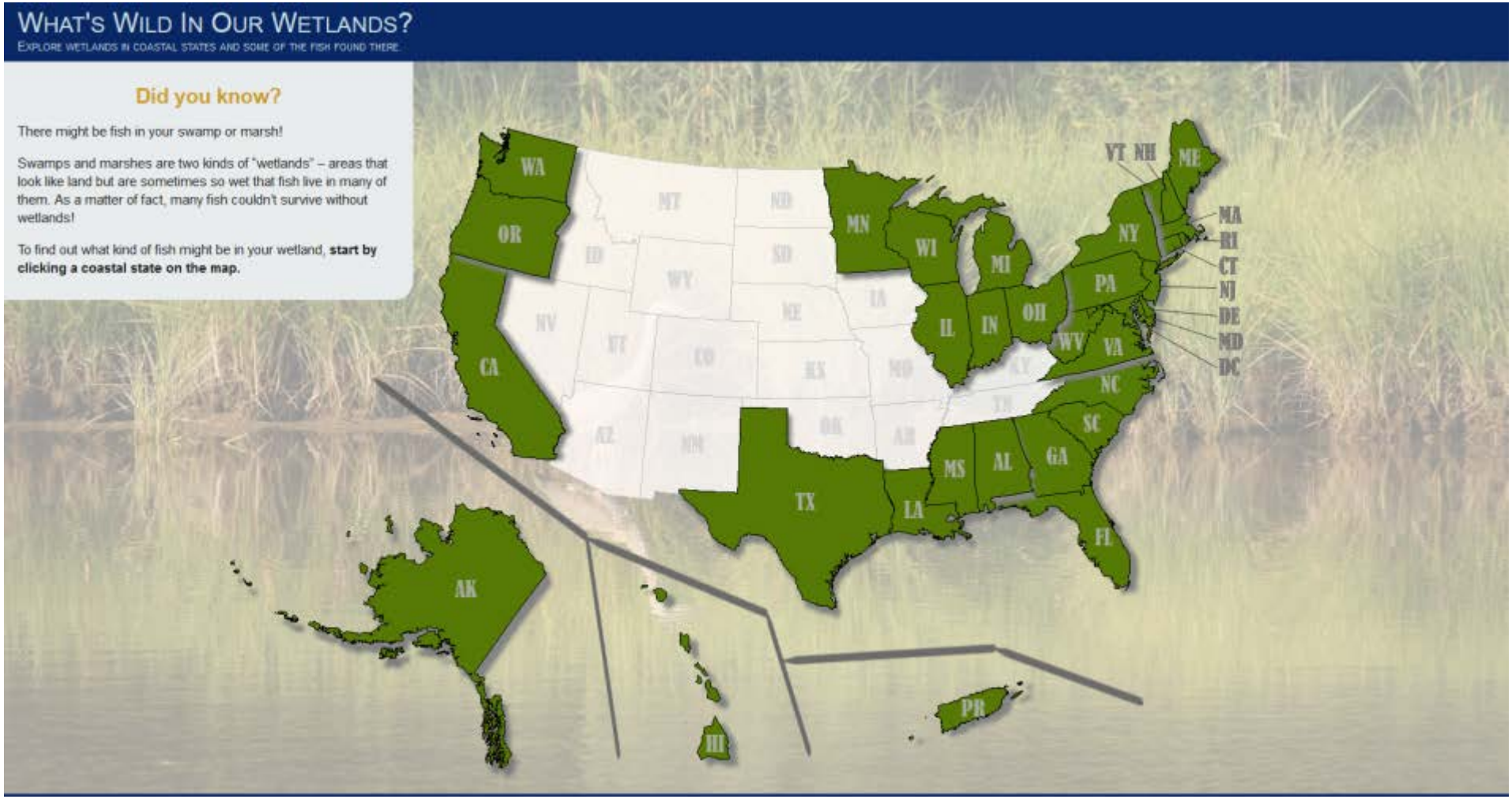
http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/protection/wetlands/wild-in-our-wetlands/index.html



