a safe and suitable habitat for their eggs to develop into tadpoles and eventually metamorphose into adult frogs.

Example -

Green and Golden Bell Frog (*Litoria aurea*): the species has a bright green back with gold patches. The Green and Golden Bell Frog has experienced severe declines due to amphibian chytrid fungus.



Freshwater Fauna

Freshwater fish: Freshwater fish use wetlands for breeding, shelter and feeding.

Example -

Murray Cod (*Maccullochella peelii*): a large predatory freshwater fish found in slow flowing rivers, creeks and streams of the Murray-Darling Basin. The species is highly territorial and aggressive towards other fish.



Freshwater Fauna

Monotremes: Monotremes (i.e. platypus and echidna) are a group of specialised mammals that lay eggs and have no teats. Pores on the females belly secrete milk for their young.

Example -

Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*):

the platypus has a leathery beak that is used to sift through substrate for invertebrates. Platypus burrow in the banks of rivers, creeks and ponds and may burrow under the roots of riparian vegetation.



Freshwater Fauna

Reptiles: Reptiles are cold-blooded (ectothermic) vertebrates that use external sources (i.e. the sun) to regulate their body temperature. Reptiles such as freshwater turtles may spend most of their life in wetland environments, while others such as snakes may search for food around wetlands but otherwise spend their lives on land.

Example -

Eastern long-neck turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*): lives in freshwater environments and is known for making overland movements in search of new habitat.



Freshwater Fauna

Waterbirds: Wetland environments provide breeding grounds, food sources, migration stopovers, roosting sites and protection for waterbirds.

Example -

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*): the little egret is a species of small heron. It feeds in both shallow water and on land. In shallow water, it shuffles its foot to stir up aquatic prey.



Classroom Activities

Activity 1 -

Cut out the pictures of flora and fauna.

Assign each picture to a category (either flora or fauna) in the worksheet.



Classroom Activities

Activity 2 -

Research one plant and one animal at your local wetland.

Identify:

- The species common name and scientific name;
- The habitat the species is found in;
- A description of the species;
- The role of the species in the ecosystem.

