



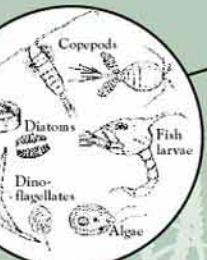
From Marshes to Mudflats



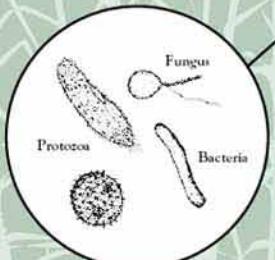
Terrestrial insects and spiders are among the most abundant marsh organisms.



Epifauna are organisms that inhabit the surface of the bottom. Individual species may be grazers, predators or detritivores.



Plankton come in many shapes and sizes. Some are invisible to the eye while others appear as small floating specks.



Microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi and protozoa play an important role in the decomposition of detritus (organic matter). They process this material to a level where it may be consumed by other organisms.

Plants within the tidal marsh are found in zones that correspond to individual physical tolerances. Each species may spread or decline in response to changing annual conditions.

Salt Grass-extreme high tide

Pickleweed-normal high tide

Cord Grass-normal low tide

Salt Grass

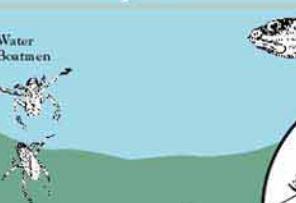
Pickleweed

Cord Grass

Ribbed Mussel



Staghorn Sculpin



Paddle Worm



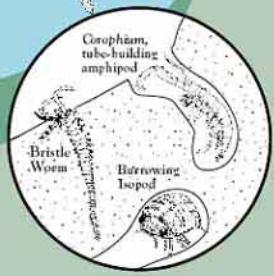
Clam Worm



Gem Clam



Baltic Clam



Infauna refers to animals that live within the sediments.

Within the sloughs, salt marshes, mudflats and shallow waters of the Baylands, plants and animals are part of an open, interconnected, living system. Each form of life depends on the presence of others to survive. Energy cycles through the food chain in dynamic, ever changing habitats governed by the ebb and flow of the tide.

Phytoplankton, the microscopic plants that drift at the mercy of the water's movement, are the basis of the food chain. They are the food source for small floating animals called zooplankton. The zooplankton, in turn, are eaten by invertebrates (animals without backbones) such as shrimp, marine worms and clams. Birds, fish, mammals and other wildlife feed on these smaller invertebrates.

Each species in the wetland has evolved to tolerate a certain range of physical conditions. Their survival is influenced by water salinity, sediment type, slope and period of submergence.

LIFE BEYOND THE EYE