



Parks as Classrooms—Secrets of the Salt Marsh, Grade Bands 6-8



Grade Level: Upper Elementary/Middle School

State Standard: MS-LS2 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

Learning Objectives:

Students will learn how salt marshes form and how they support the organisms that live there.

Vocabulary

Estuary

Food Webs

Tides

Salinity

Activity 1—It's All Connected

Estuaries are tough places to live - they change from dry to flooded, and varying salinity daily with the tides. Look up 2-3 organisms that live in a salt marsh, read about them. Write down your answers to these questions: 1) How do these organism survive in the salt marsh? What do they eat? What structures or behaviors help them adapt? 2) How do these organisms interact with each other? 3) Are these organisms important to people, and if so how—think food, jobs, traditional recreational activities?

Watch: Ranger Val in this video of the [inertidal zone](#) to start thinking about life “in the zone”



Activity 2—Amazing Salt Marsh Plants

Salt Marsh plants need to be able to live in a salty environment. How does salt affect plants? Get 2 cups. Put plain tap water in one cup. Put tap water and a few tablespoons of salt in the other cup. Mix well. Place 2 slices of raw potato in each cup. Wait 20 minutes. Take the potato slices out of the cups and compare the slices from the salt water to the plain tap water. Salt marsh plants are able to remove salt from the seawater and excrete it through their leaves keeping the freshwater.

Side Trip: Visit Nauset Marsh by the Salt Pond Visitor Center in Eastham. Walk out on the marsh and observe the different plants growing there. Try to identify 2-3 species. The plants growing closest to the water are the most salt tolerant (such as cord grass) and further away from the water are less tolerant (like salt hay).