

Marine Habitats

On the water's edge there are a huge range of habitats. The sea itself is one large habitat and the coastline is another. However, these bigger habitats contain many smaller ones. All animals and plants have different requirements and many choose to live in a habitat which suits these requirements. There, together with other animals and plants, they form communities. Explore some of these habitats below:



Rocky Shore

A rocky shore would be considered a stable home compared to other habitats by the sea, because unlike sand and pebbles found on other shores, the rocks do not move about so much. Rocky shores are usually made up of solid rock, boulders, large stones and rockpools and its shape is dictated by erosion from the wind, waves and rain. Like other shores, rocky shores can be both exposed or sheltered. There are many different areas on a rocky shore where animals can live and so in one large habitat there are many smaller habitats, e.g. in rockpools, on rocks, under rocks, in crevices, on overhangs, among seaweeds and on other animals.

Muddy Shore

Muddy shores may seem like empty deserts but on closer inspection there is a huge amount of life there. Mud provides many animals with shelter from the waves, particularly those that burrow, and as the habitat is constantly wet they do not have to worry about drying out. A muddy shore, however, can be a difficult place for some organisms to live. Because mud is made up of lots of tiny particles of silt and clay, tightly packed together, there is very little oxygen. Animals that live there must live close to, or on the surface to be able to breathe. Most will have developed special features in order to survive.



Strandline

The strandline can be a fascinating place to explore but due to the unstable nature of this habitat very few animals and plants make their permanent home here. Often it is just the remains of plants and animals, as well as human rubbish that are washed up from the sea by the waves. Sometimes living animals and seaweeds are washed up but very few of these survive out of water and will soon die. All of this debris found along the strandline is called 'flotsam and jetsam'. It is normally found just above the high tide mark but can be forced further up the shore during storms and exceptionally high spring tides.

Underwater

The sea covers up to 71% of the earth's surface and in parts can be as deep as 10 km. It is the largest of all habitats and holds a huge variety of organisms. Light can penetrate from about 30 - 150 metres into the sea, which means the deeper down you go the darker it gets. Some organisms prefer habitats with lots of light whereas others prefer complete darkness. The sea floor, which can be made up of hard rock, boulders, stones, sand, mud and clay provides a diverse range of habitats.

