



Living next door to a Wetland

What is it like living next door to a wetland?

Living close by to nature can have its advantages and disadvantages. There are plants and animals to both deal with and discover and enjoy.

A healthy wetland will generally have less weeds, less standing water, fewer mosquitoes and less odour. Most people would agree that living nearby a healthy wetland is better than living nearby a degraded wetland.

There are things that you can do at home and actions your neighbours can take which will improve and protect the health of your local wetland into the future.



Photo: These backyards back directly onto this wetland reserve. For these people a healthy wetland means a healthy backyard (Kate Heyward, WetlandCare Australia)

Right: Protecting local wetlands will also help make them visually **aesthetic** and be healthier generally – which will in turn improve community wellbeing and make **recreation** more satisfying (Photo: WetlandCare Australia)

Did you know? – that most people are more likely to purchase a property that has a connection with a nearby natural area, for example, adjacent to a park or reserve or with a view of the ocean.

Why care for your nearby wetland?

There are several reasons why people living nearby a wetland should take positive steps to care for, and protect the wetland;

- Wetlands provide **habitat** for animals, and plant communities – places for migratory birds to stop over, places for wading birds to feed – fish breeding and nursery grounds
- Wetlands play a significant role in filtering catchment water and protecting **water quality** entering streams, rivers and oceans/reefs – improving river health, recreation and fishing
- Wetlands are **biodiverse complex environments** which are often undervalued in society – they need to be cared for championed by people who can recognise their value
- Wetlands are at risk of damage due to sea level rise and climate change, because they are so low in the landscape
- Wetlands can store **carbon** and therefore maintaining a wetlands health will help prevent carbon in the atmosphere and climate change



Simple things you can do at home to protect your neighbouring wetland

Many of these environmental behaviours which protect and improve wetland health were suggested by the residents of East Ballina during the 2009 "Starting in your Backyard" workshops.

Protect water quality from home:

Do your part for your catchments water quality – make sure you allow "only rain down the drain" from your property (including animal waste and organic matter), wash your car on the lawn, without a hose and sweep your driveway rather than hose it.

While you are gardening:

- Practice water wise gardening, minimise garden watering – mulch, plant drought resistant plants, fix water leaks
- Remove weeds and compost under black plastic - replace weed trees with local natives
- Stop or reduce chemical and fertiliser use
- Compost and use a shredder/mulcher
- Take up propagating native plants as a hobby and share them with your neighbours
- Investigate grey water recycling systems

Be a responsible pet owner:

- Don't let domestic cats and dogs out alone, day or night
- Investigate using a cat bib www.catbib.com.au/

Cats and dogs can have a seriously damaging effect on bird, fauna and reptile populations and the biodiversity of the wetland. Don't let them run wild, particularly at night.



Photo: Protect wetland fauna such as small mammals by controlling domestic animals (Adam Gosling, WetlandCare Australia)

Make a Plan

Think about what action you can take now, in the medium and long term. Choose some of these actions or think of your own, write them down, and then congratulate yourself when you achieve these changes around your home and in your everyday life.

Reduce your carbon footprint – help prevent sea level rise and climate change which will adversely affect the environment and wetlands:

- make as many environmental choices as you can with the knowledge and resources you have – every action you make counts
- reduce waste (choose low waste products), then recycle
- buy recycled products
- think about food miles, buy locally or grow your own vegetables
- elect to receive email catalogues – put up a no junk mail sign on your letterbox

Make it your responsibility

If everybody made their backyard and their immediate environment their own responsibility then we, as a society, would come a long way in protecting the natural environment we have left.

Take Action where you can

- Improve your knowledge - Find out more your local environment – the more you know the more positive decisions you can make. Keep an eye out for new ideas and things you can do around your home
- Take advantage of current environmental rebates such as rebates on installing water tanks, or mulch at nurseries (your local Council should be able to tell you what is currently available)
- Participate in local environmental events (such as Clean Up Australia Day), walks, talks, discussions and follow what your local Council is doing and the decisions it is making
- Educate your neighbours – what positive actions are you taking that they might want to know about?
- Plant a backyard wetland – create habitat for local wildlife

For further information on living nearby a wetland and what you can do contact:

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