

Wetlands of the World

Wetlands are found throughout the world except in Antarctica.

The world has 7 to 9 million km² of wetland which is ~ 4 to 6% of the land surface. ~ 56% of the 4 to 6% of land surface is found in the tropical and subtropical regions. In 1987 Matthews and Fung estimated the extent of wetlands in the world by climatic zones they found:

Polar/boreal	2.7 million km ²
Temperate	0.7 million km ²
Subtropical/tropical	1.9 million km ²
Rice Paddies	<u>1.5 million km²</u>
Total Wetland Area	6.8 million km ²

Major Wetland Regions of the World:

South America –

The Orinoco River delta of Venezuela

- Covers 36,000 km² and is dominated by brackish shoreline by mangrove forests.
- It enters the Caribbean

The Llanos located on the western part of the Orinoco River found in western Venezuela and northern Colombia.

- Covers 450,000 km², it's one of the largest inland wetland areas of South America
- Winter wet season with a summer dry season gives rise to yearly flooding.
- Dominated by savanna grasslands and scattered palms.
- Important wading-bird habitat and is rich with caiman and red piranha.

The Amazon River

- Covers 300,000 km², 3,000 km long, the river floods 5-15 meters high yearly.
- It's considered the world's single largest river, with a flow that results in about one-sixth to one-fifth of all the fresh water in the world. Creates its own weather patterns.

The Pantanal

- One of the largest wetlands in world located in southwestern Brazil.
- Covers 140,000 km², four times the size of the Florida Everglades, with about 131,000 km² of that area flooded annually.
- It's a haven to 650 to 700 species of birds.

Europe:

1. Mediterranean Sea Deltas

The Rhone River Delta created France's most important wetland, the Camargue.

- Covers about 9,000 km².
- Highly affected by a hot, dry summer and cool, wet winters.
- Home to one of the world's 25 major flamingo nesting sites.
- Po River Delta - Venice

2. Coastal Marshes of Northern Europe

- Extensive salt marshes and mud flats are found along the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea coastlines of Europe.
- Mostly grass type marshes

Rhine River Delta

- It's a major transportation artery in Europe.
- Much of the Netherlands is on the Rhine River Delta.

3. Peatlands

- About 3.46 million km² of northern boreal and subarctic peatland exist, more than half of the world wetlands.
- Predominately found in the Old World, Ireland, Scandinavia, Finland, Russia.
- Mostly made up of decomposed sphagnum moss.

Africa:

An abundance of wetlands is found in sub-Saharan Africa such as the Congo River Swamps, Inner Niger Delta, Sudd of the Upper Nile, and the Okavango Delta.

Sudd of the Upper Nile

- Rainforest where the Blue and White Nile meet in the southern Sudan.

Nile Delta

- It used to be a huge delta; the land has been converted to farm land, no longer floods due to Aswan Dam. Losing shoreline to Mediterranean..

Okavango Delta

- A vast number of rivers, channels, island and lagoons are diverted to the Okavango Delta.
- Along the coast there are many mangrove forests.

Australia:

- Wetlands are distinctive due to seasonal dryness from high evaporation rates and low rainfall. Saline wetlands and lakes are common as a result of the high evaporation rates.

New Zealand:

- One location in North Island has all seven types of wetlands.
- Has lost 90% of its wetlands
- South Island receives 2-10 meters annually of rain, several types of wetlands

Asia:

Most of its wetlands have been converted for agriculture

South and Southeast Asia:

- Has the biggest wetlands.
- Some of the major rivers are the Indus, Ganges, Chao Praya, Mekong, Red .
- The Mekong begins at the Tibet Plateau and runs through China, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam draining 625,000 km²
- Estimated that 20 million people receive their protein from fishing in these areas.

China:

- Approximately 650,000 km² of wetlands, Pearl, and Yangtze River Deltas
- Of that 250,000 km² have been reserved, and 400,000 km² have been used for rice paddies, fish ponds, and other functions.