# LOUISIANA'S WETLANDS ARE THREATENED!

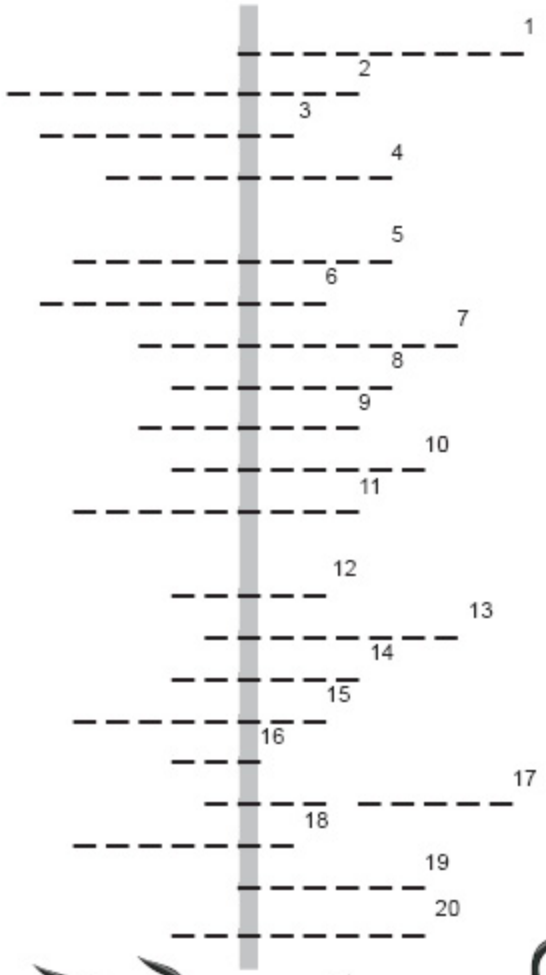
## WHAT CAN WE DO TO SAVE THEM?

**Link to our exhibit: "Louisiana's Present: Waterfowl in a Louisiana marsh"**

## SAVING OUR WETLANDS

The wetlands along Louisiana's coast are disappearing fast, threatening Louisiana's heritage, economy, wildlife habitat and much more. In the next pages, you will learn about wetlands and the problems they are facing. See how you can make a difference.

**GAME 1.** Read the following definition and transfer the underlined words from the definition to the grid on the right. Read down the shaded column to find out what all of us in Louisiana should be focussing on.




**What is a wetland?**
Wetlands are areas that, at least periodically, have water-logged soil or are covered by shallow surface water. They support plants and animals that are adapted to living in a watery environment.

**What factors can create wetlands?**
- In low-lying areas, rain and runoff help to keep wetlands saturated[1].
- Some wetlands lie where groundwater[2] is at or very near the surface of the Earth and feeds the wetlands from below.
- Other wetlands stand next to rivers or other bodies of water that regularly overflow.
- In coastal areas, tides keep many wetlands saturated.

**What are the different types of wetlands?**
- Saltwater wetlands that exist along the coastlines (salt marshes and mangrove[3] swamps).
- Freshwater wetlands (marshes, bogs, and swamps).

**What are the benefits of wetlands for wildlife?**
Some of the main benefits are:
- Migration: many birds converge on wetlands to refuel on rich food supplies before resuming their journeys.
- Natural nurseries[4]: the young of certain fish, crustaceans and birds spend their earliest days in wetlands, taking advantage of the rich food supply and natural protection[5].
- Habitat and breeding grounds: hundreds of wetlands' plants provide a vital habitat in which to live. 75% of all waterfowl[6] breed only in wetlands.
- Rare species' havens: 43% of the U.S. threatened and endangered[7] species live in wetlands or depend on wetlands for survival.

**What are the benefits of wetlands for people?**
• Flood busters[8]: by sponging up excess water, wetlands offer an easy and cheap way to control floods.
• Natural pollution filters[9]: soils and plants in wetlands remove excess nutrients, heavy metals and other toxic chemicals from polluted runoff water and help protect the nation's drinking water.
• Silt trappers[10]: sediments settle out among the roots and stems of plants and help protect streams and other bodies of water downstream from a build-up of sediments.
• Storm breakers: coastal wetlands buffer the effects of the ocean's strong winds and waves on shoreline[11] communities of people and wildlife.
• Groundwater recharges: water migrates downward through wetlands to maintain groundwater levels.
• Stock for fisheries: wetlands provide fish and shellfish with food and a place for breeding and raising young.
• Recreation hot spots: wetlands are a great place to retreat to birdwatch, photograph, fish, hunt or simply relax.

**Wetlands are endangered!**
1. Louisiana 's wetland is the seventh largest delta[12] on earth and is the heart of an intricate ecosystem on the verge of collapse.

2. This valuable landscape extending along Louisiana's coast is disappearing at a rate of 35 square miles per year, the equivalent to losing over 21,000 football[13] fields.

3. In the past 50 years, more than 1,500 square miles of coastal Louisiana have been lost. By the year 2050, another 1,000 square[14] miles will be lost if nothing is done to save it.

4. Home to 40% of the nation's wetlands, an alarming[15] 80% of all coastal wetland loss in the continental United States occurs in Louisiana.

5. One-fourth of all the oil and gas used in America and 80% of the nation's offshore oil and gas[16] travels through Louisiana's wetlands.

6. More than 95% of all marine species living in the Gulf of Mexico spend all or part of their life cycle[17] in Louisiana's wetlands.

7. Louisiana's wetlands are the wintering ground for millions of waterfowl and migratory birds whose habitat[18] is lost as the wetlands disappear.

8. More than 30% of the nation[19]'s fisheries catch comes from offshore Louisiana.

9. Restoring coastal Louisiana will cost upwards of $14 billion, while it is estimated that the cost of inaction[20] will amount to more than $100 billion in infrastructure alone.

*Note — This game is based on information from "America's Wetland Campaign to Save Coastal Louisiana"

**GAME 2**: Do you know which animals live on or around trees, such as cypress and mangrove, in our wetlands? Look at the animals below and draw a line between them and their favorite location in the swamp!

Brown Pelican

Angulate periwinkle snail

Sea horse

White ibis

Alligator

Blue crab

Yellow rat snake

Green-backed heron

oyster

Mangrove snapper