

## Life in the Estuary

### Charting the Course

In this exercise students will become acquainted with the many plants and animals of the Estuary as they search for information about the appearance and life history of a particular species. Students will prepare reports and share information with their classmates orally and via a field guide, which the class constructs.

### Background

The Delaware Estuary provides important habitat to a variety of plants animals. More than 130 species live in the Estuary. The Delaware Estuary is noted for being a vital habitat for migratory shorebirds and for having the largest population of spawning horseshoe crabs in the world.

**Objectives** / Students will be able to:

1. Name important animals and plants of the Delaware Estuary.
2. Relate key life history characteristics of prominent estuarine species.

### Procedure / Warm Up

Open a class discussion about how estuaries support a diverse suite of organisms. Ask students if they can name an animal that lives in the bay.

## The Activity

1. Have students select a plant or animal from the species list in Table 1.
2. Have students conduct research/report on their species finding information indicated on the student report worksheet.
3. Have students orally present their research.
4. Construct class “Field Guide of Delaware Estuary Plants and Animals” by compiling student reports.

**TABLE 1**

### Animals of the Delaware Estuary

#### Fish

American Shad  
Striped Bass  
Spot  
Clearnose Skate  
Winter Flounder  
Atlantic Sturgeon  
Summer Flounder  
Bay Anchovy  
Weakfish  
Atlantic Menhaden  
Angel Shark  
Black Drum

#### Shellfish

Eastern Oyster  
Channeled Whelk  
Oyster Drill  
Blue Mussel  
Ribbed Mussel  
Blue Crab  
Atlantic Horseshoe Crab  
Black Fingered Mud Crab  
Common Razor Clam  
Hard shell Clam

**Wrap Up** / Share knowledge through oral presentations. Conduct a class discussion about which animals/plants students found most interesting.

## Activity 1.3

- Grade Level  
**3-5**
- Subject Areas  
**Science, Language Arts**
- Duration  
**1-2 class periods plus independent work time**
- Setting  
**Classroom**
- Skills  
**Reading, research, writing**
- Vocabulary  
**Habitat, Ecosystem**
- Correlation with Next Generation Science Standards  
**2-LS4-1, 3-LS2-1**

### Materials:

- Delaware Estuary animals list
- Student Worksheet-Activity 1.3
- Reference materials (books, internet, others information sources)
- Binders and materials for compilation of reports/Field Guide construction

**Student Worksheet** Activity 1.3 — Life in the Estuary

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**TABLE 1**

**Animals of the Delaware Estuary**

**Fish**

- American Shad
- Striped Bass
- Spot
- Clearnose Skate
- Winter Flounder
- Atlantic Sturgeon
- Summer Flounder
- Bay Anchovy
- Weakfish
- Atlantic Menhaden
- Angel Shark
- Black Drum

**Shellfish**

- Eastern Oyster
- Channeled Whelk
- Oyster Drill
- Blue Mussel
- Ribbed Mussel
- Blue Crab
- Atlantic Horseshoe Crab
- Black Fingered Mud Crab
- Common Razor Clam
- Hard shell Clam

1. Name of Animal

2. Scientific name of Animal

3. Describe appearance

**Draw or place illustration of your animal here**

# Student Worksheet Activity 1.3 — Life in the Estuary

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Life History and Characteristic

a. Habitat

b. Life cycle

c. Food

d. Predators

**Fun Fact:**