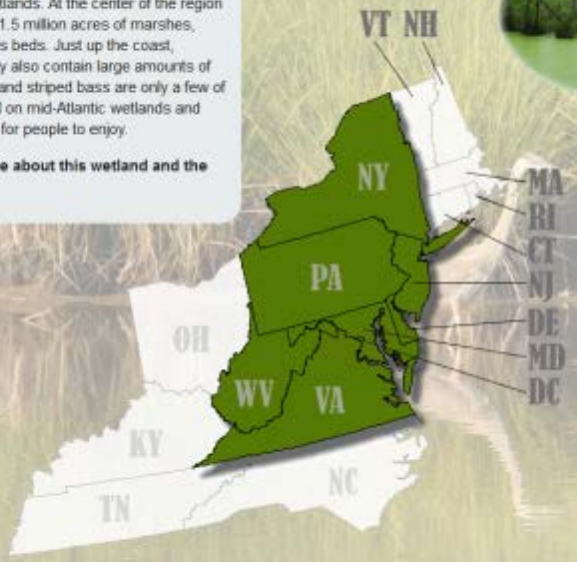
What's Wild In Our Wetlands?

Explore wetlands in coastal states and some of the fish found there.

Wetlands in the Mid-Atlantic

Wetlands in the mid-Atlantic region are an important resource not only to local residents, but also to others who eat or use products produced by these wetlands. At the center of the region is the Chesapeake Bay with its 1.5 million acres of marshes, forested wetlands, and seagrass beds. Just up the coast, Delaware Bay and Barnegat Bay also contain large amounts of wetlands. Oysters, blue crabs, and striped bass are only a few of the diverse species that depend on mid-Atlantic wetlands and are shipped all over the country for people to enjoy.

Click the bubble to learn more about this wetland and the fish that can be found there.



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Mid-Atlantic Saltmarsh

Saltmarsh is the second most common type of wetland in the mid-Atlantic area (after forested wetlands). It is dominated by salt-tolerant grasses such as saltmarsh cordgrass (Spartina alterniflora), salt hay (Spartina patens), giant cordgrass (Spartina cynosuroides), and saltgrass (Disticulus spicata). These grasses provide abundant organic material that is eaten by a wide range of organisms such as bacteria and crabs, making them one of the most productive ecosystems in the world. They also furnish a safe place for young fish to hide from predators and grow to maturity, filter pollutants out of runoff that would otherwise go into the ocean, and protect shorelines from erosion.

Fish Fun Facts

Atlantic croaker

Named for the loud "croaking" sound it makes during mating season, these are popular sport fish. Young croakers hide from predators in seagrass beds and saltmarshes.

Atlantic menhaden

A type of herring, menhaden are small fish that swim in large schools and are an important source of fish oil and fish meal. Young menhaden hide in saltmarshes.

Blue crab

Their scientific name means "tasty beautiful swimmer" and they are very popular eating. Blue crabs thrive in seagrass beds and coastal marshes eating everything from fish and shellfish to insects.

Mummichog

Mummichog, which live in saltwater marshes and tidal creeks, can breathe air when out of water.

Spot

A sweet saltwater panfish popular with bridge and pier anglers; travels in schools; has notable black spot behind its gills.

Summer flounder

The summer flounder is left-handed; that is, it lies on the bottom on its right side, with its eyes on its left-hand side. It can change colors to blend in with its surroundings.

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Mid-Atlantic Fresh Marsh

Freshwater marshes are particularly common in the mid-Atlantic coastal region. Unlike saltmarshes, where plant life is limited to species that can tolerate higher concentrations of salt, freshwater marshes often have many different species. Common plants include arrow arum (Peltandra virginica), pickerel weed (Pontederia cordata), wild rice (Zizania aquatica), marsh hibiscus (Hibiscus moscheuto), beggar's ticks (Bidens frondosa), and swamp milkweed (Asclepias incarnate). Some fresh marshes, especially in disturbed areas, are dominated by cattails (Typha latifolia and Typha angustifolia). Freshwater marshes around ponds are often nesting areas for small fish and feeding areas for larger fish. Tidal freshwater marshes are particularly productive because they receive organic material from both rivers and the ocean, and they are important resting places for migrating fish.

Fish Fun Facts

Alewife

People eat this small fish smoked, dried and salted, and fried; but it is enjoyed fresh by lobster and salmon. Also known as the blueback herring.

