

Mangrove Life



Mangroves

Mangroves are plant communities that live at the salt and freshwater interface or in coastal areas. They have unique physiological structures and mechanisms to adapt to the harsh conditions of the intertidal zone. Mangroves are very important to the animals of the intertidal zone, providing them with important habitats, foraging and breeding grounds.



Gastropoda (snails and slugs)

Gastropoda includes snails and slugs. Snails are commonly characterized by a single shell, a single foot, and an asymmetrical body, while slugs have a completely degraded shell. Their hard outer shells have a hole, and their outstretched foot slowly crawl and attach themselves to hard objects. Most of them feed on algae grown on an object, while a few are carnivorous (e.g., *Thais clavigera* and *Conidae* sp.).



Bivalves (Clams, Mussels and Oysters)

These animals have a flat body with two shells connected by elastic ligaments. The two shells are generally similar or equal in size, but in some sessile species (e.g., oysters), the lower shell, which is attached to the substrate, is smaller than the upper shell. They use their gills to filter fine organic particles from the water as food.



Crustaceans (Barnacles)

Barnacle juveniles float in the ocean, and adults attach to hard objects such as rocks, mangroves, and piers, where they use their legs (cirri) to filter out fine organic particles from the water as food.

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Crab

Crabs belong to the class Crustacea (i.e. their bodies are covered by carapace) and the order Decapoda (i.e. they have 10 legs). There are more than 60 crab species in Hong Kong's mangrove forests and most of them are omnivorous, eating leaves and fruits, animals, algae and some eat carrion.



Birds

The mangrove forests are rich in fish, shrimp and shellfish, which provide abundant food for birds. The most common birds in mangrove forests are egrets, which are easy to observe. They hunt for prey in the shallow waters of the intertidal zone during low tide.



Fish

The most noticeable fish in the mangroves are the mudskippers, which can leave the water for short periods of time to move on land. Mudskippers can breathe by storing water in their mouths and gill chambers, or through blood vessels on the surface of their skin. To adapt to moving on land, they have developed muscles in their pectoral fins that allow them to crawl and jump on land.