Wetland basics

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“land which is transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is periodically covered with shallow water, and which land in normal circumstances supports or would support vegetation typically adapted to life in saturated soil”
1. Saturation

2. Water-loving plants (hydrophytes)

3. Modified (hydric/ hydromorphic) soils
Presence of water influences characteristics of soil and plants

Direct indicator

But hard to measure
So where is the water?
Vegetation

Hydrophytes normally reflect saturation of the soil for at least part of the year

Indirect indicator

Respond quickly to changes in hydrology
Soil

Soil colour strongly influenced by frequency & duration of saturation

Indirect indicator

Good indicator of historic wetland boundaries
DWS wetland delineation manual
A practical field procedure for identification and delineation of wetlands and riparian areas
Further reading

1. What is a Wetland? – Mondi Wetlands Programme
   www.wetland.org.za/wetlandbasics

2. A practical field procedure for the identification and delineation of wetlands and riparian areas – DWS
   www.dwa.gov.za/Documents/Other/EnvironRecreation/WetlandZoneDelineationSep05.asp

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