

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	Shellfish
American Shad	Eastern Oyster
Striped Bass	Channeled Whelk
Spot	Oyster Drill
Clearnose Skate	Blue Mussel
Winter Flounder	Ribbed Mussel
Atlantic Sturgeon	Blue Crab
Summer Flounder	Atlantic Horseshoe Crab
Bay Anchovy	Black Fingered Mud Crab
Weakfish	Common Razor Clam
Atlantic Menhaden	Hard shell Clam
Angel Shark	
Black Drum	

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

- 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	Shellfish
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Angel Shark	
Black Drum	

1. Name of Animal

Draw or place illustration of your animal here

2. Scientific name of Animal

3. Describe appearance

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: