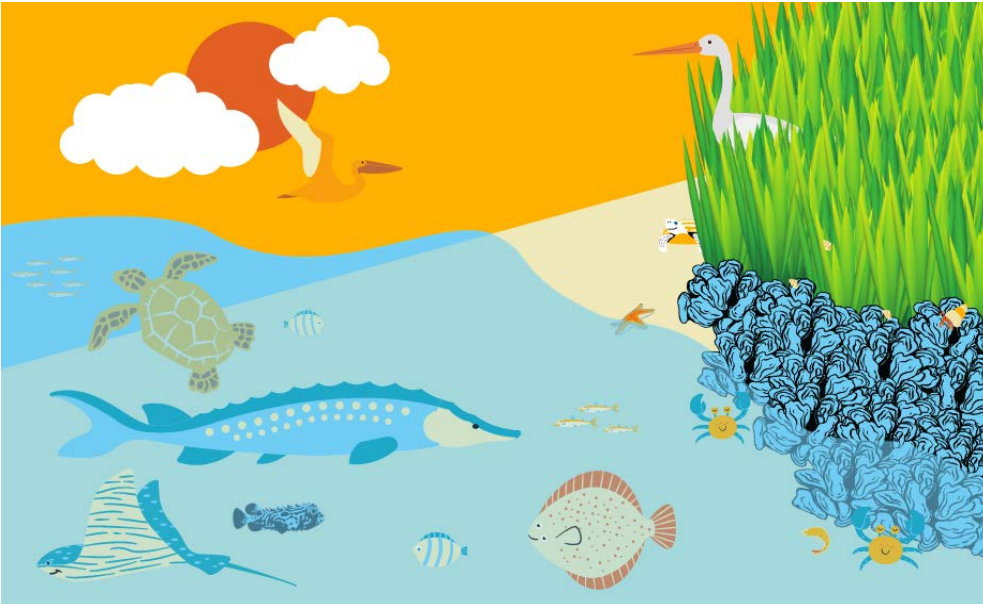


Sea Science

A Series by SCDNR Marine Resources Division

The Salt Marsh

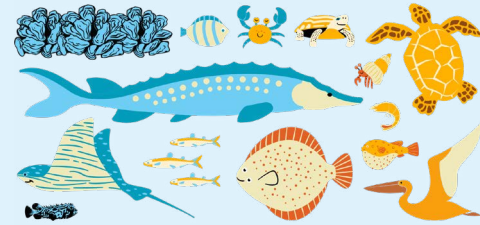


The salt marsh defines South Carolina's estuaries, where our rivers meet the sea. It gives life to our most important fisheries, absorbs the wrath of hurricanes and serves as the playground of locals and tourists alike. The salt marsh's tall grasses and oyster beds are flooded and drained twice daily by the tide, creating a unique and ever-changing habitat for thousands of animals. Sheltered within the tall grasses, you can find diamondback terrapins living alongside blue crabs, eastern mud snails and marsh periwinkles. Red drum, southern flounder and striped burrfish glide through brackish water alongside bottlenose dolphin, who visit the marsh at high tide. Offshore fishes and horseshoe crabs visit each year to lay their eggs, leaving them to grow into adults within its protective creeks. Local and migrating shorebirds flock to the marsh for rest and food at low tide. Even sea turtles and manatees can be spotted in the warmer months, traveling beside boaters and paddle boarders.

Just like these creatures, we too rely on the salt marsh for food and protection. It provides our favorite seafood and our favorite hobbies while filtering pollutants from our water and absorbing the shock waves of strong storms that threaten our homes. South Carolina alone has 350,000 acres of salt marshes and tidal creeks! It is our job to enjoy this beautiful resource and to ensure its protection and health for future generations of shorebirds, fish, turtles and humans alike.

Salt Marshes do many things:

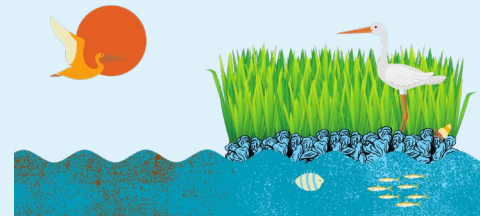
Support 100's of species



Prevent Erosion



Filter Water



Stop Storm Surge



Find the full Sea Science Series by SCDNR at bit.ly/seasciences

Protecting the Salt Marsh

Despite the importance of the salt marsh, there are many human actions today that threaten these ecosystems. More and more of our coastlines are being developed. More people living along the coast means more pollution and more fishing in our waters. Additionally, salt marshes are damaged by rising sea levels and storm damage from climate change.

To reverse damage to our salt marshes, SCDNR plants marsh grass and oyster shells to restore natural habitat. We even have researchers developing easier ways to restore the salt marsh. To prevent serious declines in our fish populations, SCDNR monitors our fish populations and recommends the state set catch limits and size restrictions for keeping certain fish.

If you'd like to help protect our salt marsh, there are some easy things you can do today:



Clean up your neighborhood.

Collecting litter from our streets and pet waste from our yards prevents harmful bacteria and pollutants from washing into our local waterways.



Reduce your waste. Using reusable water bottles, bags, and utensils limits the amount of plastics that end up in our environment.



Buy a fishing license. Your money will be used to protect and restore our natural resources like our salt marshes.



Threats to the Salt Marsh



Overfishing



Coastal Development



Climate Change



Pollution