

# A SALT MARSH STORY

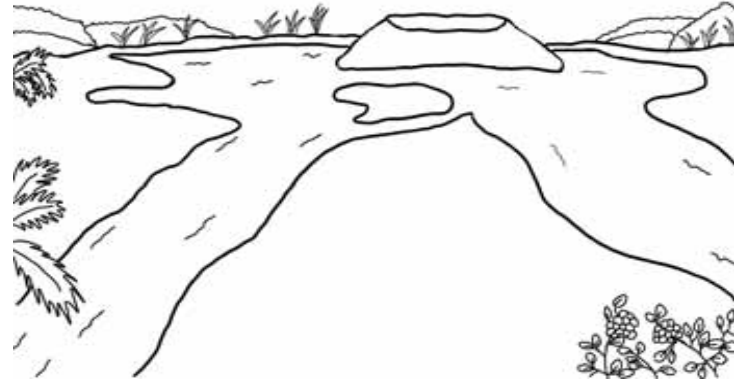


STORY AND COLORING PAGES

CREATED BY ZOE ALLEN AND CATHERINE TERRONES

# A Salt Marsh Story:

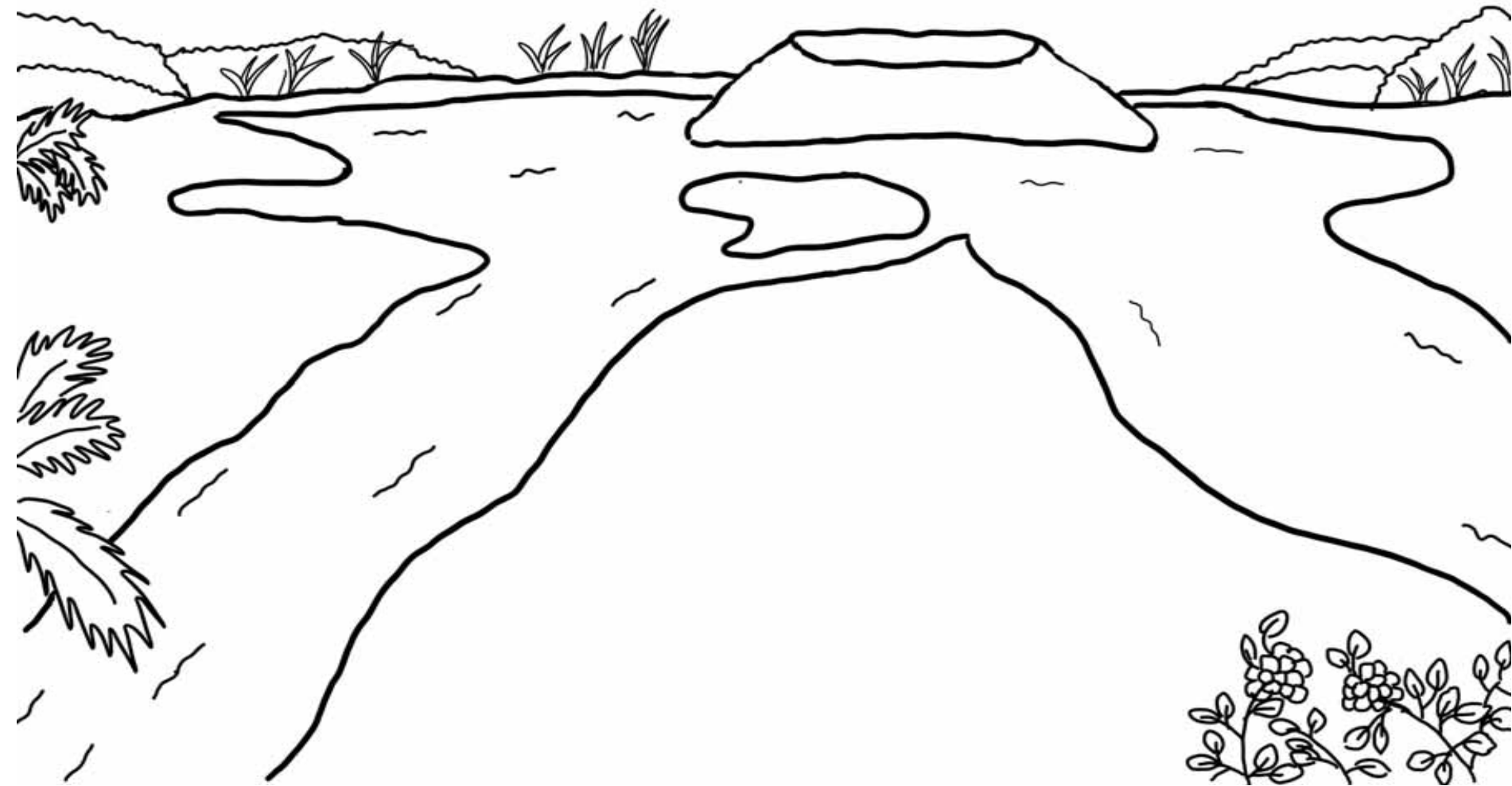
A Salt Marsh is a muddy habitat that gets flooded by salt water tides from an ocean or bay.



