



Hi folks! I'm Lily, the Pacific chorus frog, and I help the City of Eugene teach people about stormwater in our community. I was born in a wetland, and many of my wildlife friends live in the streams and wetlands downstream from you!

Wetlands *aren't* all wet!



These specialized areas near streams and ponds are nature's water filters and support a rich assortment of plants and wildlife.

Have you ever walked in a field that squished like a sponge under your feet? It may have been perfectly dry in the summer, but in the winter it seems like the grass is growing in more water than soil. Maybe it was an area in your neighborhood near a stream, or perhaps you were visiting part of the 3,000-acre West Eugene Wetlands that includes Meadowlark Prairie and the Willow Creek Natural Area. There are many examples of wetlands in our area, and even though in the Willamette Valley they may not be wet year-round, they do support distinctive types of plants and animals that wouldn't survive without them.

Not too long ago, people thought it was a good idea to fill in the wetlands so that the land could be used for building or agriculture. What they didn't know was that the wetlands perform many important functions in our environment. When wetlands disappear, it upsets the balance of the local ecosystem and can actually contribute to flooding, pollution problems, and loss of plants and animals.

Wetlands help to **control flooding** in winter months. The porous soil can absorb as much as 1.5 million gallons of floodwater per acre—water that otherwise would flow over land causing erosion and flood damage downstream in neighborhoods, parks and businesses.

We have also learned that wetlands are a **natural water filtration system**. Stormwater slows down when it reaches these swampy areas, where the combination of plants and soil filter suspended sediment and pollutants. The water is held long enough to seep down into lower layers of soil where it eventually replenishes our underground fresh water supply—an important reserve that we use during dry periods. This natural system is so effective that some builders and landscapers are imitating wetland landscapes—with special soil, plants and small swales—to filter stormwater run off near houses and shopping centers.

Finally, scientists have learned that wetlands are some of the most **biologically productive ecosystems** in the world—right up there with coral reefs and rain forests! In addition to the many plants, mammals, amphibians and insects found there, wetlands provide nest locations and food for up to one-half of North America's bird populations. The West Eugene Wetlands are home to more than 350 species of plants and dozens of species of dragonflies. Wetlands are great to visit if you enjoy the outdoors—just remember your rubber boots in the rainy season!

To learn more about Eugene Wetlands, visit www.wewetlands.org. For more general wetland environment information, visit www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/.



Several of Eugene's wetlands are connected by the Amazon Creek (above). Exploring these wet prairies and creekside areas during different seasons, you may find chorus frogs (inset left), damselflies, or killdeer eggs (insets below). Walk quietly and be respectful of the wildlife and you'll be rewarded with a wonderful natural show!



Dragonfly Bend, near Greenhill Road and Royal Avenue, filters sediments and holds water during times of heavy rain.



This landscaped area at Oakway Center is actually a stormwater treatment system that functions much like a wetland, filtering stormwater that flows into it from sidewalks and parking lots.



Teachers: The SPLASH! curriculum for grades K-12 is available free to Eugene teachers. New this year are posters and hexaflexagons about stormwater and salmon lifecycles. For more information about SPLASH! Stormwater Learn and Share for grades K-8, and Salmon and the Ecosystem for 5-12, call 682-8482.