

## Mudflats

**Read:** This is the mudflat habitat! Remember how our last habitat was at high tide? Now we are at low tide, and look at all this mud! This photo was taken from the same spot as the previous one from yesterday. All of that water has left the slough, went out into the bay, and now the mudflats are exposed. There are two high tides and two low tides each day, which means the mudflats are visible twice a day, as well as the slough. What types of creatures do you think live in the mud? And who might eat them? Even though you might not be able to see them, there are lots and lots of creatures living within the mudflats. Since there is no longer deep water here, shorebirds can fly in and find plenty of food! Shorebirds have specially adapted beaks that allow them to poke into the mud. They are long and pointy!

The mudflats also store lots of minerals and metals, some naturally occurring and some not. During the California Gold Rush, people not only mined for gold, but mercury as well. Mercury was used to extract the gold from rocks. In the South Bay, there was a large mercury mine called New Almaden Quicksilver Mine. Unfortunately, they did not know that mercury is toxic to humans and many animal species. Some of the mercury traveled down our local watersheds and have settled in the mud in and around San Francisco Bay. For more information about how you can reduce further mercury pollution and keep your family safe, visit

<http://www.mywatershedwatch.org/residents/prevent-mercury-pollution/>



*Click your mouse or spacebar to learn about the plants and wildlife that live in the mudflat habitat!*

1. The California Ridgway's Rail is another endangered species that relies on the Refuge. They can also be found the Salt Marsh! Why have they become endangered?
2. What type of eaters are California Ridgway's Rail?
  - a. Carnivores
  - b. Herbivores
  - c. Omnivores
3. Dunlins are a type of Shorebird. What adaptation do they have that makes them a Shorebird? *Look at their beak and feet!*
4. Click on the Range Map. Which state and/or country do Dunlins spend breeding season?
5. What color are a Snowy Egret's feet? Why do you think that is?
6. Click on the Nesting icon. Where do Snowy Egret's nest?
7. There are lots of clams and snails that live in the mud. They feed on plankton that are found in the water! Create a simple, 3 step, food chain for the Mudflats:

