



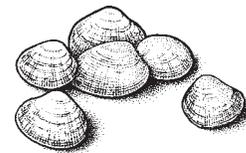
I'm proud to be a **GREAT BLUE HERON**. Just look at my graceful long neck, powerful pointed beak, and great legs! What could be better for hanging out in shallow water and catching fish? Estuaries are good places for me to find food, but I also like ponds, rivers, wetlands, ditches -- anywhere wet. You'll never catch me swimming. I'm strictly the wading type.



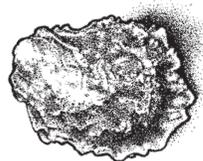
I'm the dead stuff, **DETRITUS**. I may not be a "critter" but I'm SO important, SO connected to everyone, and SO teeming with bacteria that I definitely belong at this party. I'm bursting with stored up energy. You can think of me as the corner grocery. My bacteria are munching away, unlocking goodies for everyone else to enjoy. I give the mud that beautiful color. My bacteria contribute to the lovely smell.



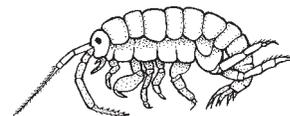
I'm a bent-nose **MACOMA CLAM**. Don't you think I'm well adapted to life in the mud flat? I'm thin enough to slip into the thick mud. My two siphons are just what I need to suck detritus off the mud surface and spit out the inedible particles. I'm a lovely mud-gray color so I'm hard to spot by hungry gulls. I don't have any eyes, so life down under doesn't bother me a bit.



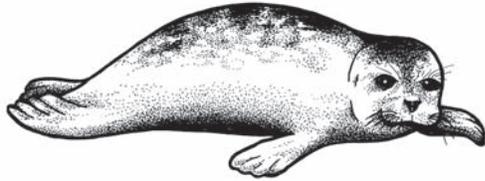
LITTLENECK CLAM means that I can't burrow very deep. My short neck has to be within reach of the mud's surface. I suck in the water through my siphon and filter out the plankton and detritus. Gulls really like me because they don't have to dig far to find me. People like me for the very same reason. When the tide is low, I just pull in my neck, close up tight, and wait for the water to return.



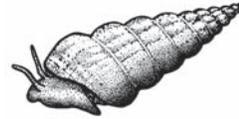
I'm an **OYSTER**, and I love estuaries. In fact, you won't find me anywhere else. In Washington, I'm a big money maker for shellfish growers. I have to have clean water, though or people can't eat me. Like clams and mussels, I filter plankton and detritus from the estuary water. In fact, I can filter 25 gallons of water each day. That's a lot for a little animal like me!



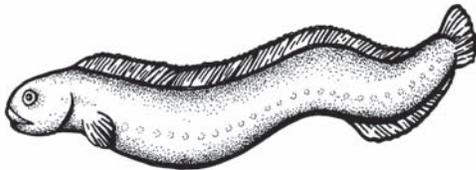
I am an **AMPHIPOD**. I am about the size of a house fly. I eat dead eelgrass which has washed up onto the shore, but other kinds of amphipods may eat things like smaller crustaceans (crab relatives), green algae, or diatoms (phytoplankton). I don't like fish such as salmon, perch, or herring, but they sure like me (to eat)!



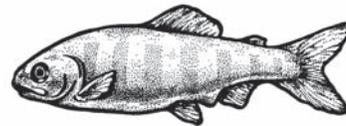
I'm a **HARBOR SEAL** and although my big eyes make me look "cute", I'm really a large predator with fierce teeth. I eat over twenty species of fish in Puget Sound with my favorites being sculpin, herring, and hake. You can tell me apart from other marine mammals by my small size, spots, and lack of external ears.



