

Aquatic Habitats

Life first appeared in water around 3 billion years ago, in the form of microorganisms. These distant ancestors of all current living things had only one cell. Today, millions of plant and animal species live in water. Aquatic habitats can be freshwater (rivers, lakes, and ponds), saltwater (seas and oceans), or coastal (where fresh water meets salt water, such as a bay or lagoon).

Fish breathe underwater by absorbing oxygen from the water that passes over their gills. They also drink seawater, pumping out excess salt through their kidneys and gills.

Microscopic algae called phytoplankton live in the ocean with tiny animals, called zooplankton.

Phytoplankton use sunlight and carbon dioxide to make food and energy. They then release oxygen, which is essential to marine life.

The ocean is littered with plastic trash. Many animals depend on plankton for food but they may mistake tiny plastic pieces for the real thing.

When too much carbon dioxide dissolves in oceans, the water becomes acidic. This has serious effects: the shells of shellfish become fragile, coral reefs erode, and plankton are unable to survive.

There are marine animals that live deep underwater where the pressure is strong enough to break a diving glass. It's so dark that some creatures create their own light at night like they're glowing.

The use of fuel for boats and other water vehicles has caused hazardous pollution in the water, as well as in the air.

High Tide

At high tide, little creatures move about in the water or hide under the sand.

The clam feeds by sucking up water through a tube. Its waste goes out through another tube.

The wind blows over the sea, pushing the surface of the water and creating waves.

Some mammals, such as dolphins and whales, inhale air at the water's surface through special nostrils called blowholes.

The coast is home to many plants and animals underwater.

Fresh Water: Rivers, Lakes ... and Wetlands

Rivers, lakes, marshes, and wetlands are important ecosystems for plants, insects, birds, fish, and mammals.

kingfisher, grass, great diving beetle, dragonfly, rainbow trout, sole



