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# Wet and Wonderful: The World's Largest Wetlands Are Conservation Priorities FREE

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## Abstract

Wetlands perform many essential ecosystem services—carbon storage, flood control, maintenance of biodiversity, fish production, and aquifer recharge, among others—services that have increasingly important global consequences. Like biodiversity hotspots and frontier forests, the world's largest wetlands are now mapped and described by an international team of scientists, highlighting their conservation importance at the global scale. We explore current understanding of some ecosystem services wetlands provide. We selected four of these wetlands (the largest peatland, West Siberian Lowland; the largest floodplain, Amazon River Basin; the least-known wetland, Congo River Basin; and the most heavily developed wetland, Mississippi River Basin), and we illustrate their diversity, emphasizing values and lessons for thinking big in terms of conservation goals. Recognizing the global significance of these wetlands is an important first step toward forging global conservation solutions. Each of the world's largest wetlands requires a basinwide sustainable management strategy built on new institutional frameworks—at international, national, and regional levels—to ensure provision of their vital services.

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