

FENS

FENS, like bogs, are more common in northern regions. Fens are wetlands predominated by sedges— a group of grass-like plants with triangular stems. Fens occur in slightly acidic or alkaline water. Many rare wildflowers and orchids require the unique chemistry of fens to grow. Like bogs, fens are not very productive wetlands, but they are important for the unique life forms found within them.

Trees, if present in fens, are usually cedar or tamarack.

Marshes, swamps, bogs and fens are the types of wetlands found in Canada. Any single wetland can be made up of any combination of these four wetland types. The more variety of types and plant communities within a wetland, the more important it is for wildlife.

Succession

Wetlands are not static systems -- they constantly change through the process of natural or human influenced succession. Ecologically, marshes are the youngest wetlands -- a fact which enables marshes to be created in a relatively short time. Marshes sometimes succeed into swamps, and in some cases to a fen or bog over many years. Fens gradually become bogs as peat accumulates and acidity increases in the wetland. Because of their ecological age, fens and bogs are more sensitive to disturbances.

Source: four preceding pages modified from *Wonders of Wetlands*, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