American eel

All American eels are born in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean in the Sargasso Sea. Currents carry them to the coast where they swim up rivers, hiding in wetlands and changing color from transparent to brown to yellow to silver.

Blueback herring

Also known as river herring and related to alewives. Migrates from ocean to freshwater to reproduce, sometimes spawning in wetlands adjacent to streams.

Largemouth bass

Popular freshwater sport fish reaching 17 lbs. Males create nests and guard eggs, young fish feed and hide in wetlands. Adults eat fish, crustaceans and large insects.

Silver perch

Popular drum fish in shallow bay grass waters, but juveniles move upstream to fresh water; may make a loud drumming or croaking sound.

Striped bass

Once overfished, now sustainable--a great sport fish (or "Rockfish") living 30 years. Adults migrate to the sea, and spawn each spring in coastal estuaries.

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Great Lakes Fresh Marsh

Great Lakes marshes occur along all of the Great Lakes and their connecting rivers, including the Detroit, St. Clair, and St. Mary's Rivers. They include wet meadows and emergent marsh. Wet meadows are dominated by grasses such as blue joint grass (Calamagrostis canadensis), water hemlock (Cicuta spp.), and various sedges (Carex spp.). Emergent marshes are typically covered with shallow water most years, but can emerge when water levels become low. Common emergent marsh plants include bulrushes (Scirpus spp. and Schoenoplectus spp.), spike-rushes (Eleocharis spp.), rushes (Juncus spp.), and cattails (Typha spp.). Fish are most common in emergent marshes, where the plants help small fish hide from predators.

Fish Fun Facts

Bluegill

Also called "sunnies" and "panfish." They feed and reproduce in weedy habitat of lakes, ponds, and slow-moving rivers.

Minnows

Very small freshwater fish with teeth in their throat. Food for larger fish. Bait for sportfish. Avoids predators with shoaling and schooling behavior.

Muskellunge

This large fish can weigh as much as 64 pounds and eat ducklings.

Northern Pike

An agressive large fish, its scientific name means "pitiless water-wolf". They will eat small frogs as well as fish, even other pike. They need marshes for spawining and as places for the young fish to hide.

White Bass

This fish, popular to catch and eat, spawns by broadcasting up to half a million eggs in shallow water that settle on the bottom.

Yellow Bullhead

This tasty fish has no scales, but has chin whiskers covered in taste buds that help it scavenge for food.

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Pacific Northwest Seagrass

Eelgrass (Zostera marina) is the most common of the six species of seagrass that occur in the Pacific Northwest. In places like Puget Sound, Coos Bay, and other embayments along the northwest Pacific coast it forms beds and meadows that provide refuge and food for juvenile fish. They are also havens for crabs, scallops, and other numerous species of marine life. Eelgrass improves water clarity by filtering polluted runoff and by absorbing excess nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, keeping the aquatic system in balance and storing the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide. Eelgrass also protects the shoreline from erosion by absorbing wave energy.

Fish Fun Facts

Chum salmon

Also known as dog salmon, they have the longest migration of any Pacific salmon. Juveniles move quickly to the ocean, feeding in wetlands along the way. Years later they return to the same stream they were born in to spawn.

Dungeness crab

Prized seafood found walking sideways in and near seagrass beds. Named for the Port of Dungeness in Washington and the official "state crustacean" of Oregon.

English sole

A right-eyed (both eyes on the right side of the body) diamond-shaped flatfish. Adults live in shoreline muddy estuaries while juveniles hids in seagrass and salt marshes.

Lingcod

Fine eating fish. Commercially caught, also spearfished. Large protruding mouth, canine-like teeth. Voracious bottom dwellers in reefs and kelp beds.

Pacific tomcod

One of the smaller members of the cod family reaching a maximum size of 12 inches. They feed in seagrass beds on smaller fish and shrimp, and in turn are an important food source for seals, sea lions, and other larger fish.

Rockfish

Female rockfish give birth to live young, and some individuals can live for as long as 100 years.

