# Does Your Lake Have Good Kidneys?

Wetlands are areas of transition between aquatic ecosystems (lakes and rivers) and land ecosystems (fields and forests). There are various categories of wetlands: marshes, ponds, peat bogs, and swamps, and all wetlands share the following three characteristics:

- The presence of water for varying lengths of time.
- Shallow water, with levels varying from year to year.
- Plants adapted to oxygen-poor soil.

Nearly 70% of wetlands in Canada were lost due to human development in the most populated regions of the country. Yet, they remain the best natural filters of lakes and rivers, acting as kidneys while serving many other important functions.
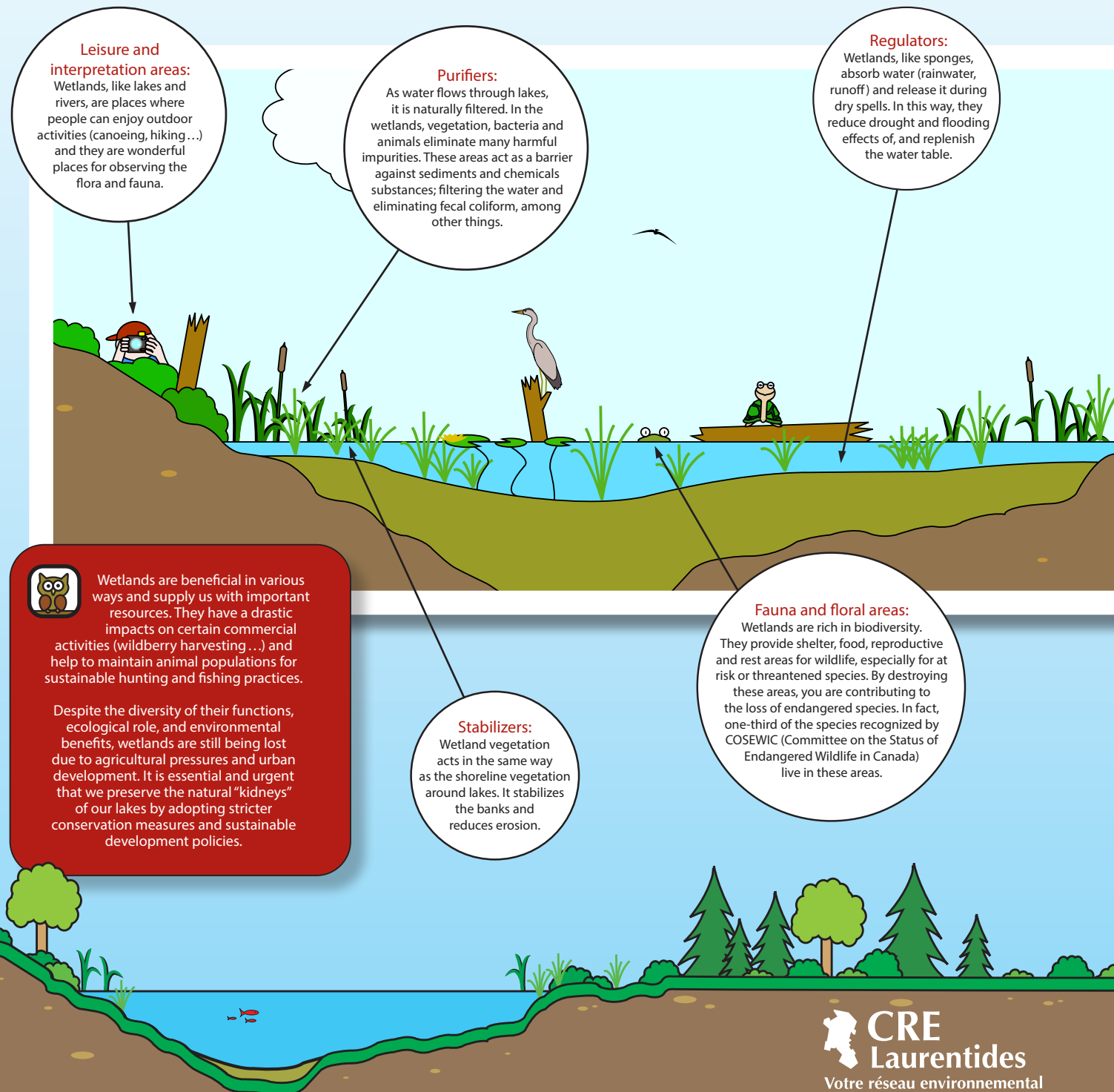
Leisure and interpretation areas:
Wetlands, like lakes and rivers, are places where people can enjoy outdoor activities (canoeing, hiking…) and they are wonderful places for observing the flora and fauna.

Purifiers:
As water flows through lakes, it is naturally filtered. In the wetlands, vegetation, bacteria and animals eliminate many harmful impurities. These areas act as a barrier against sediments and chemicals substances; filtering the water and eliminating fecal coliform, among other things.

Regulators:
Wetlands, like sponges, absorb water (rainwater, runoff) and release it during dry spells. In this way, they reduce drought and flooding effects of, and replenish the water table.

Wetlands are beneficial in various ways and supply us with important resources. They have a drastic impacts on certain commercial activities (wildberry harvesting…) and help to maintain animal populations for sustainable hunting and fishing practices.

Despite the diversity of their functions, ecological role, and environmental benefits, wetlands are still being lost due to agricultural pressures and urban development. It is essential and urgent that we preserve the natural "kidneys" of our lakes by adopting stricter conservation measures and sustainable development policies.

Stabilizers:
Wetland vegetation acts in the same way as the shoreline vegetation around lakes. It stabilizes the banks and reduces erosion.

Fauna and floral areas:
Wetlands are rich in biodiversity. They provide shelter, food, reproductive and rest areas for wildlife, especially for at risk or threatened species. By destroying these areas, you are contributing to the loss of endangered species. In fact, one-third of the species recognized by COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) live in these areas.

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