Twice a day the tide rises and falls, and it brings new animals and changes with each tide. Water covers or uncovers the mud and eelgrasses. Birds fly in and out. Fish and sharks swim in and swim out with the tide.

Salinas de San Pedro at Cabrillo Beach, in Los Angeles, California, is a restored habitat. A hundred years ago, the Los Angeles Harbor was a large networks of inlets, islands, and marshes.

As the Los Angeles Harbor grew, the salt marsh got smaller and smaller. Salinas de San Pedro and the eelgrass beds of our Inner Cabrillo Beach have turned this corner of the harbor back into a muddy Salt Marsh Habitat.



# Native Plant Garden

At Salinas de San Pedro, we have planted many California native plants along the walkway to the entrance, and around the Marsh.

*What is sticky, and tastes like lemonade without the sugar?*

Why Lemonade berry plant of course!

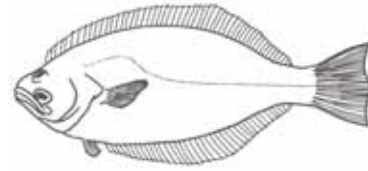
Their seeds mature in the warm sun all Spring. When the seeds turn red, the lemon flavored slime covering the seeds is a great treat if you like sour lemon flavor!

*Why might the seeds of a plant have a sour slime covering them? Do you think that helps the plant in any way? Why?*





# Fly, Swim, or Walk...



The Salinas de San Pedro sees many visitors. Some fly, some swim, some float, and some walk. Animals come to rest or eat, and many are simply following the tide.

