

The dog days of summer have arrived! Kids are eager to be outside and parents are eager to find ways to keep them occupied. A perfect solution...head down to Long Beach and Great Meadows Marsh and participate in the Great Meadows Marsh Scavenger Hunt. The game is simple, and is open to all students (up through high school) in the Town of Stratford.

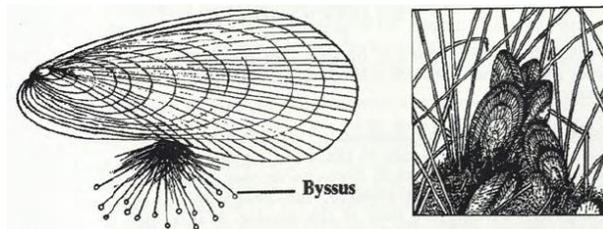
Head down to the marsh, and complete the following activities. Each student who completes the hunt successfully, and follows the submission instructions, below, can pick up a FREE ADMISSION TICKET FOR CONNECTICUT'S BEARDSLEY ZOO from the Town of Stratford Conservation Department.

INSTRUCTIONS:

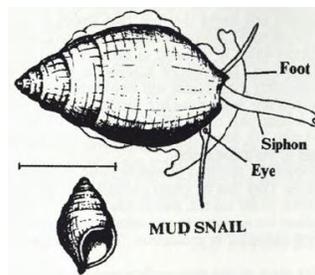
1) **As you enter the Long Beach Complex, take a photo showing yourself beneath a street sign that reads *Marcia Stewart Way*.** Marcia Stewart is a wonderful woman who introduced generations of Stratford Youth to the marsh and fought tirelessly for the conservation of this amazing resource.

2) **Provide a photo of the marsh which shows Salt Marsh Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*).** The thick mats of tall grass slow water that moves in and out with the tides. As the water slows, sediments settle out of the water column. This sedimentation allows the marsh to accrete (i.e. grow). The grasses also provide an important habitat for various crabs, snails, and juvenile fish during high tide.

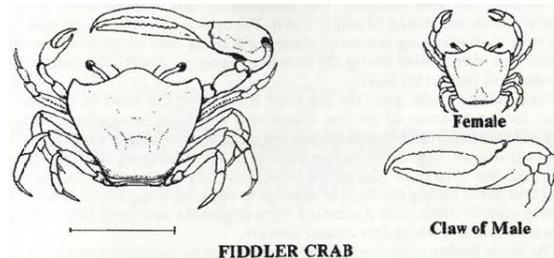
3) **Provide a photo of yourself with, or next to, ribbed mussels.** Mussels are a type of bivalve (two-shelled) mollusc (a group of invertebrates which also includes snails, squid, and octopus). Ribbed mussels are abundant in the low marsh where they feed when submerged. Particles in suspension in the water are sorted on the gills of the mussel. The molluscs selectively retain particles of food (such as phytoplankton) and eject non-food items (such as sediments) on to the marsh mud. Ribbed mussels are often found clumped together, attached by byssal threads which are produced by the foot.



4) **Provide a photo of yourself holding a mud snail.** The mud snail is a type of mollusc with a single shell that is generally shaped like a cone. The head of the snail is well developed with eyes and tentacles. The mouth contains a ribbon- or belt-like structure known as the radula. The radula is covered in sharp teeth that allow the carnivorous snail to feed on dead and decaying organisms. A *carnivore* is an animal that feeds upon other animals.



5) **Provide a photo of fiddler crabs.** This one may be a little more difficult. Fiddler crabs can move quickly and burrow in holes in the low marsh. During high tide, these crustaceans stay in their burrows. At low tide, they emerge to feed on algae, decomposing marsh grass, animals remains, and worms in the marsh mud. Fiddler crabs are easily distinguished as the male has a very large first claw which is used to attract females during breeding season.



6) **Provide a photo of a piece of trash in the marsh, and another photo of yourself throwing it away or recycling the item.** Litter is a big problem for the marsh. Not only can trash affect the beauty of the habitat, but it can also be swept to sea by winds and tides. Items like plastic bags and soda can rings remain in the oceans for hundreds or thousands of years. Many animals like whales and sea turtles may die if they swallow these items after mistaking them for food.

7) **In addition to submitting the required photographs, write three things which you learned** about the marsh by participating in the scavenger hunt. Also, **write one or more questions that you have** about the marsh or some of the organisms that you encountered during your adventure.

Email your completed scavenger hunt (items 1-7) to the Conservation Administrator cbatoh@townofstratford.com. Include your NAME, ADDRESS, AND THE SCHOOL AND GRADE YOU WILL BE GOING IN TO FOR THE FALL. Your free admission ticket to the zoo will be mailed to you (or you can pick up in Conservation Office). ALL COMPLETED SCAVENGER HUNTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY AUGUST 12.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

- Go to the marsh with a parent or friend. The marsh is a natural ecosystem and you can easily get stuck in marsh mud or cut your feet on mussel shells. It is always a good idea to be with someone in case of an emergency.
- Wear sunscreen, bug repellent, and either watershoes or boots.
- Check the tides before you head out to the marsh. Most of the organisms are much easier to spot at low tide.
- Check yourself for ticks immediately as you exit the marsh. Ticks reside in the vegetation on the edges of the marsh and can climb on to you if you brush up against them.