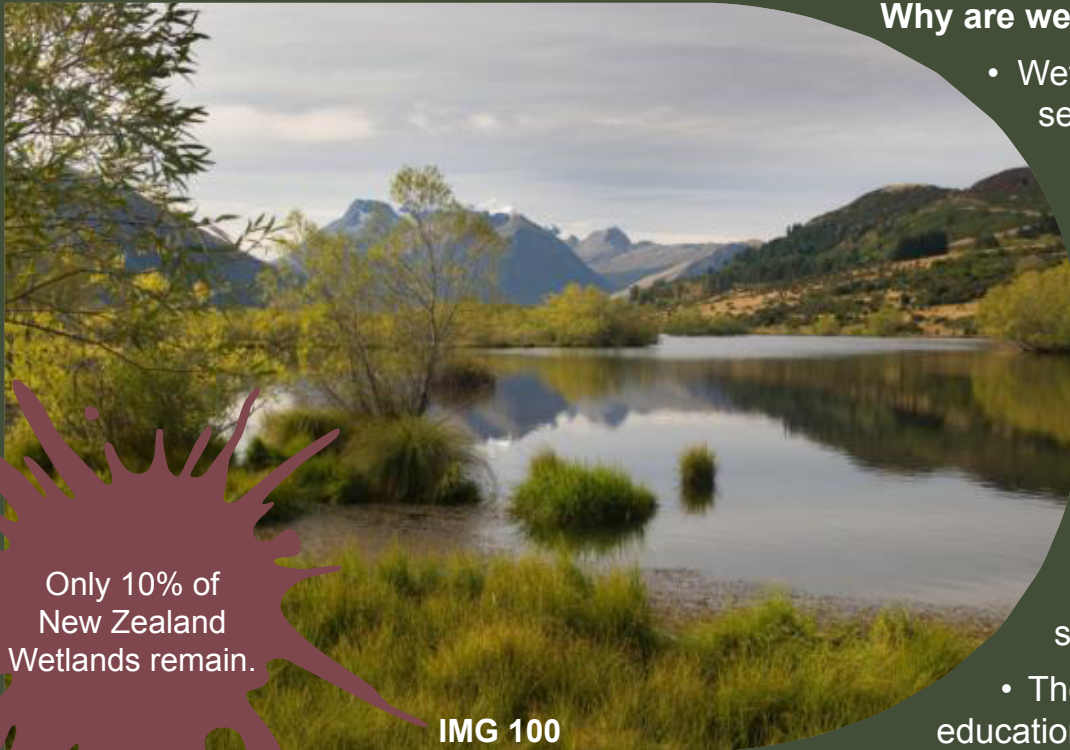


# WETLANDS

100

Wetlands are permanently or sometimes wet land, shallow water and water margins. Wetlands are characterised by the plants and animals that have adapted to living in wet conditions. Wetlands retain water during heavy water flows and maintain ground water levels during periods of low rainfall.

IMG 101



Only 10% of New Zealand Wetlands remain.

IMG 100

## Why are wetlands important?

- Wetlands improve water quality by retaining nutrients and trapping sediment which would otherwise flow into the waterway.
- Wetlands slow down the speed of surface water during a high rainfall event, which can reduce flooding and erosion. They then release them slowly like a sponge.
- Wetlands are ecologically important because they provide unique habitats and breeding grounds, and are important for the survival of many species of native plants and animals.
- They are used for fishing, shooting, botanising, bird watching and for water sports.
- Wetlands can be of great historic and present importance to Māori as both a food and medicinal source and for their spiritual significance.
- They form excellent examples of the functioning of ecosystems for education.

World Wetlands Day is held on 2nd February every year