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# LITERATURE CONNECTIONS FOR WETLANDS

**Note on grade levels: A range of grade levels is usually given, to reflect both interest level and reading level. Most books can be enjoyed by a wide age range, although younger children must be read to while older children can read alone.**

*Arthur, Alex. Shell. Knopf, 1989. (Eyewitness Book). All ages.*

As is true of other Eyewitness books, the photographs are truly amazing: clear and close-up, all the details of structure are clearly shown, including interior views if those are what is notable about the particular shell. Shelled creatures shown range from tiny snails to large lobsters and turtles; objects made from shells, ways in which shell shapes and patterns aid in camouflage, and fossil shells are all presented. Shelled animals which are successfully adapted to freshwater and estuary life are included, such as some crabs, crayfish, and river snails. The text consists mainly of one-paragraph captions explaining the photographs, and the extremely small typeface as well as the vocabulary appear intended for adult reading. However, children of all ages will find their curiosity stimulated by the photographs, and teachers can easily explain the meaning of the captions.

*Becvar, Patsy. A Woman Who Cared. Nystrom, 1992. [kit]. Gr. 1-3.*

As a young girl and her father watch people working to clean up an oil spill on a beach, the girl tells the story of Rachel Carson and her work to save the environment. This is a very simply worded introduction, packaged as a “kit” which includes an audiocassette, a 7” X 10” book, a large 14” X 20” book which can be clearly seen and read even by a very large group, and a teacher’s guide. This is sure to create good classroom discussion of ways to protect our beaches and other vulnerable areas.

*Bowden, Joan Chase. Why the Tides Ebb and Flow. Houghton Mifflin, 1979. Gr.K-3.*

This is a folktale of irresistible charm, whose flowing language, humorous situations, and repeated rhymes will make it a favorite classroom read-aloud. A very stubborn old woman has been promised a rock to shelter her from the weather, and she chooses the very rock that none of the Sky Spirits want to

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give her: the rock that plugs the hole in the bottom of the sea. Her humorous persistence finally wins her all she wants and more. This will be enjoyed by children of all ages.

*Brown, Mary Barrett. Wings Along the Waterway. Orchard, 1992. Gr. 3-6.*

Twenty-one birds found in wetlands are included here. For each bird, there is a chapter that discusses habitat, appearance, behaviors such as grooming, courtship, nest building and parenting, and life cycle. The many illustrations range from small medallions to double-page spreads, and are meticulously detailed, colorful, and enchantingly beautiful. The text may be a bit challenging for some third-graders, but most will find it both accessible and fascinating.

*Cameron, Anne. How the Loon Lost Her Voice. Harbour Publishing Co., 1985. Gr. 3-6.*

A retelling of the Northwest coast Native American myth telling of a time when daylight was stolen by evil spirits, and all the animals and birds tried to reclaim it, while the world grew colder and darker. Loon sacrificed her beautiful singing voice in her efforts, but without her, Raven could not have ultimately succeeded in bringing warmth, sunlight, and springtime back to the earth so that all creatures could continue to live happily. The flowing language in which this is told would read aloud very well. Children may be inspired to write their own “how it came to be” story about some animal or its attributes after hearing this.

*Clark, Margaret Goff. The Vanishing Manatee. Cobblehill, 1990. Gr. 3-6.*

These friendly, curious mammals, once mistaken for mermaids, are in danger only from humans. This book describes the various kinds of Sirenians, their habitats and habits, and describes their endangerment by pollution, by development of their habitats, by human artifacts such as boat propellers and canal locks, and by intentional means. Human attempts to help manatees are also described. Each section is amply illustrated with many color photographs. There is a list of agencies with their addresses to which children can write for more information about manatees -- and after reading this and looking at the pictures they will probably want to know more about these “friendly giants”. Will be enjoyed especially by children who have already been introduced to manatees in Sewer Sam (see below).

*Cohlene, Terri. Clamshell Boy: A Makah Legend. (Native American Legends). Watermill Press, 1990. Gr. 1-5.*

A legend from the Makah people, who live along the Pacific Northwest coast in the region of Neah Bay, Washington. A lengthy appendix tells about the Makah, including photographs of traditional life and artifacts, and a map of their homeland. It is unfortunate that throughout the appendix, the Makah are referred to in the past tense, and all photographs refer to traditional activities,

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clothing, etc., which may lead young readers to mistakenly believe that the Makah no longer exist; this in itself would make an interesting point for a class discussion. The legend tells of Basket Woman, a monster who steals and eats children. Clamshell Boy, a young hero born of the tears of a bereaved mother, goes to rescue the girl Salmonberry, and succeeds by tricking the monster. The tale is exciting, and would absolutely compel attention if read aloud to a class; in addition, it reveals many details about a people whose life was closely connected with the water.

*Dorros, Arthur. Follow the Water from Brook to Ocean. (Let's-Read-And-Find-Out Science Book). Harper Collins, 1991. Gr. 2-4.*

As do the other books in this series, this makes its topic clear and understandable to very young readers as well as to those with limited English proficiency. The title describes the topic: rain collects, flows downhill in the form of streams and rivers until it reaches the ocean. Plants and animals that live in the moving water are described; the movement of water itself is described. Among concepts defined by the text are erosion, flooding, water pollution, and the formation of deltas. Illustrations are colorful and light-hearted, very attractive and very descriptive.

*Foster, Leila M. The Story of Rachel Carson and the Environmental Movement. Children's Press, 1990. Gr. 3-5.*

The life of Rachel Carson is here described, emphasizing the importance of her books for the environmental movement. There are excerpts included here from some of Carson's writings about the sea that may inspire young readers to read more about this very interesting person.

