

The Flufftail Festival

CELEBRATING WETLANDS & WATER

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BirdLife South Africa, Water Wise
& partners



BE A WETLAND WARRIOR ACTIVITY BOOK

PART 2

People n Planet
Educating future leaders

Water Wise
RAND WATER

BirdLife
SOUTH AFRICA
Giving Conservation Wings

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A Shy and Secretive Bird

Wetland Warriors protect Flufftails!

1. Read about the White-winged Flufftail:



Credit: Warwick Tarboton

The White-winged Flufftail is a tiny, very shy African bird. It is estimated that there are only between 200 and 250 White-winged Flufftails left in the world. This means that the White-winged Flufftail is a critically endangered species and is in danger of going extinct.

The White-winged Flufftail's natural habitat (environment) is in wetlands, surrounded by grasslands with thick vegetation. They hunt for food in the mud at the edges of reed beds, shallow water and floating vegetation, and feed on seeds and plants, as well as insects, spiders, earthworms, snails, small frogs and small fish.

From June to August every year, White-winged Flufftails live in the highland areas of Ethiopia, where they lay their eggs. Then, during April and May, they migrate south through Zambia and Zimbabwe to South Africa. They spend the summer months from November to March in the high-altitude wetland areas of the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, before flying back north to Ethiopia during April and May. It was thought that White-winged Flufftails only breed in Ethiopia but breeding grounds have also been recently discovered in South Africa.

The main reasons why White-winged Flufftails are so endangered is because their natural habitats and breeding grounds are being destroyed by the grazing of livestock and grass cutting, as well as the draining of wetlands for farming. Almost all of their wetland habitats in Ethiopia have already been converted into farming and grazing lands and settlements. We must protect our wetlands to make sure that the White-winged Flufftail, and other endangered birds and animals, always have a protected natural habitat, where they can live and breed in safety.

2. Search this maze of letters to find these 12 words. Draw a circle around each word that you find. The words are written forwards and backwards, upwards and downwards:

Flufftail

Ethiopia

Wetland

Habitat

Endangered

Protect

X	T	M	I	G	R	A	T	E	V	B	V
S	C	W	F	V	T	C	E	T	O	R	P
K	N	F	D	S	J	V	Q	A	Y	E	R
H	I	G	H	L	A	N	D	T	G	E	Z
F	T	W	K	G	C	B	Y	I	N	D	V
W	X	E	B	U	F	J	P	B	I	Y	C
J	E	T	H	I	O	P	I	A	N	Z	S
V	W	L	G	P	C	B	Y	H	I	D	K
L	I	A	T	F	F	U	L	F	A	X	H
D	L	N	F	Q	C	J	V	K	R	F	Z
E	N	D	A	N	G	E	R	E	D	C	H
V	T	N	E	M	N	O	R	I	V	N	E

