What constitutes a wetland?

Zimbabwe has recently become a contracting party to the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar defines a wetland as: “areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is status of flowing, fresh, brackish or salty…”

In North America the US Fish and Wildlife Service considers wetlands as “lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water.” (Breen et al. 1997)

The South African Department of Environment Affairs defines this, inter alia, as follows: “Marshes, bogs, swamps, vleis and sponges are examples of wetlands.”