

Intertidal zone

The intertidal zone is an extreme ecosystem because it constantly experiences drastic changes due to the change in tides. It is located on coastlines and is the region between the high and low water marks.

Anything living in the intertidal zone must be able to survive changes in moisture, temperature and salinity as well as withstand strong waves. Intertidal zones of rocky shorelines host sea stars, snails, seaweed, algae, and crabs. Barnacles, oysters and seaweed can survive in this environment by anchoring themselves to the rocks. Barnacles and oysters

can also hold seawater in their closed shells to keep from drying out during low tide. Intertidal zones richer in sediments are filled with different species of clams, sand dollars and worms.

Mangroves, salt marshes and salt flats have communities of plants with special physiological and morphological adaptations that allow them to grow in the intertidal zone of the marine environment. The role of mangrove roots in preventing coastal erosion is critical as well as providing important nursery habitat for prawns and fish. They

also play a role in coastline protection from storm surges and tsunamis.

Seagrass is an angiosperm, or flowering plant, adapted to living submerged in the marine environment. Seagrasses are most diverse in tropical regions and generally grow in the intertidal zone on soft substrates such as mud or sand. Seagrass meadows provide important nursery habitat for prawns and fish as well as providing an essential food resource for dugongs and green turtles.

From left: Seaweed on the shoreline; mangroves and their roots in the intertidal zone of Mulambin Creek; low tide pool on North Keppel Island; ghost crab; oysters firmly attached to a shoreline rock



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