Environment

Breed

Draining

Migrate

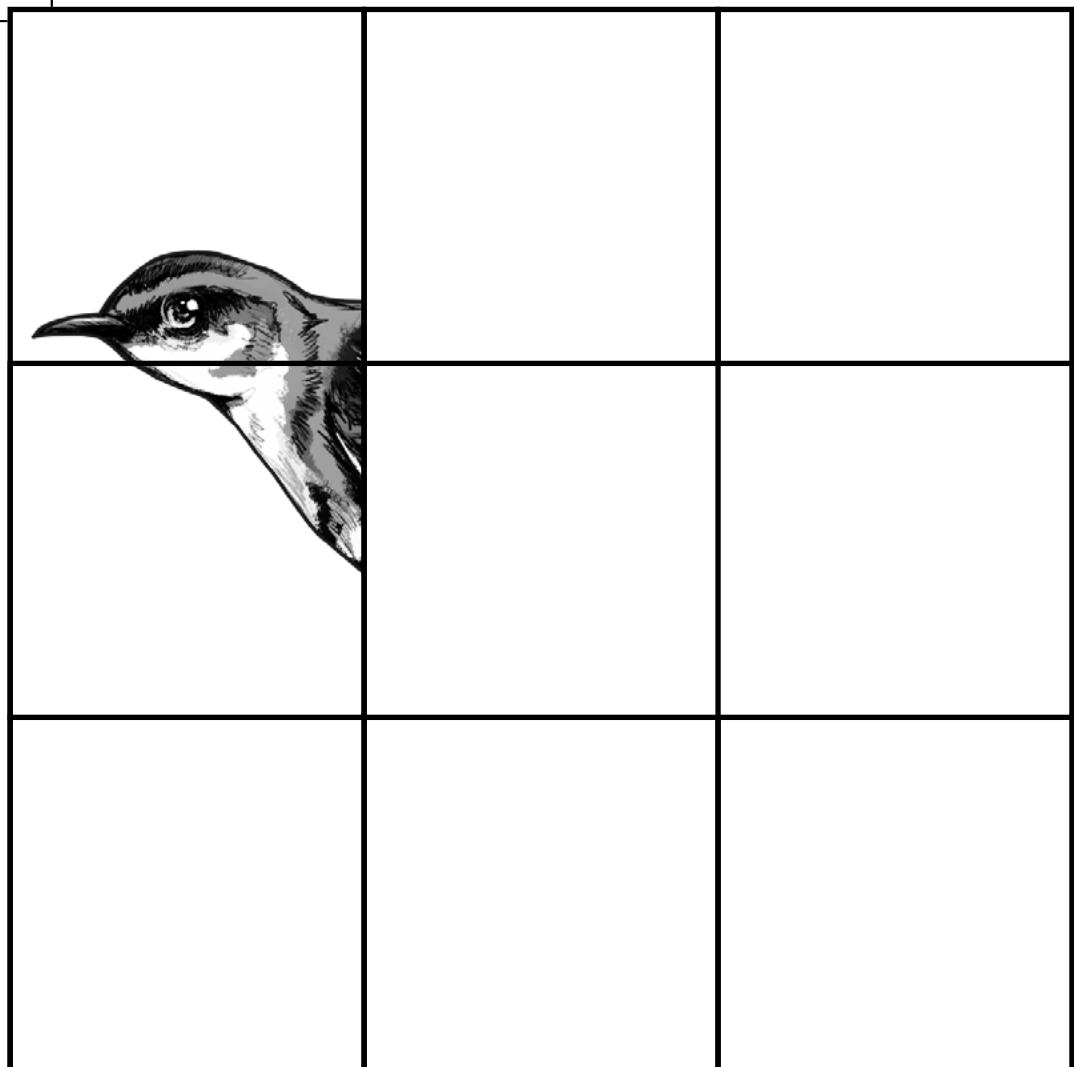
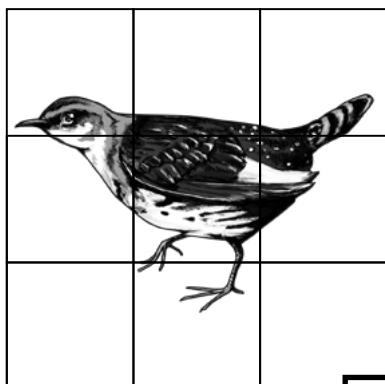
Highland

Extinct

3. Draw a White-winged Flufftail.

Use the picture below to complete the boxes on the right-hand side. Copy each box onto your drawing, and you will draw your own bird.

4. Look at the picture of the bird on the front cover and colour in your White-winged Flufftail.



Human Harm

Wetland Warriors never litter or pollute their environment!

1. Read about human activities that harm wetlands:

- Burning wetlands destroys the homes of birds and animals. When wetlands are burnt, the fire area should be carefully controlled, so that plant and animal life can return.
- Mining wetlands for their fertile soil, called peat, means that plants and animals cannot survive once the soil is removed.
- Draining wetlands by digging canals into the wetland for agriculture or development destroys the wetland.
- Pollution from human activities affects the quality of the water in wetlands. Throwing rubbish into wetlands causes disease and does not look good.
- Grazing by domestic animals, like cattle and goats, can have a positive or a negative effect on wetlands. In wetlands that have some areas grazed short and other areas left tall, the diversity of habitats increases. In wetlands which are over-grazed, the diversity of habitats is decreased.
- Farming using the healthy soils in wetlands is good for crops, but when wetlands are taken over by farming, the wetland dies.
- Planting alien vegetation, like pine trees for the timber industry to make paper, poles and furniture, kills wetlands, because these trees drink a large amount of water and dry out wetlands.