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Alaska Saltmarsh

The steep coastal topography and heavy wave action of the Alaska coast make it an inhospitable place for saltmarshes, so it is not surprising that saltmarshes make up less than one percent of the wetlands in Alaska. They typically occur on or near low-energy, nearly level shores close to the mouths of rivers or behind barrier islands and beaches. Several large saltmarsh areas thousands of acres in size occur along Alaska's coastal zone, such as the Copper River Delta and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Common plants in Alaska saltmarshes include hairgrass (Deschampsia spp.), Pacific silverweed (Potentilla egedii), pickelweed (Salicornia europaea), and sea milkwort (Glaux maritima). Salt marshes also provide spawning and nursery habitat for many marine invertebrates and fish.

Fish Fun Facts

Chinook salmon

Also known as king salmon, it is the largest Pacific salmon. Young salmon spend up to 2 years in streams, bays, and wetlands before moving out to the sea. Years later they return to the same stream they were born in to spawn.

Chum salmon

Also known as dog salmon, they have the longest migration of any Pacific salmon. Juveniles move quickly to the ocean, feeding in wetlands along the way. Years later they return to the same stream they were born in to spawn.

Coho salmon

Also known as silver salmon. Young salmon spend up to 2 years in streams and estuaries and their wetlands before moving out to the sea. Years later they return to the same stream they were born in to spawn.

Dungeness crab

Prized seafood found walking sideways in and near seagrass beds. Named for the Port of Dungeness in Washington and the official "state crustacean" of Oregon.

Starry flounder

A master of hide-and-seek, this sneaky fish can change its coloration to blend in with the bottom.

Threespine stickleback

Populations of this fish from different areas can look so unlike one another that people might think they aren't the same species. Instead of scales, this fish has spines and bony plates.

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The Hawaiian Islands Seagrass

In Hawaii there are two kinds of seagrass, Hawaiian seagrass (Halophila hawaiiana), which is found only in Hawaii, and paddlegrass (Halophila decipiens), which is found in many parts of the world. Rather than having long flat blades like many other seagrasses, Hawaiian seagrass has small canoe paddle-like blades only an inch or so long. Seagrasses grow in muddy or sandy areas protected from waves, forming living green carpets. They are important food for the green sea turtle and provide protection and food to a variety of aquatic life.

Fish Fun Facts

Bandtail goatfish

Also known as the "weke pueo" (in Hawaiian), "obake" (in Japanese) weke, or nightmare weke, this fish has chemicals in its head which, if eaten, have been know to cause hallucinations.

Hawaiian green sea turtle

"honu" in Hawaiian feeds on seagrass as one of its primary sources of food.

Longjaw bonefish

"`o`io " in Hawaiian frequent seagrass beds in search of crabs, shrimp, and shellfish that live in and around seagrass. Hawaiian bonefish are world renown by fishers for their strong fight and large size.

Spotted seahorse

These rare Hawaiian fish live in seagrasses, feeding on tiny animals called zooplankton. Males are pregnant, carrying the eggs in a brood pouch which is found under the tail.

Yellowstripe goatfish

The adult fish is weke`a in Hawaiian and the juveniles are "oama". The "oama" fishery is one of the few fisheries in Hawaii where fishers specifically try to catch juvenile fish to eat.

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What You Can Do

10 Things You Can Do for Coastal Wetlands

- Participate in programs that help protect and restore wetlands. Contact your local, state or federal agencies, community groups, environmental organizations or a non-government organization.
- Report illegal activity such as filling, clearing, or dumping in wetlands to government authorities, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Pick up all litter and dispose in appropriate trash containers. Keep surface areas that wash into storm drains clean of pet feces, toxic chemicals, fertilizers, and motor oil, which eventually reach and impair our wetlands.
- Plant only native species of trees, shrubs, and flowers to preserve the ecological balance of local wetlands.
- Use "living shoreline" techniques that make use of plant roots to stabilize soil if you own waterfront property and your shoreline or riverbank needs to be stabilized.
- Avoid wetlands if you are expanding your home or installing a shed.
- Use phosphate-free laundry and dishwasher detergents. Phosphates encourage algae growth, which can suffocate aquatic life.
- Use paper and recycled products made from unbleached paper. Bleached paper contains toxic chemicals that can contaminate water.
- Use non-toxic products for household cleaning, lawn and garden care. Never spray lawn or garden chemicals on a windy or rainy day, as they will wash into the waterways.
- Reduce, reuse and recycle household items and waste.

Useful Links

Status and Trends of Wetlands in the Conterminous United States 2004-2009

National Wetlands Reserve Program for landowners