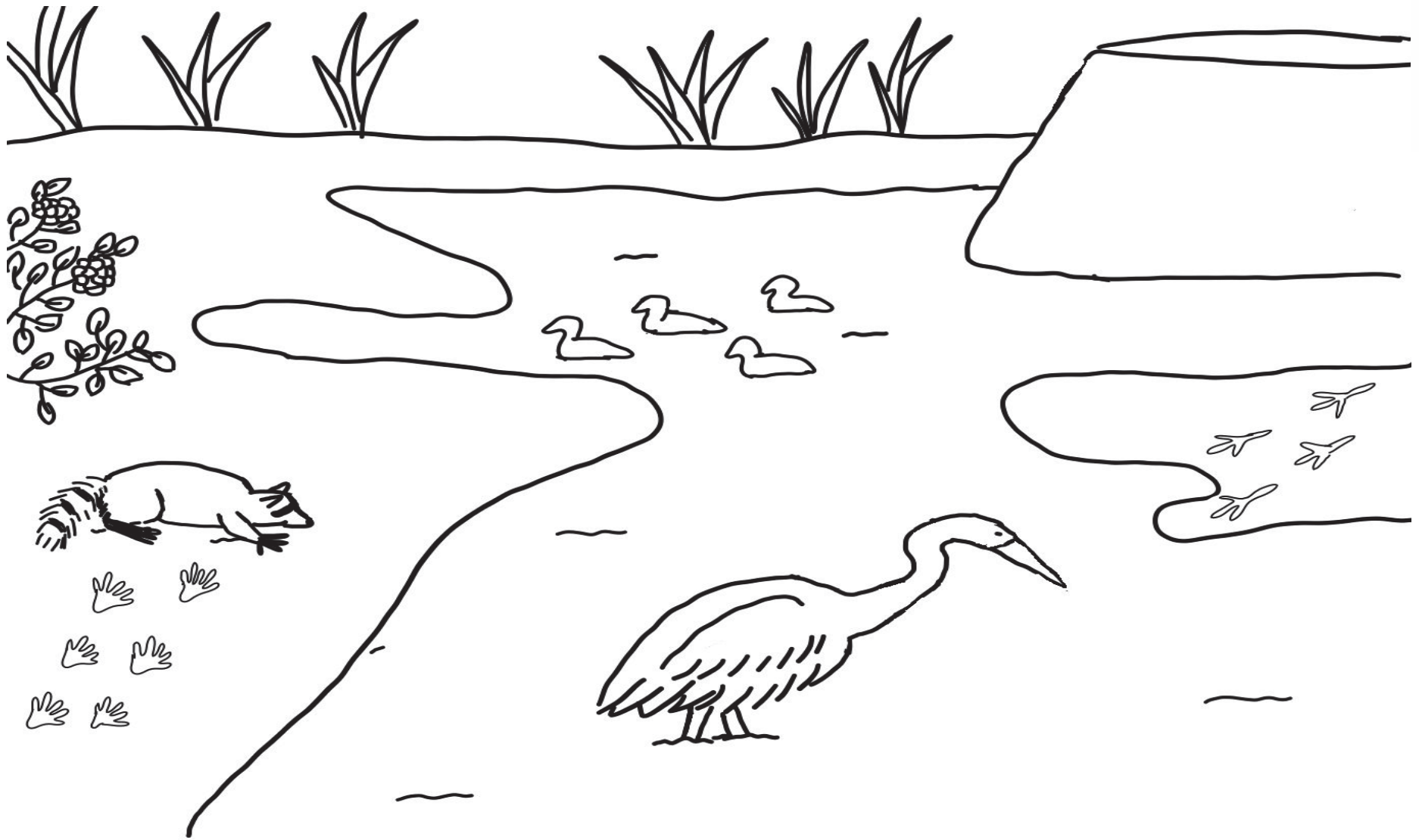
*Can you imagine what we might see if we visited the Salinas de San Pedro today?*

We might see birds like the Snowy Egret or Great Blue Heron hunting in the water and mud.

Smoothhound sharks, and Round Stingrays swim in or out with the tides. Mullet fish jump in the pools around the island grow more shallow. Small schools of shimmering silver-side fish turn in the water.

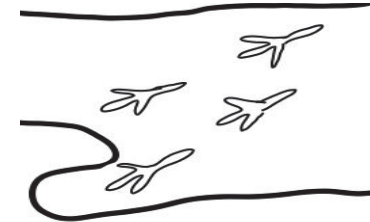
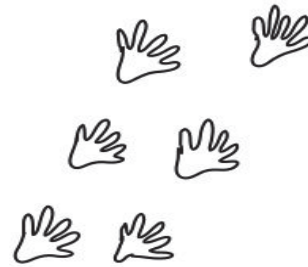
Many times we see Racoons playing, napping, or swimming, (yes they can doggy paddle, we've all seen it!) around the mudflats.

*Can you think of some reasons why this habitat would get so many visitors?*



Cabrillo  
Marine  
Aquarium

# Tracks in the Mud



Mud in a salt marsh can be squishy and slippery, a little bit like clay or wet cement.

We can learn about our marsh by looking at the different tracks and burrow holes in the mud.

*What are some things that we could learn or study using tracks in the mud?*

The Great Blue Heron makes the largest tracks in our marsh. Some of the smallest tracks are made by the Sanderlings, tiny shore birds that feed along the edge of the marsh.