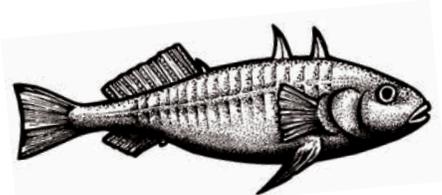
You can call me **MUD SNAIL**, although **BATILLARIA** is my true name. I'm a foreigner, imported from Japan, and I really love my new home. There's detritus everywhere for me to eat, and the mud is covered with microscopic plants called diatoms. Yum! I don't worry about drying out on sunny days. Even when the tide is low, the mud stays nice and wet, and I can always close my operculum if it gets too dry.



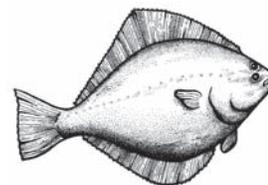
I'm a **GUNNEL**, one of several different species of gunnels found in Padilla Bay's eelgrass. Some people see my long, thin body, and think I'm an eel, but I'm not. Some gunnels can get to be a foot and a half long though 6"-10" is more common. I eat smaller animals like snails, clams, and little crabs.



I'm a young **SALMON SMOLT**. I'm one of thousands of migrating juvenile Chinook, coho, pink, and chum salmon that come down to the estuary from rivers and nearby creeks. I use the estuary as a place for my body to adjust to the salt in the ocean. And I chow down on copepods and amphipods (plankton) living on or near the bottom. Estuaries are good places to hide from big fish, too.



I'm a **THREESPINE STICKLEBACK**, and I hang around estuaries because I can handle both fresh and salt water. You might find me hiding in the eelgrass meadow eating smaller fish, tiny crustaceans, and plankton. If a predator threatens me, I'll stick up my sharp dorsal "spines." I especially need to watch out for bigger fish, seals, and birds.



I'm a **STARRY FLOUNDER**, hard to see when I lie flat on the mud. Like most fish, I'm born with an eye on each side of my head. After about 2 weeks, one eye begins to "migrate" to the opposite side of my head, and I lie down on the eyeless side. I skim along the mud flat eating crustaceans, worms and small fish. When I'm young, skeleton shrimp are my favorites to munch.



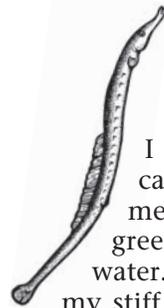
I'm a **HERMISSENDA**, a nudibranch. I must be the most beautiful animal here. I glide gracefully around the meadow with my cerrata (the frilly things sticking out of my back) rippling in the current. Those cerrata are my protection, for they contain stinging cells which taste bad to almost everyone. I like to eat eggs, little snails, other nudibranchs, bits of dead stuff -- most anything, in fact.



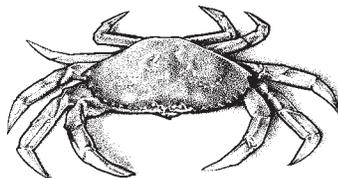
I am **EPIACTUS**, a brooding anemone. I attach myself to the blades of eelgrass where I sit and wait for plankton or detritus to touch my tentacles. I am green, like the eelgrass. I can move around, but I don't go far or fast. My babies attach to my side, so people call me a **brooding** anemone. I'm food for some nudibranchs (sea slugs) and sea stars.



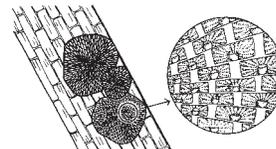
I am a **CAPRELLID AMPHIPOD**. People sometimes call me a skeleton shrimp, but I'm definitely not a shrimp. I inch my way along the eelgrass, scraping up diatoms, bacteria, and algae living on the blades. I'm prime fish food, so I hold tightly onto the eelgrass with my hooked "feet." I might win a prize for the most bizarre looking creature in the community.



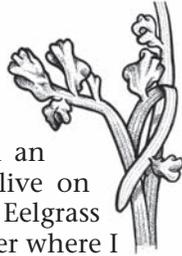
I am a **PIPEFISH**. I am perfectly camouflaged to live in the eelgrass meadow. I am long and thin and green, and swim vertically in the water. I eat plankton which I suck into my stiff mouth like a vacuum sucks up dirt. I need to watch out for larger fish and hungry crabs. My mother laid her eggs in my father's brooding pouch where I was incubated. I emerged looking like a tiny pipefish. I'm a year-round resident.



