



Estuaries of the Outer Banks: Where Rivers Meet the Sea

Outer Banks, North Carolina

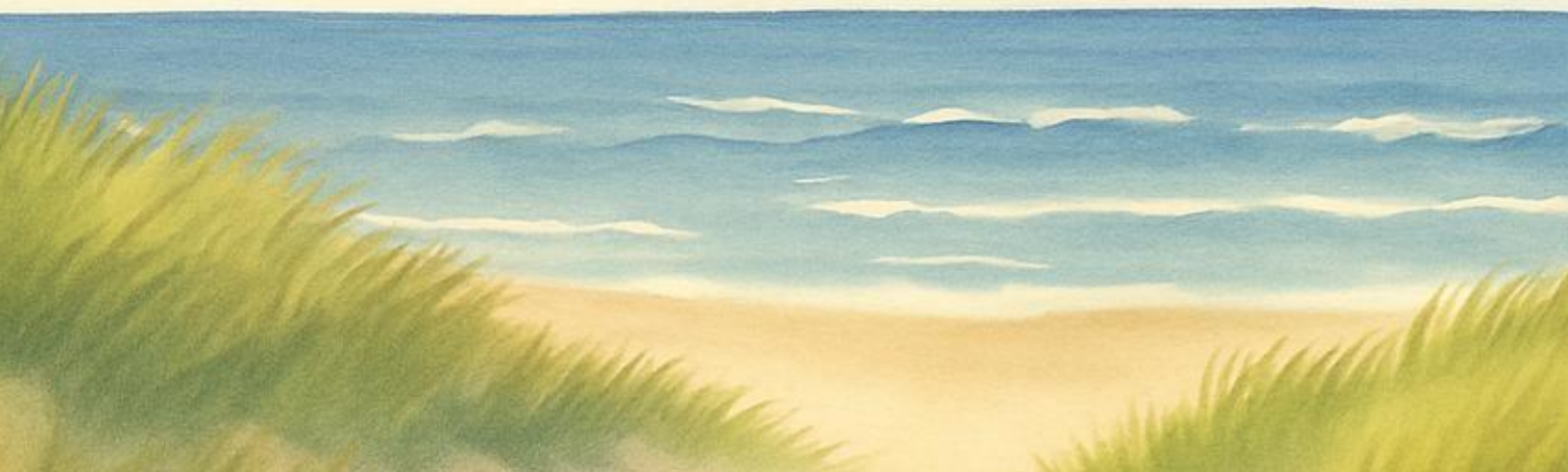
Forward

This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

We believe that small stories can spark big change. That is why we have made this book available as a free resource for parents, teachers, and community members.

All materials in this book may be freely downloaded, shared, printed and used for educational or nonprofit purposes.

To learn more, access additional resources at: www.theobcc.org.



What's an Estuary?

Have you ever seen where a river meets the ocean? That magical place is called an estuary! Here, freshwater from rivers and saltwater from the sea swirl together, making something special called brackish water — not too salty, not too fresh, just right for many kinds of creatures.

Along the Outer Banks of North Carolina, big sounds like Pamlico, Albemarle, and Currituck are really giant estuaries. They stretch behind the barrier islands, full of hidden life and changing tides.

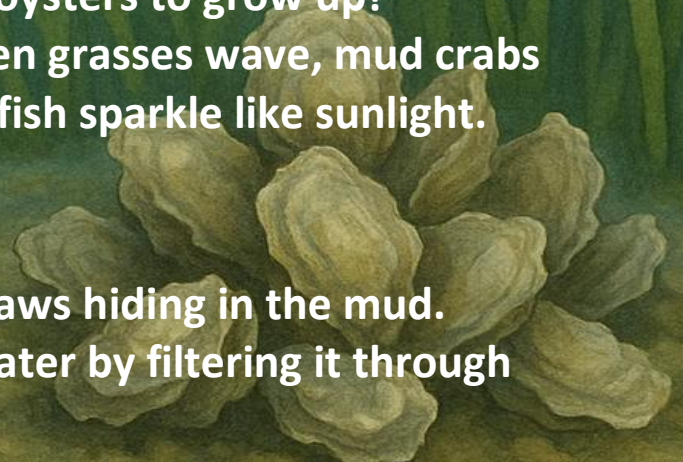


A Busy Underwater Neighborhood

Estuaries are like nature's nurseries — safe places for baby fish, shrimp, crabs, and oysters to grow up! In these calm waters, tall green grasses wave, mud crabs scuttle under shells, and tiny fish sparkle like sunlight.