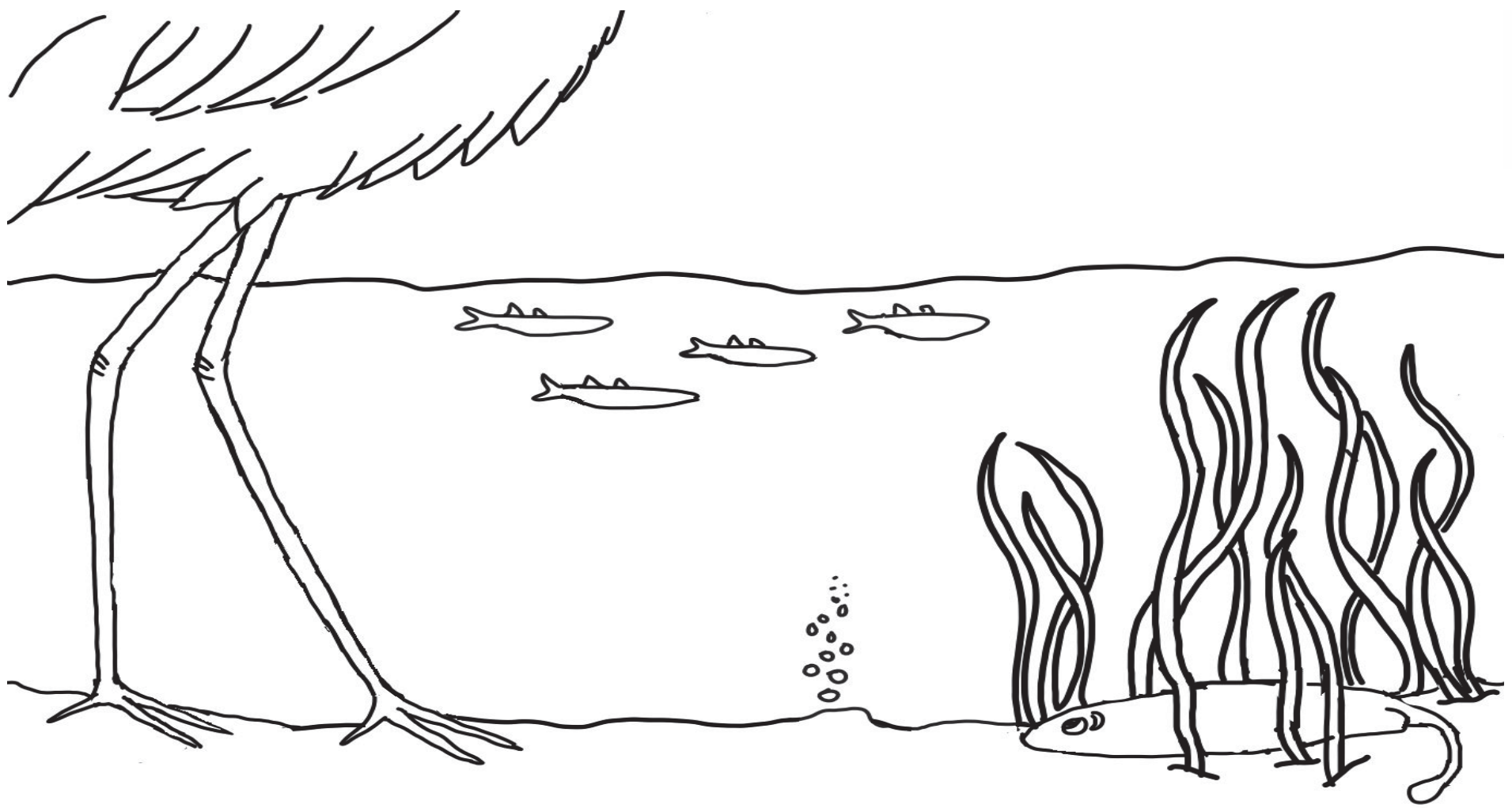
Racoons are natural part of a salt marsh habitat. They can feed on crabs, shrimp, clams, bird eggs and other animals that might be present in a marsh.

*Do you think it's difficult to walk in the mud? Why or why not?*



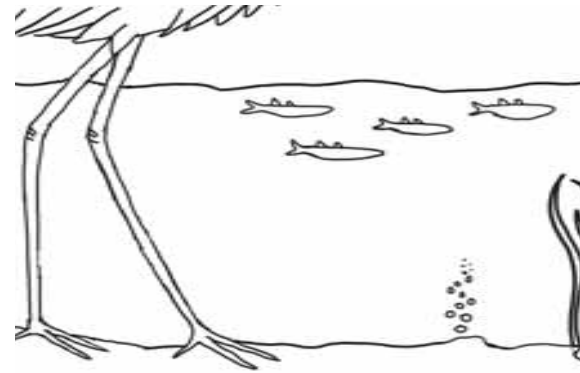


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# Wading in the Shallows

*Can you imagine which animals might like to wade in the water when it is shallow?*



Great Blue Heron or Snowy Egret like to hunt in shallow pools of water.

