

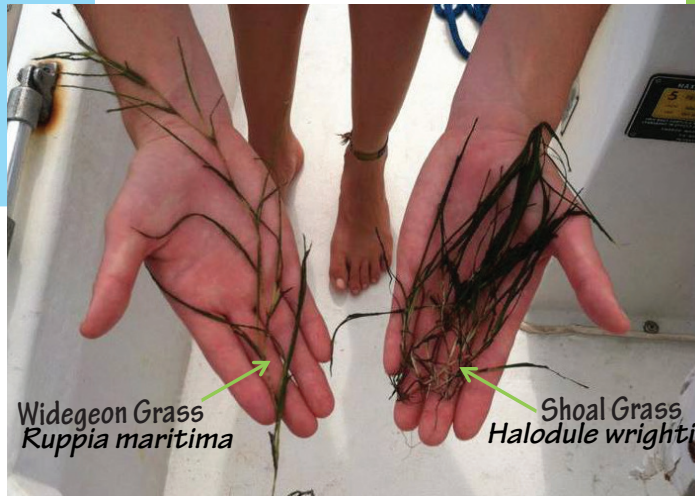
Exploring the Seagrass

Why is seagrass important for the Choctawhatchee Bay?

- ✓ Seagrass beds are nurseries for many species. The grass allows for juvenile fish to hide away from predators in the blades of grass.
- ✓ Seagrass improves water quality by slowing down particles (like sand) in the water and absorbing nutrients.
- ✓ Seagrass roots help to stabilize the bottom of the bay.
- ✓ Seagrass converts sunlight and nutrients into organic matter for other animals to eat. Because the seagrass uses light for photosynthesis, the plants must be close to the water's surface.

Did you know that grass meadows grow underwater in the Choctawhatchee Bay? That's right, throughout Choctawhatchee Bay, patches of seagrass can be found in shallow, clear waters. The state of Florida has 7 different types of seagrass. But Choctawhatchee Bay is home to only 2 grasses, Shoal Grass and Widgeon Grass. Shoal Grass can tolerate high salinity levels, while Widgeon Grass is able to survive in areas with low salinity levels.

Salinity:
the total amount of
dissolved salt in water.



Help Protect Seagrass beds from Prop Scarring



The picture to the left was taken at Crab Island in Choctawhatchee Bay. This popular boating area has a large problem with propeller scarring because boats come through the shallow water with their motors too low. Boat propellers can cause serious damage to seagrass beds, by cutting through the plants roots and destroying the entire plant. It can take as long as 7 to 10 years for prop scars to heal! So next time you're out on the boat, remember to avoid shallow areas with your motor down.

Who lives in the Seagrass?

Gulf Pipefish



Pin Fish



Blue Crab



Brown Shrimp



Hermit Crab



Seagrass Word Search

Help the crab find all 13 seagrass words in the puzzle to the right!

BLENNY
 BRACKISH
 EROSION
 ESTUARY
 FLOUNDER
 HABITAT
 OXYGEN
 OYSTER
 PINFISH
 PIPEFISH
 PROPELLER
 SEAGRASS
 SHORELINE

G	W	T	B	L	Q	N	U	B	C	U	S	K	P	I
P	Z	X	C	H	O	E	R	I	Z	M	S	O	I	O
J	R	I	G	I	R	A	I	W	S	G	A	K	N	J
F	R	O	S	W	C	E	S	T	U	A	R	Y	F	E
J	P	O	P	K	H	W	T	X	F	B	G	G	I	S
F	R	C	I	E	M	A	R	S	L	T	A	H	S	O
E	H	S	O	T	L	N	B	E	Y	M	E	K	H	S
Q	H	S	U	B	O	L	N	I	Y	O	S	U	O	H
X	R	Y	I	Q	I	N	E	N	T	G	I	P	V	O
E	J	I	I	F	Y	S	U	R	G	A	M	V	S	R
Q	X	D	O	F	E	Z	Q	F	D	X	T	A	R	E
E	X	Z	X	G	R	P	N	E	G	Y	X	O	Y	L
V	J	X	U	U	I	P	I	C	A	I	X	P	M	I
F	U	S	Z	I	S	M	N	P	P	M	Q	U	S	N
R	E	D	N	U	O	L	F	O	E	B	S	N	T	E



Can you find me?

The seagrass habitat provides a safe location for many juvenile species to hide from large predators. Often the young creatures found in the seagrass habitat use camouflage to blend in with the blades of grass. Below, 7 animals that are often found in the seagrasses of Choctawhatchee Bay are hiding! Color each animal once you discover their hiding location in the seagrass below.

BLUE CRAB
 GULF FLOUNDER
 HERMIT CRAB
 GULF PIPEFISH
 PIN FISH
 BURR FISH
 SHRIMP