Here's who lives there:

- Blue Crabs with bright claws hiding in the mud.
- Oysters that clean the water by filtering it through their shells.
- Red Drum and Flounder that start life here before swimming to the ocean.
- Great Egrets and Herons that hunt quietly along the edges.



Blue Crab

Oysters



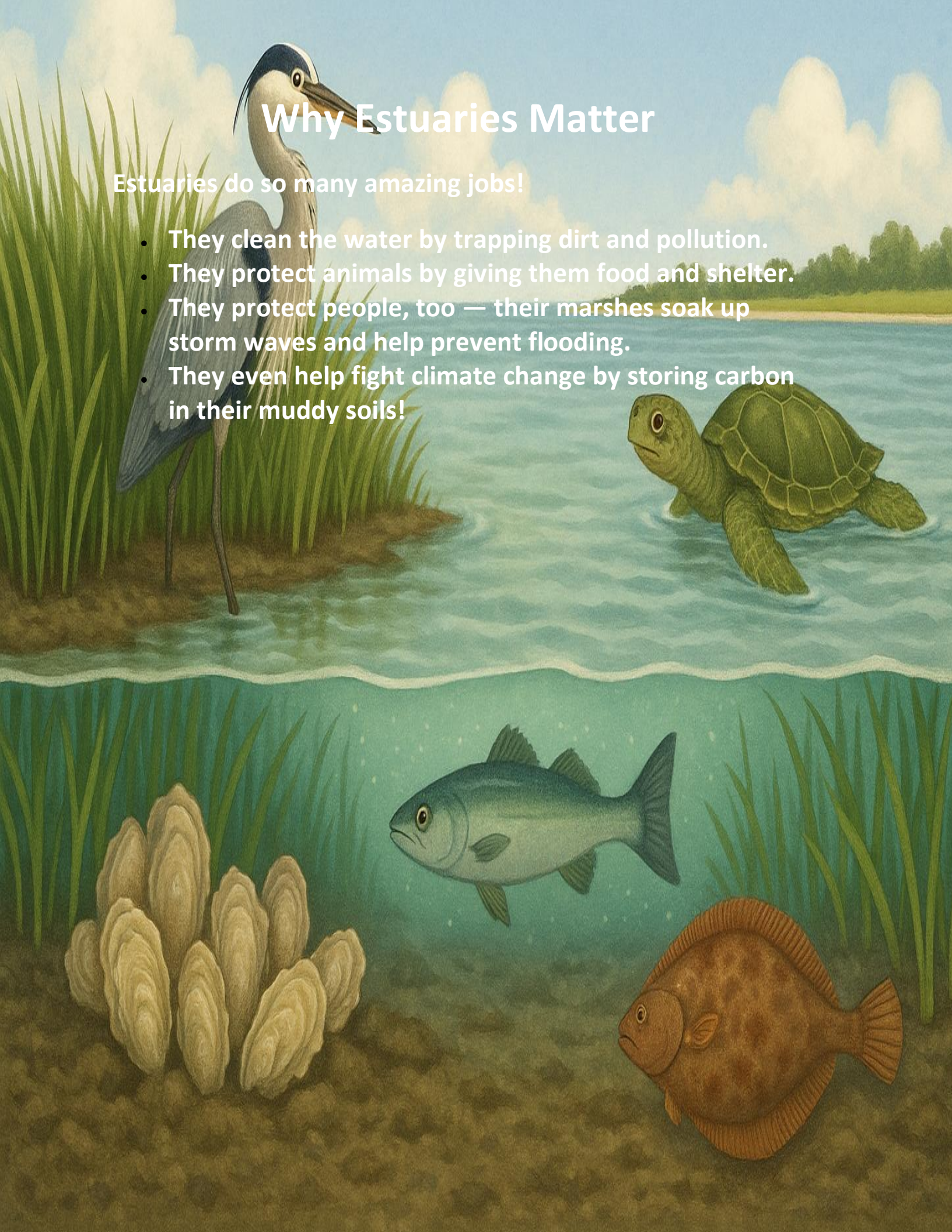
Red Drum and Flounder

Great Egrets and Herons

Why Estuaries Matter

Estuaries do so many amazing jobs!

- They clean the water by trapping dirt and pollution.
- They protect animals by giving them food and shelter.
- They protect people, too — their marshes soak up storm waves and help prevent flooding.
- They even help fight climate change by storing carbon in their muddy soils!



What's Hurting Our Estuaries?

Estuaries are strong but also need our help!

- Pollution from roads or lawns can make algae grow too much and take away oxygen from fish.
- Building too close to the water can hurt marsh plants and animal homes.
- Storms and sea level rise can wash away shorelines and make the water too salty.

