

# NCA

NEWTOWN CREEK ALLIANCE

# Marine Wildlife of Newtown Creek

Shown here are some of the more common and interesting species of marine wildlife one may encounter on Newtown Creek. For a more comprehensive list of Newtown Creek wildlife please visit our website: [newtowncreekalliance.org](http://newtowncreekalliance.org)



### American Eel

A snakelike fish that spends most of its life in freshwater and estuary environments, leaving only on spawning migrations to the Sargasso Sea. Juvenile eels, also known as glass eels, travel from the Sargasso Sea to places like New York City and all the way up to Canada. They feed primarily at night and some adults are nearly 4 feet in length. Although once a fishery staple in the Hudson River, it is currently not advised to eat local eel due to PCB contamination. They do not electrocute.



### Eastern Mud Snail

Small and slow moving creature commonly found on mud flats in the intertidal and shallow subtidal zones. This species is a detritus feeder, eating whatever is found in the film on top of the mud where it lives, including many microscopic marine plants.



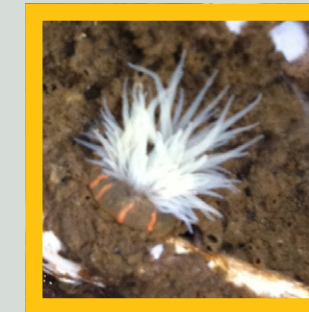
### Fiddler Crab

A common inhabitant of salt marshes, they are well known for their distinct claws which they use for communication by a sequence of waves and gestures. Males possess one oversized claw that is used in clashes of ritualised combat of courtship over a female. Their burrowed holes help aerate marsh habitats.



### Striped Bass

One of the most popular game fish, these anadromous fish (spawn in freshwater, live as adults in salt water) are once again very common in New York waters during migration months. The average size of adults is about 2 to 3.5 feet and 10 to 30 pounds, with an estimated lifespan of up to 30 years.



### Striped Anemone

Recognizable for its crown of tentacles, this very small anemone can be found attached to pilings or other hard surfaces with its adhesive foot. There is a slot like mouth in the center surrounded by some 25 to 50 tentacles which can release a substance toxic to its prey. Typically less than 1 centimeter in length.



### Soft shelled Clam

Known as "steamers" or "longnecks" these bivalves live buried in tidal mudflats, approximately 6 to 10 inches under the surface. Paired siphons extend up to the surface, one of which is used to draw in water which it filters for plankton and eject unused water from the other, which is easily seen by the human eye.



### Atlantic Mud Crab

A small dark brown crab found on muddy bottoms, hiding under stones and shells or among sponges and weeds. It cracks up shells of clams, oysters and periwinkles with its strong claws. They are also fond of hermit crabs which they can grasp and pull out from their protective shells.



### Sand Shrimp

Normally sandy brown in appearance, a Sand Shrimp can also alter their color to match an environment. During the day they often remain buried in the sand to escape predators like birds and fish, with only their antennae exposed. They feed nocturnally and live in shallow waters.



### Horseshoe Crab

This "living fossil" is one of the oldest and most unique animals on the planet, dating back 450 millions years! These slow moving and hard shelled creatures live primarily in shallow ocean waters and are often seen in large quantities at nearby shores during the mating season. Their blood is harvested for medical testing and despite the name are not true crabs.



### Skillet Fish

The skilletfish is a small, frying pan-shaped fish often found clinging to rocks and oyster shells with its suction disk. They grow up to about 3 inches in length and have a brown speckled color that allows them to blend in with oysters and bottom sediments.



### Summer Flounder

Also known as Fluke, this flat, bottom lying fish can change the color and pattern of their dark side to match the surrounding bottom, and are also capable of rapidly burrowing into sediment. They are typically 12 to 20 inches in length and can live up to 20 years. Common game fish, but not advisable to eat if caught from Newtown Creek.



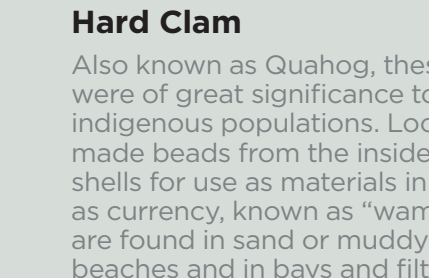
### Blue Crab

Blue crabs are one of the more visible water based animals in NY Harbor. They can grown up to 9 inches in length and are often seen in summer months near shorelines, clinging to rocks, seawalls or pilings. They have 10 legs and are excellent swimmers, using hind appendages shaped like paddles. Although a very common food item, anglers should follow health advisories for consumption and avoid eating blue crabs caught from highly polluted waters like Newtown Creek.



