

Why are school children in Christchurch, Masterton, Hamilton and Otamatea wearing gumboots?

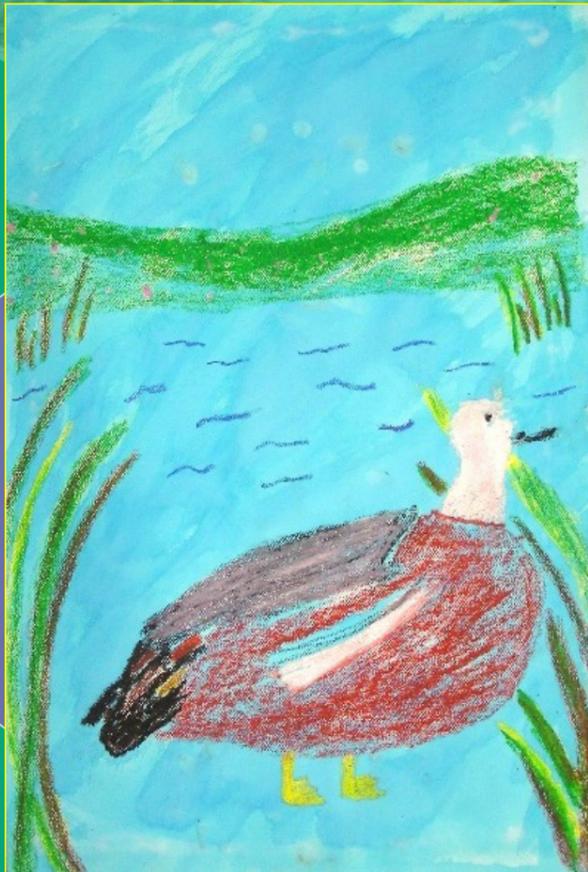
Scattered through out New Zealand are some very progressive schools whose students are learning about wetlands in a very hands on way. Forward thinking teachers are encouraging their students to understand the value of wetlands not only as wildlife habitat but also as important places in social and ecological systems.

Masterton Intermediate School, Wellington

Opposite Masterton Intermediate School is a wetland which was once just a piece of soggy ground. A 1ha pond was created through a donation from Banrock Station Wines. The school and local community have planted out a range of trees, native grasses and flaxes. The school plans to use the wetland to combine its studies in agricultural science with environmental science as most of the wetlands in the Wairarapa region have been lost through drainage schemes and conversion to farmland.

St James School, Christchurch

The Bexley Wetland was once an important place for gathering food and fibre by early Maori in Canterbury. However later years saw grazing, cropping and then conversion to a scrap metal yard. Finally in 1992, 12.5 hectares of salt marsh, salt meadow, coastal bush and freshwater wetland areas were designated as an ecological heritage site. Over the past 5 years, a group of enthusiastic children from St James School have assisted the Bexley Wetland Trust and Trees for Canterbury to carry out a planting and maintenance programme at



the wetland. The St James School project, supported by WWF's Habitat Protection Fund, involves creating a natural buffer of trees, shrubs, grasses, rushes and flaxes between nearby residential homes and the wetland. Bexley wetland has become an extension of the school. As an outdoor classroom, the wetland is used extensively across the curriculum for teaching and learning. Students are beginning to see the results of their work, seeing plants grow and more and more birds flock to the wetland every year.

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Imagine...a generation of innovative and motivated young people, who instinctively think and act sustainably.

Enviroschools is working towards this vision through a whole school approach to environmental education. Students develop skills, understanding, knowledge and confidence through planning, designing and creating a sustainable school. Action projects undertaken by enviroschools have both environmental and educational outcomes that benefit the school and the wider community.

Enviroschools takes an holistic approach to environmental education. This approach is also known as education for a sustainable future, education for sustainable development or sustainable education. Whatever the title it is a big subject! An effective learning process would aim to:

WETLAND ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AT SCHOOL

- Collecting seed from local wetlands
- Raising native plants in a school nursery
- Planting out eco-sourced natives
- Going on field trips with experts
- Creating a mural showing foodwebs and biodiversity
- Developing a play or theatre piece (swamp treasures) about wetland values
- Staging a debate between different wetland users
- Designing interpretational signage for a wetland walk

- Help people think creatively ... AND not just from their own world view but acknowledging other perspectives.
- Lead to action on current sustainability issues ... AND involve planning and decision-making by people of all ages.
- Result in long-term behaviour change ... AND critical reflection on lifestyle choices, attitudes and values.