



## Fact Sheet

### What is a Wetland?

Wetlands are some of the world's most valuable ecosystems. They contain a disproportionately high number of plant and animal species and provide a huge variety of natural goods and services. Vital to humans throughout our history, wetlands include rivers, lakes, swamps and marshes, fens, wet woodlands and flooded forests, floodplains and even rice-fields. Wetlands also include coastal shore lines where the water is less than six metres deep at low tide which includes many coral reefs



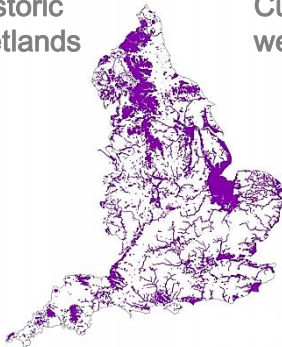
### Where are Wetlands Found?

There are wetlands in every corner of the globe from the polar regions to the tropics. In total, wetlands cover about 6% of the Earth's land surface: that's 33% larger than USA.

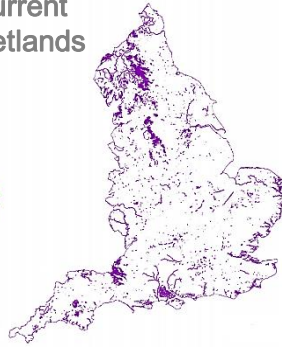
### Why are Wetlands Important?

As well as playing home to a great variety of wildlife, wetlands are also economically important. They provide food, fresh water and building materials, and also provide services such as water purification, flood defence and erosion control. Large wetlands can even influence local climate. All this means that wetlands aren't just important for the people who live on their shores, but for all society.

Historic wetlands



Current wetlands



Then and now: drainage and overuse has seriously decreased the extent of wetlands in England from what we think it was 500 years ago. (Source: Wetland Vision)

### Threats to the Wets

Despite their importance to us, people have taken wetlands for granted. These habitats are in serious decline through drainage, pollution, over-abstraction of water, canalisation (making the banks straight and steep) and damming.

We don't actually know how many wetlands there used to be in England, but it is estimated that we've lost 90% of all our wetlands. (Source: WWT).