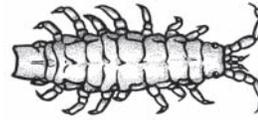
I am a small **DUNGENESS CRAB**, far too small for a crab pot. I grow pretty fast, but my skeleton is on the outside of my body so I have to molt my old shell, and grow a bigger one. The eelgrass offers me lots of hiding places, something important when diving ducks, great blue herons, and other crabs come around. My favorite foods are smaller crustaceans, clams, small fishes, and worms.



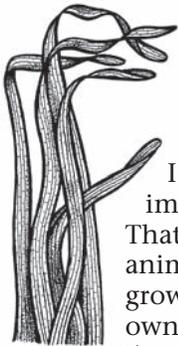
I am a **BRYOZOAN**. I live in a tiny box like case among thousands of other animals like me. My colony grows on algae or eelgrass to form a white, crusty patch the size of a quarter. I eat plankton which I catch with my tentacles. I'm not rare, I'm just small and hard to spot. Next time you go to the beach, check out algae and eelgrass that washes onto the beach, and you may find me.



I am an **ALGAE**, living on an eelgrass plant. (Plants that live on other plants are *epiphytes*.) Eelgrass holds me high up in the water where I can get the sunlight to make my own food. (That's photosynthesis!) I am food for animals like snails, amphipods, and sea slugs. If I grow too big, I may harm the eelgrass by blocking its sunlight. If my eelgrass gets eaten by a brant goose, I get eaten, too.



I am an **EELGRASS ISOPOD**, an eelgrass eater and a pretty good swimmer. I zip along from blade to blade, watching out for predators (fish). When I cling to an eelgrass blade, even the most observant fish (or human) can't see me unless I move around. I'm about an inch long and exactly the same width as a blade of eelgrass. When I was born, I rode around on my mother's back until I was big enough to take care of myself.



I am **EELGRASS**, the most important member of the bay! That's because lots of plants and animals live on or around me. I grow up to 10 feet tall, making my own food from the sun's light. Then I'm eaten by geese, ducks, isopods, snails, amphipods. . . I keep up by reproducing with both seeds and an underground stem that spreads and sends out new shoots.



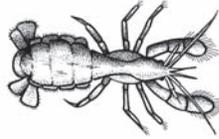
I am a **DIATOM**, a microscopic algae that can live floating in the water, coating the mud surface, or stuck to eelgrass blades. Much of the oxygen in the bay came from my photosynthesis. I reproduce by splitting in half -- pretty easy! If I get too thick on the eelgrass, I can harm my host by stealing all the sunlight. I'm eaten by lots of animals who scrape me off the blades (snails, sea slugs, skeleton shrimp).



I am a **HYDROID** that looks a bit like algae. Actually, I'm made up of lots of cooperating animals. Some of us hold on tightly to the eelgrass blade. Some of us transport food up and down the colony. Some of us are the hunters, catching plankton with stinging tentacles. Some of us produce the "baby" hydroid medusae which float around like jellyfish until they find a good place to settle down.



I am **LACUNA**, a very tiny snail that eats eelgrass and the algae attached to it. I am eaten by sea slugs and larger snails, but my hard shell keeps fish away. There is a tiny amphipod that tries to look and act like me so that fish will leave her alone, too. I lay my yellow eggs in donut-shaped rings on eelgrass blades. When danger is near, I close up tight and hope for the best.



I am the “excavator” of the mud flats, the **MUD SHRIMP**. I dig extensive burrows in the subtidal and intertidal mud which are then used by many other organisms. I'm about 3" long with a soft, bluish shell. I use my feathery pinchers to trap detritus loosened by leaflike “spinnerets” under my abdomen. Clams, worms, crabs, copepods and isopods may share my burrow.