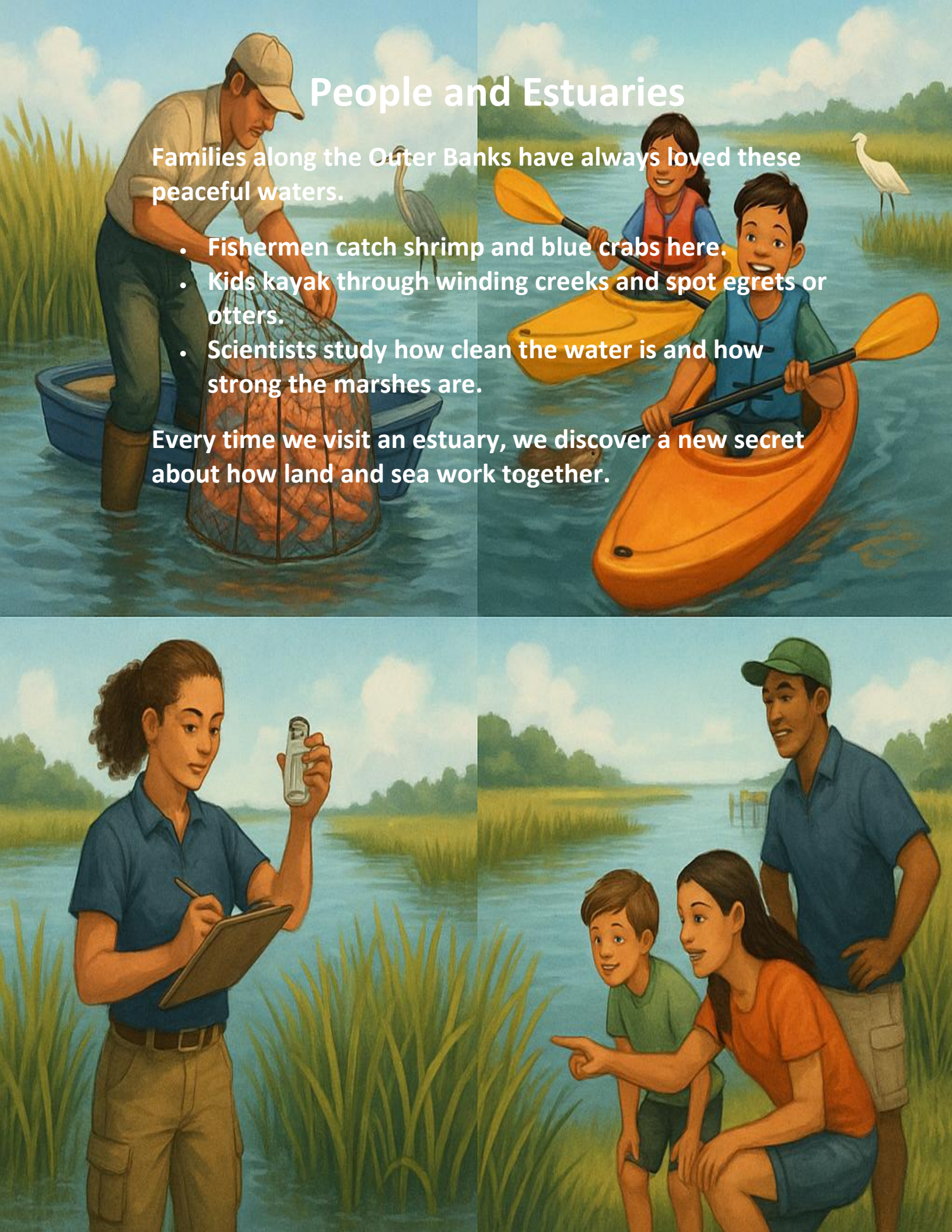


People and Estuaries

Families along the Outer Banks have always loved these peaceful waters.

- Fishermen catch shrimp and blue crabs here.
- Kids kayak through winding creeks and spot egrets or otters.
- Scientists study how clean the water is and how strong the marshes are.

Every time we visit an estuary, we discover a new secret about how land and sea work together.