Burning wetlands



Mining in a wetland



Farming in a wetland



Litter in a wetland



Grazing in a wetland



Canals are dug into wetlands and DRAINED of their water



Alien vegetation

2. Play the 'A Walk in the Wetlands' game.

- Play in pairs or in groups.
- All players start on the 'START' square, with a token piece like a coloured disk or coin.
- Each player takes a turn to roll a dice and move the appropriate number of spaces.
- If the player lands on a square with information, the player then moves their piece according to the instruction.
- The first player to reach the top of the wetland wins!

Finish		You find litter lying in the wetland. Move back 4 spaces.			You find insects living in the wetland. Move forward 1 space.		You find clean water in the wetland. Move forward 3 spaces.
You find ducks living in the wetland. Move forward 3 spaces.		You find canals draining the wetland. Move back 5 spaces.		You find a heron living in the wetland. Move forward 4 spaces.			You find people farming in the wetland. Move back 2 spaces.
You find cattle over-grazing the wetland. Move back 1 space.		You see a White-winged Flufftail in the wetland. Move forward 5 spaces.		You find alien vegetation growing in the wetland. Move back 3 spaces.		You find water plants growing in the wetland. Move forward 1 space.	You find people mining in the wetland. Move back 4 spaces.
Start	You find fish in the wetland. Move forward 3 spaces.		You find an uncontrolled fire burning the wetland. Move back 1 space.			You find rubbish dumped in the wetland. Move back 2 spaces.	You find frogs in the wetland. Move forward 3 spaces.

Fluffing it Up

Wetland Warriors show they care with words and actions!

Many people have written poems, songs and raps to teach others about the importance of wetlands. Now it is your turn to do the same.

1. Read these wetland raps for inspiration.
2. Discuss what each rap teaches you about the importance of wetlands.
3. In your group, choose one of the raps and find a beat that works. Practise it and present it to your class.

We're living in a wetland, wetland, wetland,
Right there where the water meets the dry, dry land.
We're living in a wetland, wetland, wetland,
Hold it man, I am a flufftail,
Living in a wetland with a hippo and a snail.
Poisons in the water hurt the humans and the otter,
So have a heart and do your part, you know you gotta.
Wetlands are a habitat for so many species.
It's like a puzzle - the picture's not done
Unless you save all the pieces!

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X33FX8pG-Dc> (adapted for SA)

Sometimes they're wet, and sometimes they're not,
Transition zones where the water meets the dry spot.
Without the wetlands, what would we do?
They're here for me. They're here for you.
The kidneys of the landscape, they filter and they purify,
Removing chemicals, recycling the nutrients,
Slowing the flow, capturing the sediment,
Cleaner water for us all!
A filling station, a highway rest stop for the birds,
A needed place to rest and recharge.
For the ducks, geese, herons and flufftails too,
A quiet, peaceful place to be.
Without the wetlands, what would we do?
We can't survive without these swamps and marshes,
And many other creatures wouldn't make it too.
And that is why...
Wetlands have really important jobs to do.

Source: <https://www.waterrocks.org/newsong-wetlands-have-real-important-jobs-to-do> (adapted for SA)

Wetlands have important jobs to do,
Wetlands put here for me and you.
Wetlands have important jobs to do,
Wetlands put here for me and you.
A habitat for the hippos and flufftails,
We're talking about a marsh with wildlife trails.
Nature makes them, why do we take them away,
Just so we can get more pay?
There'll come a day, in fact it's already here,
Mother Earth is making it clear.
Whether in the city or on the farmlands,
We're heading for our own downfall, oh man!