I am **PHYLLAPLYSIA**, a beautiful, green sea slug. (Some people call me Taylor's sea slug.) I glide along the eelgrass, scraping up the layer of diatoms and other microscopic organisms that cover the eelgrass blades. I look like eelgrass, long and green with stripes that mimic the eelgrass ribs. I lay my eggs in a clear, rectangular patch right on the blades. It seems that I taste so bad that nobody else in this community is interested in eating me.



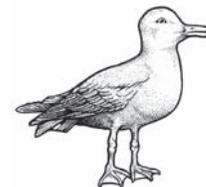
I'm a **LUGWORM**, a mud eater and burrower. I look a bit like an earthworm, but with little red gills sticking out along my sides. I eat the detritus in the mud and leave squiggly castings on the mud surface. Being a worm, I am food for birds and fish.



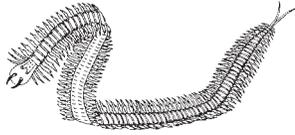
I am a **BLACK BRANT GOOSE**, a winter resident of the eelgrass meadow. I migrate between Mexico and Alaska, stopping at eelgrass meadows along the way to munch on those tasty eelgrass blades. Padilla Bay is one of my favorite stops because it has so much food for me. Some of my friends spend the whole winter here before travelling north for breeding season. I try to avoid humans and eagles.



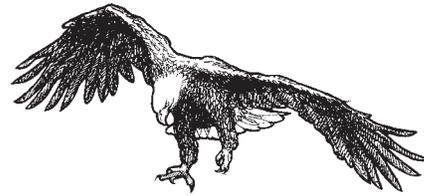
I am a **PERIWINKLE** or *Littorina*. Look for my small, black, round shell on rocks high in the tide zone. I prefer to be just out of the water, feeding on microscopic algae as well as bigger plants like sea lettuce. I can survive long periods out of water.



I am a **GULL**, the noisiest animal in the community. But I can't help it. I get so excited when the tide goes out and there is so much food to fight over. I eat crabs, worms, clams, fish, garbage -- just about everything! You may have seen my funny way of eating a clam. I fly up into the air and drop the clam, hoping to hit a rock. When the clam hits, its shell breaks and I have a feast.



Just call me **POLYCHAETE** (sounds almost like parakeet). I'm a lovely worm with lots of segments and leg-like things sticking out. You may find me digging around under rocks or in the mud, looking for food. Though my jaws look fearsome, they are mostly just for tearing algae. Birds like to eat me, so I try to stay hidden during the day.



I am a **BALD EAGLE**, the boss of all the birds. Not only do I look great with my white head and tail, I also soar well and have a good voice that you can hear all over. I'm known for eating salmon, but I also like estuary birds. I'm not too good at catching healthy ones, but if there is a sick or wounded duck or brant goose, I'll find it. Some days, I just sit in a tree and hang out.



A **BARNACLE** may be common, but it's not boring! I stay closed inside my shell when the tide is low, but you should see me when the tide is high! I stick out my feathery feet and wave them through the water to catch plankton. My biggest enemy is the seastar, so it's wise for a baby barnacle to attach to a rock high enough to be out of the seastar's reach but low enough to get enough food.



How would you like to be a **SPONGE** like me? I'm a colony of lots of little animals living together. I sometimes grow attached to eelgrass, oysters, or other shells. I pump water in through lots of tiny holes, filter out the plankton for food, and then pump it back out through bigger holes at the ends of my "arms." Sea slugs like to eat me.



I'm a **HERMIT CRAB**, the most amusing critter around. I ramble around the tidepools, looking for fights, scrounging for food, poking in and out of my snail shell home. Like all crabs, I shed my own shell when I grow, but I also have to replace my snail shell now and then when I outgrow it. I'm useful as a scavenger, eating bits of plant and animal material and keeping the beach tidy.



I'm a half pint in the seastar world, a **SIX-RAYED STAR**. I only get to be about 2 or 3 inches across, so I'm easy to miss. I eat slow animals like snails, mussels, barnacles, and limpets. I'm greenish-grey, so I blend into the eelgrass and mud very well.