*What about their bodies and beaks helps them do this?*

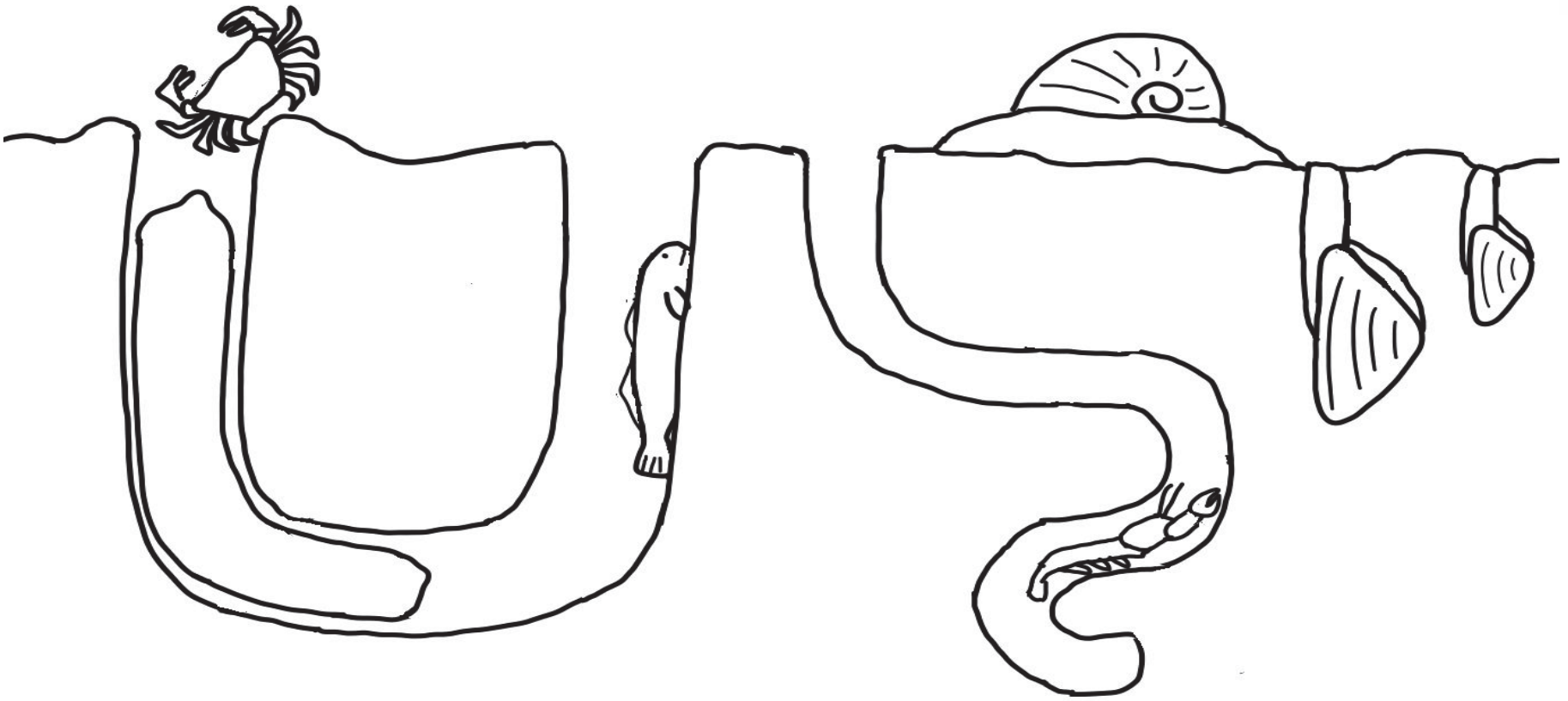
Many fish, sharks and rays benefit from shallow water. *Why would it be helpful to them?*

Some birds that hunt from the sky, hover over the water, and dive in to catch their prey like the Belted Kingfisher, or even the Osprey.