Source: <https://www.waterrocks.org/song-lyrics-wetlands-rap>
(adapted for SA)



Credit: Arno Ellmer

4. Now, it's your turn! In your group, use everything you have learned to write your own rap about the wetlands called: '**We're Wetland Warriors**'.
5. Practise your rap and then present it to your class. Remember that a rap needs a strong message, a beat, and a chorus.



Credit: kjpargeter - www.freepik.com

Wonderful Wetland Warriors

I am a Wonderful Wetland Warrior!



PLEDGE

My name is _____.

**I promise to be a Wetland Warrior
and love and care for water, wetlands and
waterbirds, as they support life on Earth!**

As a Wetland Warrior, I will:

- Use water wisely
- Protect my local wetland
- Teach others about wetlands
- Care about all living things
- Protect flufftails and all animals
- Never litter or pollute my environment

Learner

Teacher

Parent / Caregiver

People n Planet
Educating future leaders

Water Wise
RAND WATER

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Wetland Survey

Go on a field trip to a wetland. Please make sure that the wetland is safe to visit, and that there is an adult present with you. You should wear gloves, and do not put your hands in your mouth after touching the water. Please wash your hands with soap and clean water after touching the water at the wetland.

Your Name: _____ Name of Wetland: _____ Date: _____

1. Write a brief description of the wetland. (Use extra paper if you need more space to answer the questions.)

2. What activities are taking place around the wetland? (You may tick more than one.)

Formal houses		Cattle		Factories		Litter and dumping	
Informal settlement		Crops		Park and sports fields		Nature area	

3. What animals and plants do you see in the wetland?

4. Take a sample of water from the wetland using a clear container. How would you describe it? (You may tick more than one.)

Green		Smelly		Slimy		Foamy		Oily		Clear		Muddy		Dead animals	
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5. What impact do you think the quality of the wetland has on the animals and plants living in and around the wetland?

6. What impact do you think the wetland has on the humans who live around the wetland?

7. What is the quality of the wetland? How bad is the problem?

Do not know		Not a problem		A slight problem		Bad	
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8. What environmental problems have you identified in the wetland?

9. What do you think this means for the wetland?

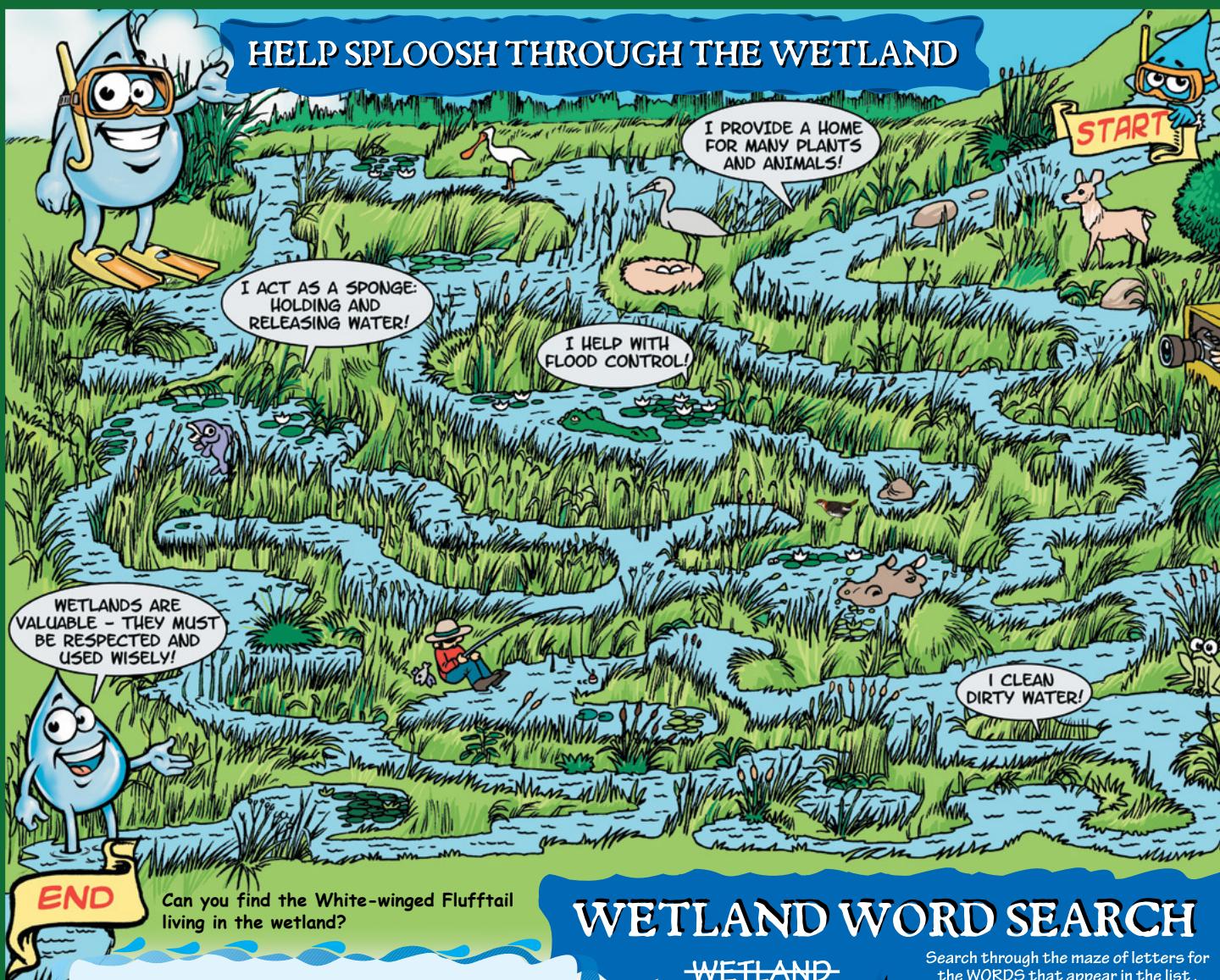
Do not know		It is bad		Okay to not so good		It is good	
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10. What can be done to solve the problems of the wetland?

