

# HANDOUT 4:

## SOME ANIMALS IN THE MANGROVE SWAMP

A mangrove swamp is home to many animals. Below are some animals that can be commonly found in the mangrove swamp, and descriptions on how they benefit from the mangrove swamp. The scientific name for each animal is included under its common English name.

### **Mangrove Crab**

*Scylla serrata*



Mangrove crabs play important roles in the mangrove swamp. They dig holes and tunnels in the mud. The holes and tunnels bring air to support other plants. Mangrove crabs also bury dead leaves and improve mud quality.

Mangrove crabs eat many things: plant parts, small clams, worms, shrimp, barnacles, small fish, and other crabs. Their waste provides food for other insects. Mangrove crab larvae provide food for baby fish in the mangrove swamps. Juvenile mangrove crabs provide food for birds and fish. Adult mangrove crabs provide food for sharks, larger fish, and humans.

### Cardinal Fish

*Apogonidae*



Cardinal fish are small fish. They are usually brightly colored. Their dorsal fins divide into two separate fins.

Cardinal fish live in coral reefs and lagoons. The mangrove swamps work as a nursery for the baby cardinal fish. The baby cardinal fish feed on mangrove crab larvae. The cardinal fish provide food for larger fish such as snappers and soldier fish.

### Pacific Reef Heron

*Egretta sacra*

Pacific reef herons are medium-sized birds. Some have all white feathers, while others have charcoal-grey feathers.

They eat fish, shellfish, and molluscs. They lay eggs in nests in mangrove trees.



### Black Noddy Tern

*Anous minutus*



Black noddy terns are medium-sized birds. They have white feathers on the head and black feathers all over the body.

Black noddy terns eat fish and squid. They use dried leaves and bird droppings to build nests in tree branches and lay eggs.

**Mudskipper**  
*Oxudercinae*

Mudskippers live along the mud flats of the mangrove shores. They have large eyes on top of their head. They can stay on mud for a period of time. They swim in the water, and skip on land. Mudskippers eat small crabs, worms, and insects. They provide food for humans.



**Mangrove Clam**  
*Anodontia edentula*



Clams play an important role in the mangrove swamp. They filter water in the mangrove swamp. When water passes through a clam, sediments nutrients, and pollutants are removed from the water. The waste and debris in the water of mangrove swamps provide food for clams. Clams provide food for crabs and humans.

**Mudfish**

*Oxyeleotris* sp.; *Eleotridae*

Mudfish are dark brown. They have two dorsal fins on top of their body. As adults, mudfish live along riverbeds where the water moves slowly and the vegetation grows. Mudfish eat insects, small fish, shrimp, and lobsters.

Mudfish are a type of “sleeper goby”. Many are important predators, or animals who kill and eat other animals, in freshwater and brackish water ecosystems.



## Mangrove Red Snapper

*Lutjanus argentimaculatus*



Mangrove red snappers are commonly found in mangrove areas. You can find them among the roots, fallen trees, and rocks, where it is easiest to hide. They are mainly nocturnal, or awake at night.

They eat fish, clams, shrimp, and lobsters. They move to the ocean reefs to spawn, or lay eggs. Their color can vary from burnt orange to deep red-brown depending on age. Mangrove red snappers are a food source for many people and usually grow to be about 30 inches long.

## Freshwater Eel

*Anguilla obscura*

Freshwater eels spend most of their lives in fresh or brackish water environments, like a mangrove swamp. They travel to the ocean only to breed, or to produce offspring.

Eels grow to about 24 inches long and eat bony fish, crabs, and clams. They provide food for humans. They are also known to be sacred in local myths and legends in some communities.