*Might shallow waters or smaller pools be helpful to them? Why or why not? Can you describe and explain your answer?*



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# Burrows and Slime Trails

*What lives under the mud? How do they live there?  
And why?*

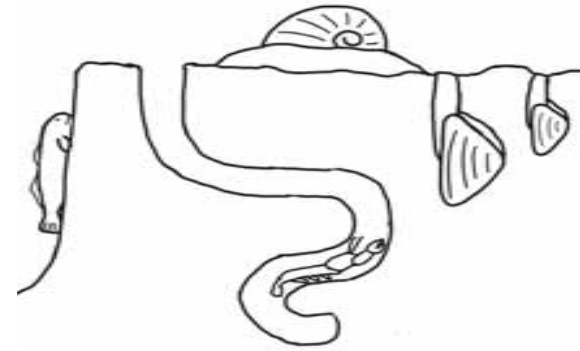
*What do you think it's like to live in the mud?*

Burrowers like Ghost Shrimp make long 'Y' shaped burrows.

Clams dig down by using their burrowing foot. Even some fish like the Tidewater Goby live in the burrows that other animals make.

*What are some advantages of living in a burrow? What might be difficult about it?*

Snails like the Moon Snail are predatory. They follow the slime trails of other snails and are able to drill into the shells of other animals, like clams and snails and eat them.



# What is Blue Carbon?

Blue Carbon is carbon from the atmosphere, or from decomposing plants and animals that gets stored for short or very long periods of time in the a Marine (water) environment.



*What do you imagine mud is made of? Does more mud get made over time? Why or Why not?*

Marine plants in salt marshes absorb carbon, give off oxygen, and “sink” the carbon they absorb down through their root systems into the mud or soil.

Dead and decaying plants and animal matter, when left undisturbed to decay, build up more and more carbon in the mud. This turns marshes into very stable carbon “sinks”.

Trapping carbon and other elements in the mud is just one of the ways a salt marsh is important and why it is considered a Coastal Blue Carbon Habitat.



# A Salt Marsh Story

Create your own salt marsh story!



You can use the slides and animals pictured here, or from any of our salt marsh materials, to tell a story. You might choose to tell a story from the point of view of one of the animals or plants that you've learned about.

*Why is that animal or plant visiting or living in the Salt Marsh? How does it adapt to the changing tides? How might it get shelter and food? What effects do humans have on this animal or plant? How are marshes important to humans?*

These are some questions to think about as you tell a story from the point of view of an animal or plant. Be creative and have fun!

# Find a Wetland Near You!

Southern California is a network  
of changing wetlands, rivers and streams.  
We can find these habitats surrounding us today.



[Dominguez Gap Wetland - Long Beach](#)

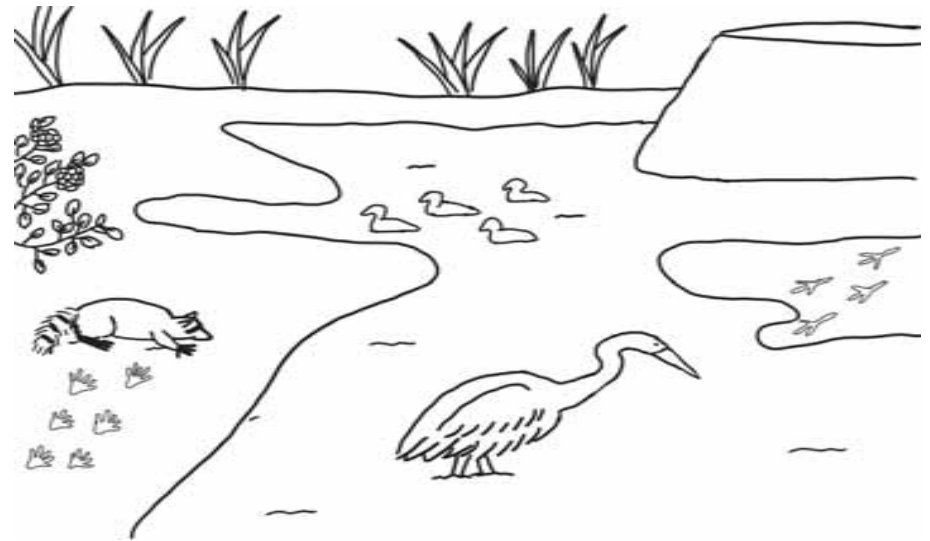
[Gardena Willows Wetland](#)

[Ballona Wetlands - Marina Del Rey](#)

[Chino Creek and Wetlands](#)

[Friends of Madrona Marsh](#)