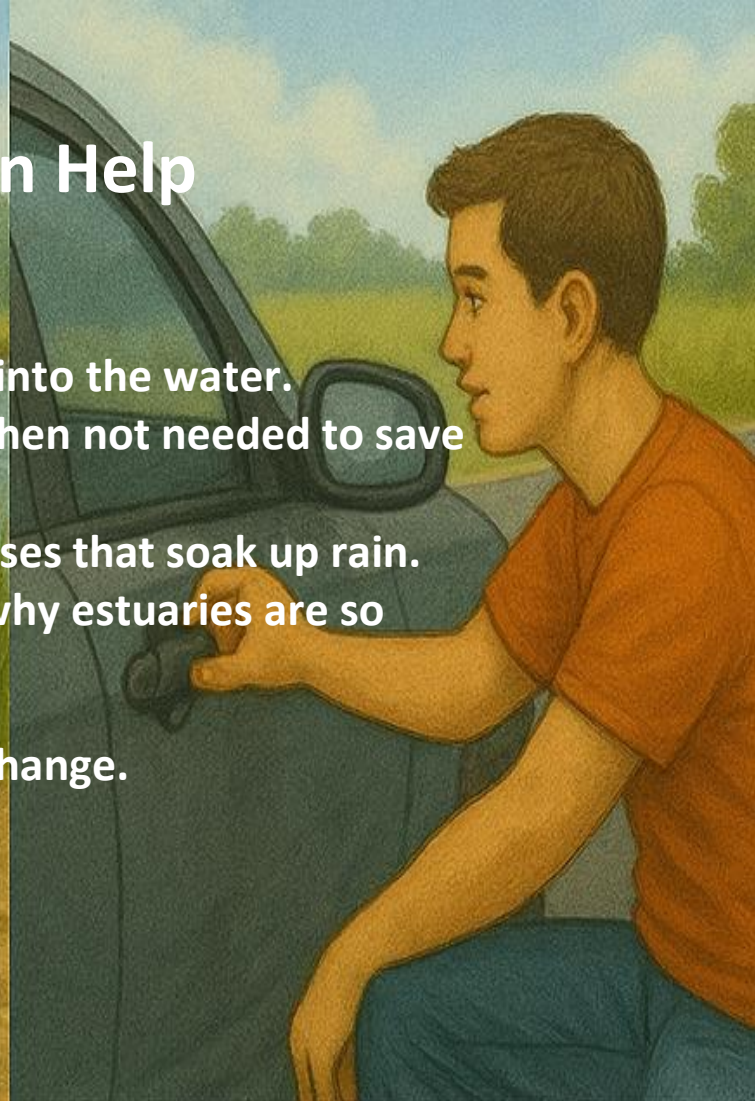
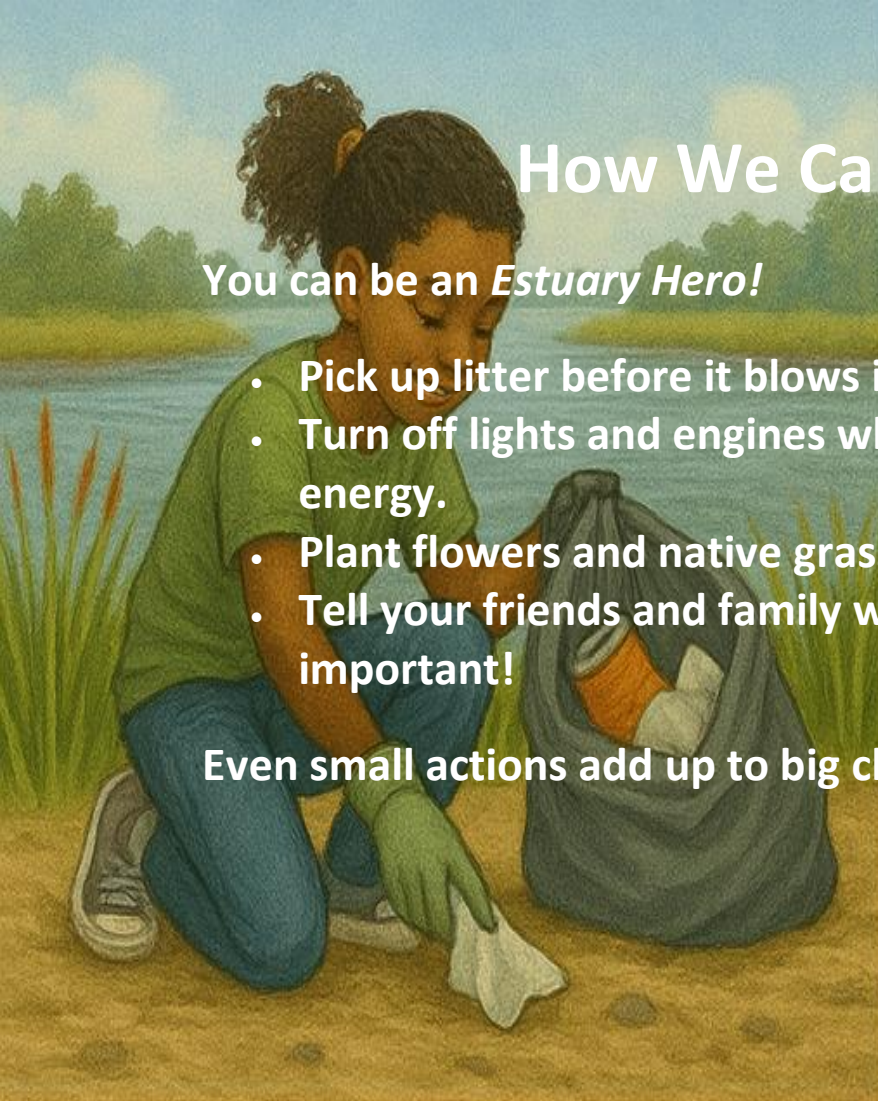


How We Can Help

You can be an *Estuary Hero*!

- Pick up litter before it blows into the water.
- Turn off lights and engines when not needed to save energy.
- Plant flowers and native grasses that soak up rain.
- Tell your friends and family why estuaries are so important!

Even small actions add up to big change.



Fun Fact Corner

- The Pamlico Sound is so big it could fit nearly 2 million football fields inside!
- A single oyster can filter 50 gallons of water a day — that's like filling a bathtub!
- More than 90% of the fish we eat begin life in an estuary.

Did You Know?

Estuaries are like nature's "mixing bowls." When fresh and salty waters blend, they create a world bursting with life — a place where rivers, animals, and people all come together in harmony.



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