*Jacobs, Francine. Sewer Sam the Sea Cow. Walker & Co., 1979. Gr. 1-3.*

This follows the life of a manatee from birth to mating age. Sam is first seen riding on his mother's back, in a series of detailed, affectionately drawn pencil illustrations (it is easy to tell that the illustrator enjoyed her subject!). We see Sam learn to breathe properly, feed, explore, and make friends with other manatees. We also see Sam encounter dangers: a boat propeller injures him, leaving a scar; at another time, he is caught in a cement pipe and must be rescued by humans. There is a concluding chapter containing information about manatees. This is very readable, and makes an excellent introduction to the topic.

*Kricher, John. Peterson First Guide to Seashores. Houghton Mifflin, 1992. All ages.*

This is a very useful guide to carry along on any field trip to the seashore, salt marsh or estuary. Divided by habitats, there are many drawings of plants, birds, and "small creatures" such as mollusks and insects, each in detail sufficient for identification, and each accompanied by a paragraph of description written in language simple enough for beginning observers. Good

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readers among third-graders can probably manage the text with little or no help, although the teacher would probably have to explain the format.

*Langley, Andrew. Wetlands: Nature Search. Reader's Digest Association, 1993. Gr. 3-5.*

The real magnifying glass attached to the front cover may be a gimmick, but it is a gimmick certain to be used by children anxious to explore the pages closely in order to discover hidden or camouflaged wetlands wildlife. (There are also many examples of plants and animals not hidden, of course.) Profuse colorful illustrations are accompanied by text in many separate boxes and sidebars on each page, giving the effect of visual confusion, but also inviting the reader to browse through all the material. Intended as an interactive text, this succeeds in that aim. The extensive "glossary" is actually a visual dictionary of each creature mentioned in the text, with line drawings and one-sentence descriptions.

*Montroll, John and Robert J. Lang. Origami Sea Life. Dover, 1990 (2nd ed.) Adult.*

Detailed step-by-step instructions are given for making origami figures of many different forms of sea life, with their difficulty level indicated from "simple" to "very complex." Only two figures are considered simple: a tadpole, and a tadpole with legs. Teachers who enjoy paper-folding or would like to learn can use these figures very effectively in storytelling and presenting information to children: most children would be extremely attentive if someone were showing them an origami fiddler crab, or giant clam, or the very complex and impressive blackdevil angler! But any who are intending to do these figures in front of a class had better practice, practice, practice -- they aren't easy.

*Parker, Steve. Seashore. Knopf, 1989. (Eyewitness Book). All Ages.*

As is generally the case in the Eyewitness series, the photographs are the main focus of this book: many, clear, amazingly close-up in some cases, amazingly detailed in all. The author seems fascinated by the enormous variety of living conditions created by the many variable factors of waves, currents, tides, climate, and types of rock or sand, and the adaptations plants and animals have made to these habitats. Although much of the book is devoted to plants and animals living in rocky habitats, there is also a good representation of sandy beach and mudflat inhabitants: seals, clams, crabs and others, and animals living where tides make their habitat ever changing. There are two sections on plants that are particularly appropriate to the wetlands. Each page contains many photographs of different sizes, each explained in a paragraph of very small typeface; each topic is introduced by a few paragraphs of well-written text, apparently meant for adult readers. However, the pictures are so intriguing that children will want to know about them, and the text could easily be interpreted by a teacher.

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*Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. Pelicans. Clarion, 1992. Gr. 3-6.*

Pelicans, those birds whose endearingly comic appearance is famed in limericks and cartoons, are here described in clear and easily understood text which describes their physical characteristics, habits and behaviors, habitats, and life cycle. Many color photographs illustrate every topic mentioned; the photos are well chosen and attractive. Several show pelicans nesting and feeding in wetland areas. An entire chapter is devoted to the endangerment of pelicans by environmental toxins, by loss of habitat, and by human disturbance. The bibliography is unfortunately all adult materials, but the book itself will find many interested readers, especially if they already have heard of the wonderful bird “called the pelican, /Whose beak can hold more than his belican.”

*Sabin, Francene. Swamps and Marshes. Troll Associates, 1985. Gr. 3-5.*

Describes the different kinds of wetlands, how they are formed, and their importance as habitat for many kinds of plants and animals, as “nurseries of life”.

Easily read, and illustrated with colorful drawings, this can be understood by readers new to the subject.

*Sibbald, Jean H. The Manatee. Dillon Press, 1990. Gr. 3-5.*

Manatees are described, and the history of their contacts with humans is described. Children may wonder, looking at the many color photographs, how it was that even the loneliest of sailors could mistake these friendly mammals for mermaids. The habitats of the different kinds of manatees are described, as well as their habits and behaviors. There is a chapter describing the endangerment of the manatee and human efforts to remedy the situation, and a chapter describing the life of one closely studied manatee, called Success. This has rather less information, but can be read at a simpler level, than Clark’s “The Vanishing Manatee” (see above); it will be enjoyed by children who have already read Jacobs’ “Sewer Sam the Sea Cow” (see above).

*Tokuda, Wendy and Richard Hall. Humphrey the Lost Whale: A True Story. Heian International, 1992. Gr. 3-5.*

This easy to read story reads like fiction, but is a true tale of danger and adventure (whale style) with a happy ending: Humphrey the Humpback Whale somehow got his directions wrong, and swam up San Francisco Bay into the shallow fresh waters of the upper Sacramento River. Many different schemes for turning Humphrey around were attempted, and finally, one worked. Illustrated with light-hearted, colorful drawings showing the predicament of the turned-around whale. A good read-aloud for a classroom, and an irresistible lure for listeners to propose their own schemes for saving Humphrey.