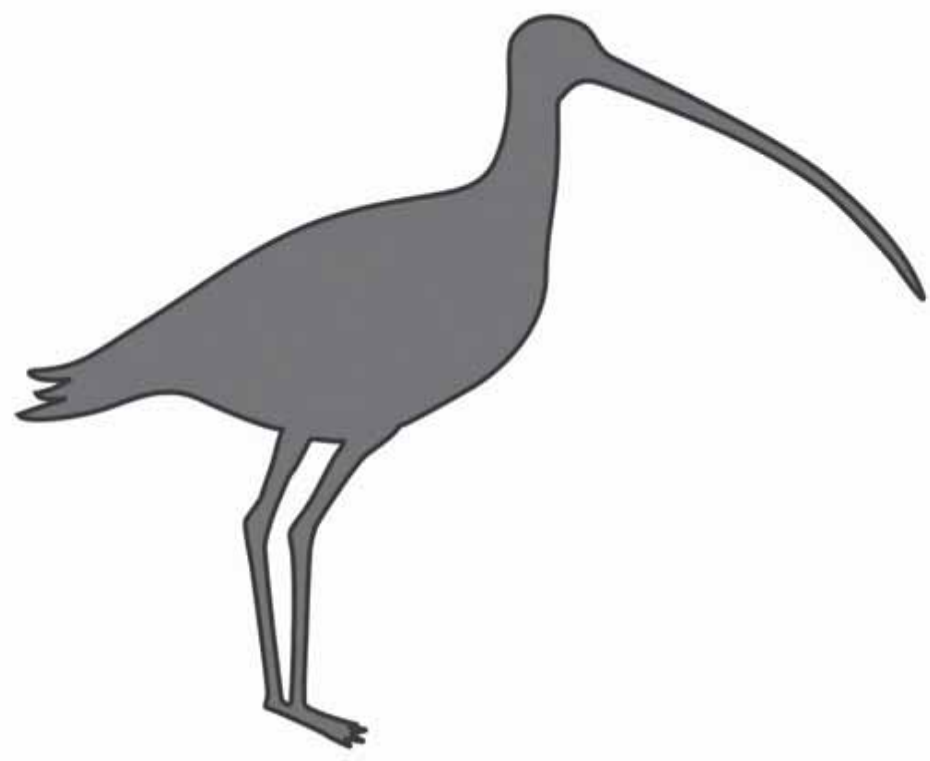
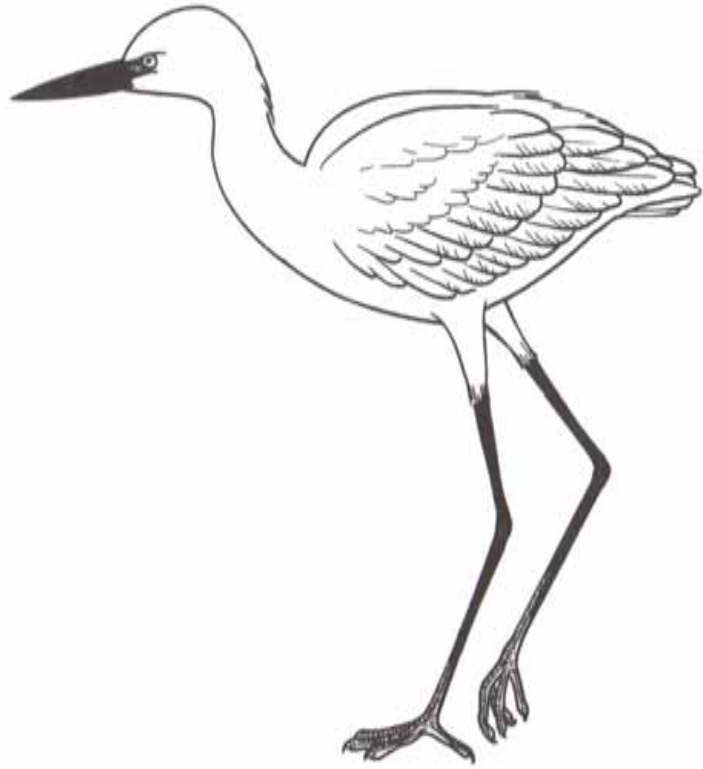
[Los Cerritos Wetlands](#)







