

Deep Sea Learning with Georgia Aquarium



Estuaries and Mangroves Fact Sheet:

Key Terms and Facts:

- **Estuary:** Where freshwater from the lands meets saltwater from the sea, creating brackish water.
- Estuaries are among the most productive ecosystems in the world. Many animals rely on estuaries for food, places to breed and migration stopovers.
- The largest estuary system in the United States is the Chesapeake Bay.
- The majority of our world's largest cities are located along estuaries.
- Estuaries are often called the "nurseries of the sea" because so many marine animals reproduce and spend the early part of their lives there.



Why are estuary systems important?

- They are incredibly productive ecosystems that help protect coastlines from erosion, especially during storms.
- They create a protective environment for many species to grow and develop. Animals like fish, sharks, invertebrates and birds depend on mangroves for their young to survive.
- Estuaries are a natural filtration system for pollution before it gets to the ocean.
- Animals like oysters live in estuaries and are very effective at filtering out pollutants from the water.
- Humans also depend on estuaries for food, recreation and jobs.



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Key Terms:

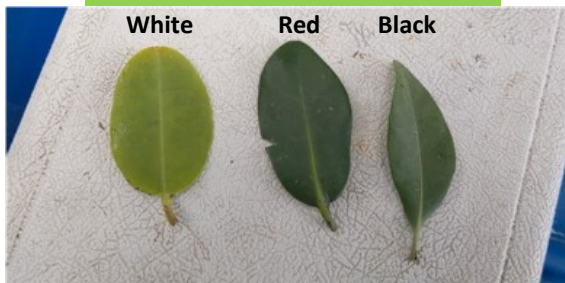
- **Mangrove:** A type of tree that can grow in salt or brackish water.
- **Propagule:** Fully mature 'seed' of a red mangrove. These are pencil shaped and can grow to around 10-12 inches in length.
- **Particulates:** Small particles of matter.
- **Prop Roots:** Large, dense root systems of red mangroves that stabi-



How are Mangroves threatened?

- As coastal development and population grows around the world, mangrove trees that make up an important component of the estuary ecosystem can be damaged.
- Mangroves are particularly sensitive to pollutants such as:
 - ◇ Improperly disposed of pet waste
 - ◇ Agricultural fertilizer runoff
 - ◇ Untreated sewage water
 - ◇ Sediment runoff from coastal development projects

Mangrove Leaves:



Here are some ways you can help estuaries:

- Conserve water whenever possible.
- Follow disposal instructions on yard or household chemicals.
- Refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Follow local laws about the use of yard fertilizers during rainy months.
- Volunteer to help preserve estuary reserves!