



IUCN
WORLD PARKS
CONGRESS
SYDNEY 2014

*Parks, people, planet:
inspiring solutions*

Healthy Wetlands Healthy People

Hilary Wheater

BA (*Sustainable Development*)

www.fragyle.org.au

Wetlands: sources of sickness or vital Ecosystem Services?

- Wetlands have long been considered to be sources of sickness and breeding grounds of parasites. They have been drained and diverted, developed, built upon and used as rubbish dumps.
- Huge percentages of wetlands have been lost throughout the world.
- However, In the 1970s and 1980s scientists began to identify the part that wetlands play in the grand scale of our existence on this Planet.
- They discovered that wetlands perform many functions and many services which are essential to the balance and maintenance of



Ecosystem Services: The Key to our Future Health & Wellbeing?



Wetlands provide these services to the planet unseen, unsung and, in the main, unrecognised.

Wetlands provide a further service to mankind that could provide the key to our future health and sustainability and the basis for our sanity and wellbeing as our lives become increasingly directed by technology.

Man has lost contact with Nature

As more and more leisure time is spent surfing the net, indulging in TV, social media and playing computer games, less and less time is spent outdoors exercising and communicating with nature.

The cost of obesity to Australian tax payers is \$56 billion a year and rising. Obesity is a significant contributor to depressive disorder.



Directed Attention Fatigue



Work-related stress and depression are together heading to become the second most disabling conditions in the world by 2020 behind heart disease.

Work related stress is a product of **“Directed Attention Fatigue”**.

“Directed Attention” is the conscious focusing of the mind. When it is fatigued or impaired we cease to function rationally.

“Attention Restoration Theory”

This syndrome was recognised as long ago as 1892 when William James introduced his “**Attention Restoration Theory**”.

His theory required:

- 1 To “**go away**” to a place that required no mental activity,
- 2 The environment must “**fascinate**”. It must have something of interest,
- 3 The environment had to have “**extent**”.
It must be rich and varied enough to engage the mind in a totally different direction,
- 4 It must be “**compatible**”.

Put all these factors together and, James alleged, the mind will be restored. Sanity will return.



Healthy Wetlands: Healthy People

- Wetlands can fascinate; no mental activity whatsoever is required to appreciate them.
- Wetlands are rich and varied and can occupy the mind and take it in a totally different direction.
- Wetlands, therefore, are not merely sources of sickness and breeding places of parasites.



Nature's Health Clinics

Harnessed and managed correctly wetlands hold the key to our health and sustainability and the basis for the future sanity and wellbeing of mankind.

They are Nature's Health Clinics, free but priceless, sustainable and reliable, bringing us continual health and wellbeing in our world.