You can also conduct a miniSASS activity. SASS stands for Stream Assessment Scoring System. Check out <https://minisass.org/en/> for more information. Have a discussion with the other learners about their wetland observations and the environmental quality of the wetland. Present your findings to the class or school and suggest solutions to the problems.

**Being a Wetland Warrior means that you TAKE ACTION to take care of wetlands.
Wetland Warriors LOVE and RESPECT water and wetlands!**

HELP SPLOOSH THROUGH THE WETLAND



WETLAND WORD SEARCH

C	W	R	E	T	L	I	F
R	L	A	B	I	R	D	S
A	W	E	T	L	A	N	D
N	R	F	A	E	E	S	E
E	P	L	E	N	R	C	E
D	N	O	P	P	I	H	R
S	P	O	N	G	E	N	T
M	A	D	S	O	I	L	G

WETLAND
 SPONGE
 CLEANING
 FILTER
 CRANE
 SOIL
 HIPPO
 BIRDS
 FLOOD
 WATER
 DAM
 POND
 REEDS

Search through the maze of letters for the WORDS that appear in the list. The words are written forwards, backwards, diagonally, up & down. Please encircle each word that you find. Once you have found all the words you will find 7 letters that are not encircled. These make up a word. Please write this word in the space provided in order to complete the slogan.



The missing word to complete the slogan is:

 OUR WETLANDS!

Wetlands are nature's way of providing water

A wetland is an area that is soaked with water, either permanently or seasonally, and is a distinct ecosystem. A wetland is recognised by special aquatic plants like sedges, bulrushes and reeds that are well adapted to water-saturated soils with low oxygen levels. Some common names for different types of wetlands are swamp, marsh and bog.



Wetlands are threatened and need to be protected for nature to do its work!

Wetlands are being destroyed by pollution such as chemicals and littering. Some people drain wetlands to mine it for peat soils and to obtain more farmland.



The RAMSAR Convention is an international conservation treaty to protect the world's wetlands. South Africa is a member of RAMSAR.

What can you do to help?

- Protect and conserve wetlands.
- Don't litter.
- Take part in wetland cleanups.
- Keep catchments healthy.
- Use water wisely.