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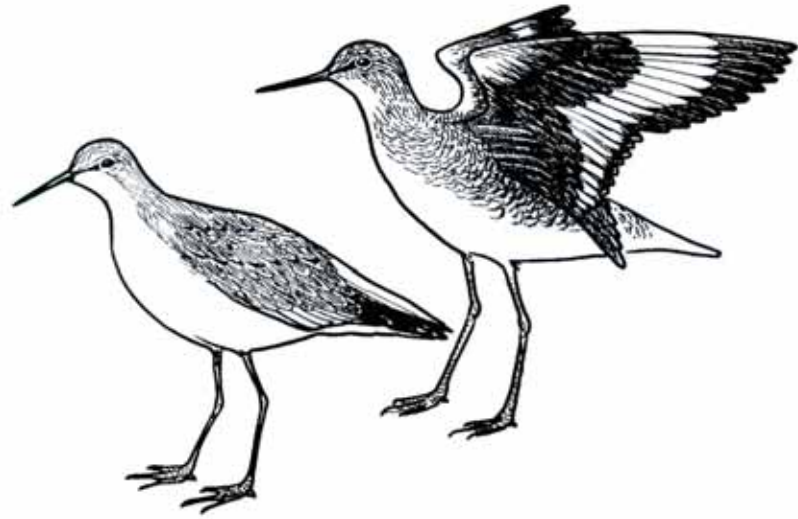
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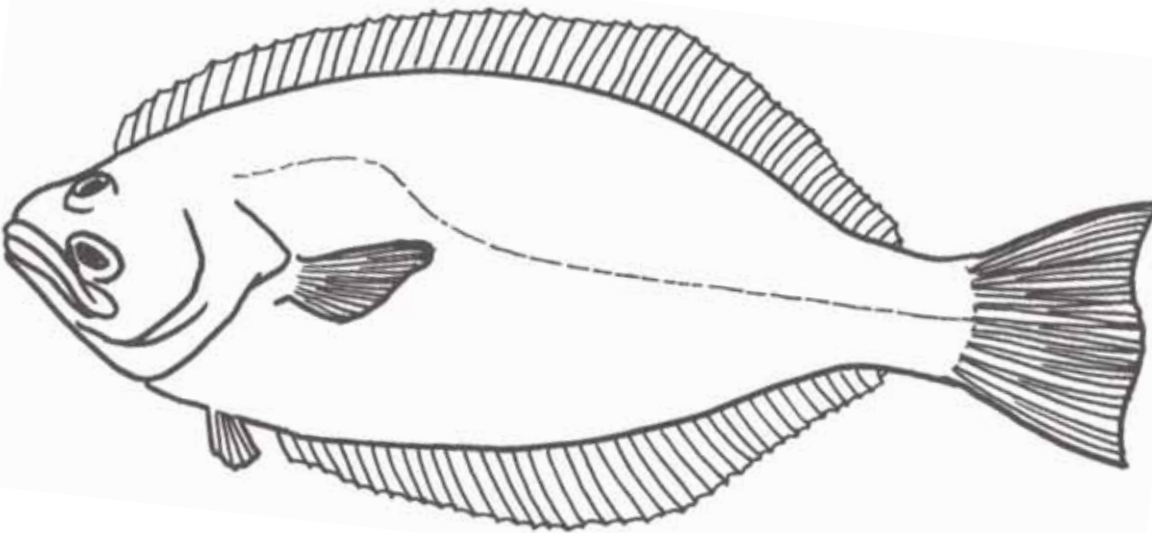
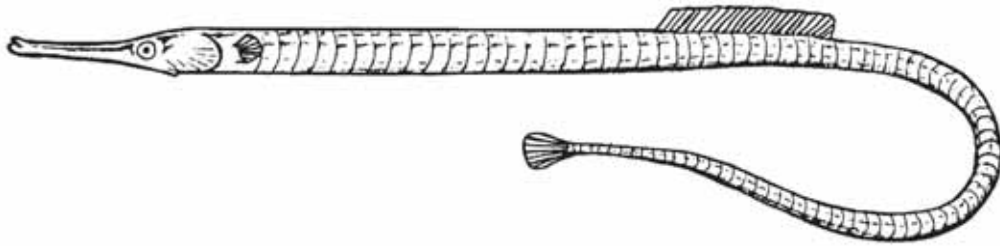
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