

Meet a Wonderful Wetland

MOUNTAIN BOG

Where in NC: Throughout the NC mountains.

Description: Small, wet & shrubby depressions often found just below a slope. Fed by groundwater and less than 5 acres in size. Saturated soils blanketed by layers of spongy sphagnum moss which form layers of peat over time in this water-rich, oxygen-poor environment.

Wetland Plants: Sphagnum moss, ferns, rhododendron, alder, meadowsweet, Gray's lily, wild orchids, and federally endangered mountain sweet pitcher plant (draw a picture of a pitcher plant!)

Adapted Animals: Bog turtle (smallest turtle in NC; threatened by the pet trade here and abroad), 4-toed salamander, bog lemming and water shrew (who knew?!)

Why this wetland is wonderful: Mountain bogs provide important habitat for many common and rare plants & animals, especially migrating songbirds. Many mountain bogs have been drained by humans over the years. Some are drying out due to changing climate.

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FRESHWATER MARSH (Beaver Pond)

Where in NC: Throughout NC, although rare in the mountains.

Description: Low spots on the land that fill with freshwater from runoff, surface water & sometimes groundwater. Often looks like an open pond rimmed by cattails, sedges and dead trees. Often created by nature's premier engineer...the beaver! Usually found where streams enter ponds and reservoirs. Some are small and some are large, covering many acres with standing water nearly year-round.

Wetland Plants: Cattails (identified by "punk" seed heads that contain 1,000s of seeds!), sedges, bulrushes, floating water lilies, arrowleaf, duckweed, dewberries, alligator weed, red maples, black willows, and alder trees.

Adapted Animals: Least bittern (blends in with cattails!), mink, beaver, muskrat, kingfisher, snapping turtle, red-bellied water snake, green frog, snag/cavity nesting birds: owls, woodpeckers, woodducks.

Why this wetland is wonderful: Freshwater marshes provide important habitat for all kinds of plants & animals. They prevent flooding downstream by storing excess stormwater; and filter out sediments, nutrients & pollutants for cleaner water. Conflicts between beavers & humans increase as beaver populations grow.

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SAVANNA (found next to →)

Where in NC: Found only in NC's Coastal Plain.

Description: Grassy and open flat lands with a sparse cover of longleaf pine trees. Easy to walk through. Found next to pocosins. Sandy, mineral soil is white or gray, or salt-&-pepper and more fertile than pocosin peat. Savannas are fire-dependent ecosystems.

Wetland Plants: Longleaf pine trees, wiregrass, toothache grass, Carolina dropseed, Meadow beauty, coreopsis. In ecotone between pocosin & savanna – sphagnum moss, Rough-leaf loosestrife, Cinnamon fern, Virginia chain fern and famous carnivorous plants: Venus' fly-trap, Pitcher plants, and Sundew.

Adapted Animals: Bobwhite quail, endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, fox squirrel, brown-headed nuthatch, diamondback rattlesnake Carolina gopher frog. In ecotone between savanna & pocosin – Eastern glass lizard, eastern king snake, pine barrens treefrog.

Why this wetland is wonderful: Savannas support a rich biodiversity of plants and animals. FACT: 50 plant species have been found in a square meter of Longleaf pine savanna, making it the most diverse plant community in North America at that scale.

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(← found next to) POCOSIN

Where in NC: Found only in NC's Coastal Plain. "Pocosin" comes from the Algonquin Indian word for "swamp on a hill."

Description: Land covered with a low-growing jungle of evergreen shrubs and vines under a few stunted pond pines. Pocosins are very difficult to walk through! Rain feeds a shallow water table that saturates soil, but usually leaves no standing water on surface. Soils are organic peat – wet, spongy, mucky and acidic.

Wetland Plants: Pond pine trees (only heat from a fire opens its cone to release seeds – Pocosins are a fire-dependent ecosystem!), Red bay, Titi, Fetterbush, Loblolly bay, Pond cypress, gallberry.

Adapted Animals: Black bear, white-tailed deer, marsh rabbit, bobcat, American woodcock.

Why this wetland is wonderful: Pocosins absorb rainwater like giant sponges and prevent downstream flooding. They regulate the flow of freshwater to nearby estuaries, maintaining the balance of fresh and salt water in sounds for young fish and shellfish, which in turn helps to maintain NC's commercial fishing industry. Many pocosins have been drained and converted to other land uses.