### Atlantic Silverside

A small (5 inches in length) silvery fish commonly seen near the water's edge in brackish environments. In addition to seeking shelter amongst eelgrass, the silverside's strongest form of defense is the strength-in-numbers strategy, where fish will school in large numbers to diminish their chances of being the one picked off by a predator. They are also quick swimmers and their coloration of silver and a little white makes it confusing to predators to determine the direction the fish are heading.



### Hard Clam

Also known as Quahog, these bivalves were of great significance to the indigenous populations. Local tribes made beads from the inside of their shells for use as materials in art as well as currency, known as "wampum". They are found in sand or muddy sand along beaches and in bays and filter feed like many other bivalves.



### Ribbed Mussel

A key filter feeder that is commonly found in salt marsh habitats, typically forming dense clusters that secure the root systems of cordgrass plants. They provide huge ecological benefit in their filter feeding behavior, and have proved apt at growing amongst manmade structures, as observed in places like Newtown Creek.



### Barnacle

Suspension feeders with tough shells that grow directly onto numerous hard substrates in shallow waters and the intertidal zone. To feed they beat their legs rhythmically in the water column to draw in plankton and detritus for consumption. Because they can often damage man-made structures, including boats, they are known as fouling organisms.



### Bristle Worm

Red in color and a few inches in length, these marine worms can be seen swarming near the surface of waters during summer nights. Also known as polychaetes, which means "many hairs", referring to the animals many bristles along the side of its body.

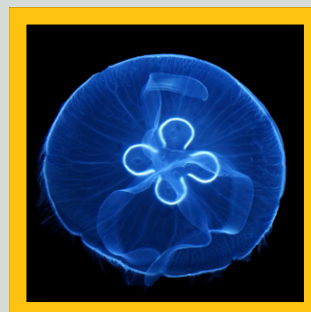
### Grass Shrimp

Nearly transparent in color, these small (1.5 inches long) shrimp live in shallow waters and can commonly be seen in summer months. Pregnant females carry eggs in a pouch that is visible through their body. Lifespan is about one year.



### Comb Jelly

One of the oldest known animals, dating back some 700 million years. Formally known as Ctenophores, their most distinctive feature is the "combs" or groups of cilia they use for swimming. They have a decentralized nerve net, as opposed to a brain and can be recognized at night by their bioluminescent activity.



### Moon Jelly

A translucent jellyfish about 10 inches in diameter that has limited motion and drifts with the current. They feed by collecting plankton and mollusks with its tentacles, bringing them into its body for digestion. They have a strong tolerance for low dissolved oxygen conditions, so populations can be high during summer months.



### Hermit Crab

Recognizable for their adopted shells, which because they lack their own must be borrowed from other animals such as snails, periwinkles or oyster shells. They have a soft coiled abdomen, two pairs of walking legs and one claw larger than the other. Like many crabs they eat algae, detritus and other small particles.



### Oyster

A filter feeder once incredibly prolific in NY Harbor before over-harvesting and pollution decimated local populations. Oysters are now being restored locally for their ecological role, they can filter up to 50 gallons of water per day and provide great habitat for other invertebrates. The local waters are still not clean enough for oyster consumption.



### Mummichog

A prominent and hardy killifish that can be found throughout NY Harbor and its streams or 'kills'. They are small, only a few inches in length, and feed primarily on insect larvae, aquatic crustaceans and worms. They have a high tolerance for pollution, temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen levels, as is common in Newtown Creek.

### Slipper Snail

A small hard shelled limpet where the inside of the shell resembles a boat or slipper, thus the common names. With arched, rounded shells slipper snails are often found in heaps on top of one another on rocks, horseshoe crabs and pilings. If the females in a stack die, the largest of the males will become a female.



### Common Pipe Fish

A relative of the seahorse, the pipe fish also has a long, thin body with a tube-like snout atop that swims in an upright position. Their highly modified skeleton makes the body look angular and not round/oval like most fish. During pregnancies, males take on most of the parenting duties including carrying the offspring in brood pouches.



### Asian Shore Crab

Originally from East Asia, these only appeared on the Atlantic coast in the late 1980s. They tend to gather in high densities under rocks and can live on mussel beds, oyster reefs and artificial structures. Can be recognized with alternating light and dark bands on their legs.

### Atlantic Menhaden

Also known as Mossbunker, Bunker or Pogy - a small silvery fish that swims in very large schools. Menhaden is a filter feeder living on plankton. Adult fish can filter up to four gallons of water a minute, which plays an important role in clarifying ocean water and preventing red tides. Because of their oily texture, these fish were historically used as a fertilizer for crops.

