

THE SALT MARSH AT ONEIDA SANCTUARY

A salt marsh is an area inhabited by salt-tolerant grasses that are covered and uncovered by changing tides twice each day.

Salt marsh grasses are homes for many animals throughout the year. The changing tides, water depths, salt concentrations, and temperatures make the salt marsh a dynamic and challenging habitat in which to survive.

Salt marshes are one of the most productive systems in nature.

As the grasses brown and die, bacteria break them down and create a rich, soup-like food. This mix of nutrients, bacteria and plant debris in the water nourishes microscopic plants and animals, invertebrates and fish. In turn, these shrimp, crabs, and small fish provide food for larger fish and birds such as herons and egrets.

Different animals can be seen here depending on the season, changing tides, times of day, and weather.

We welcome your questions and reports of wildlife sightings.

Salt marshes are nurseries for many organisms including young fish that move to deeper ocean waters as adults.

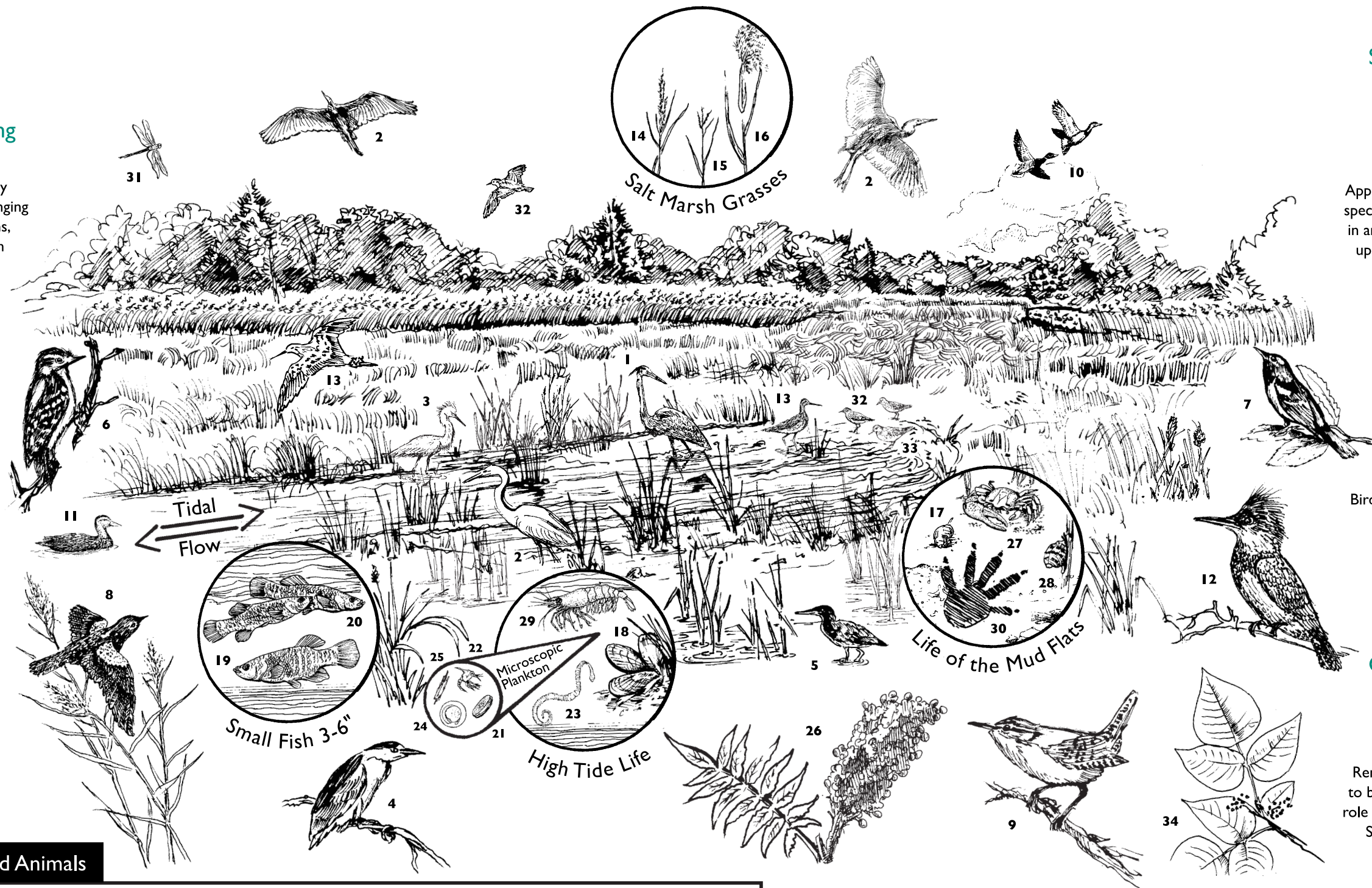
Approximately 80% of commercial seafood species spend part or all of their lives living in and around salt marsh habitats. A close-up look at these waters shows a rich mix of young fish, shrimp, crabs and other forms of marine life.

More than 350 migratory and resident bird species use salt marshes and habitats nearby, to rest, nest, breed, and feed all year long.

Birds traveling from as far as the Canadian arctic and South American rain forests stop in this sanctuary. Some of these visiting birds may be rare, endangered or threatened with extinction.

At least 50% of Connecticut's salt marshes have disappeared due to dredging and filling in the last 200 years.

Remaining salt marshes like this one need to be protected to preserve their valuable role in supporting the health of Long Island Sound's wildlife. Audubon Greenwich is involved in this important effort.



Species Key to Plants and Animals

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|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Great Blue Heron | 8 Red-winged Blackbird | 15 Salt Meadow Hay (Up to 3' ft tall) | 22 Crab larvae | 29 Common Grass Shrimp |
| 2 Great Egret | 9 Carolina Wren | 16 Common Reed (Up to 14' ft tall) | 23 Bloodworm | 30 Raccoon footprint |
| 3 Snowy Egret | 10 Mallard | 17 Mud Snail | 24 Fish egg/larva | 31 Green Darter Dragonfly |
| 4 Black-crowned Night Heron | 11 Black Duck | 18 Ribbed Mussel | 25 Plant Debris (Detritus) | 32 Least Sandpiper |
| 5 Green Heron | 12 Belted Kingfisher | 19 Mummichog | 26 Smooth Sumac | 33 Semipalmated Sandpiper |
| 6 Downy Woodpecker | 13 Greater Yellowlegs | 20 Striped Killifish | 27 Mud Fiddler Crab | 34 Poison Ivy |
| 7 Baltimore Oriole | 14 Salt Marsh Grass (Up to 5' ft tall) | 21 Diatom (microscopic algae) | 28 Salt Marsh Snail | |

In loving memory of Murray Allin Mortimer, whose spirited love of and care for nature live on in this wildlife sanctuary.

This sign was made possible by the Audubon Greenwich Executives for Conservation Group.

 **Audubon** GREENWICH
Connecting People with Nature

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