

Secrets of the Saltmarsh

AUTHOR

CLAIRE SAXBY

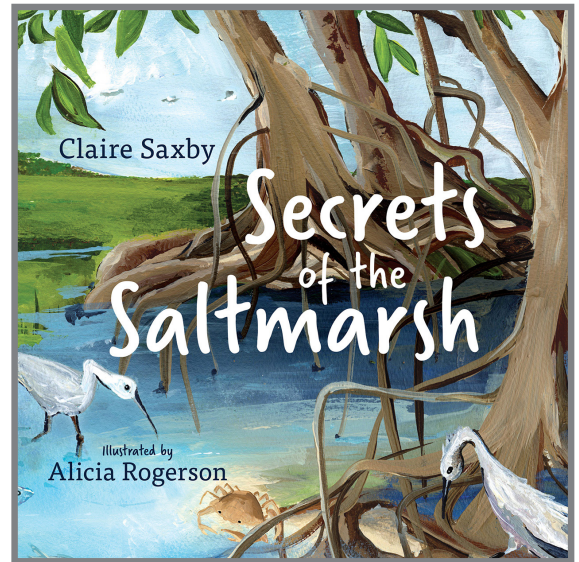
ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

You will find me where land meets sea . . .

Saltmarshes are full of energy and life. They provide food and shelter for migratory birds as well as microscopic plants and animals. They also protect our coastlines. Most of all, saltmarshes are places of discovery and wonder.

With lyrical text and captivating illustrations, *Secrets of the Saltmarsh* offers a close-up look at the fascinating world of saltmarsh wetlands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Saxby is an award-winning writer of fiction, nonfiction and poetry for young people.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Alicia Rogerson is an artist and illustrator who spends her days painting and dreaming.

THEMES

- Saltmarsh wetlands
- Migratory birds/animal life
- Interdependence of nature

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Ask the class if they know what a saltmarsh wetland is. Display images and ask students to describe what they see. Brainstorm and record their responses.
- Working with a classmate or small group, list some animals or plants that you think might inhabit a saltmarsh environment. Share your ideas with the class. Go back to this list after reading the story and add to it if necessary.

WHILE READING

- Discuss the natural elements in the book that are found in the saltmarsh: land, ocean, water, wind, sunlight. As a class, create mini concept maps to explain how each of them interacts with the saltmarsh.
- What do you know about carbon? As a whole class, research carbon and carbon dioxide. How does it work and why

is it important to the natural environment? Why is carbon sometimes called blue carbon?

- In the book we learn that mangrove trees are neighbours to the saltmarsh. How do mangrove trees support the saltmarshes?
- What does the tiny beaded glasswort plant do in a saltmarsh? Why do you think the author calls it a pioneer of the saltmarsh?

ENGLISH

- The saltmarsh is described in the first few pages. Read the story a second time and identify the characteristics of a saltmarsh and record them on a large screen/whiteboard in dot points.
- *Secrets of the Saltmarsh* is a narrative non-fiction book written in the 'first person' where each of the elements talk about themselves and how they interact with the saltmarsh. How does this help your understanding of how the ecosystem works?
- There are some powerful verbs used to describe the wind. Identify the verbs and use them in sentences or a poem of your own.
- A glossary helps explain unfamiliar words. Look at the glossary in this book and discuss the words that are explained. Are there any other challenging words you could add to this glossary?

HASS

- Look at the map of Australia in the back of the book or on a large screen. Where is the closest saltmarsh located near your school or home?
- What happens in each of the seasons in the saltmarsh? How important is this seasonal cycle to maintaining a healthy saltmarsh environment?
- A number of birds migrate to the wetlands during the Australian summer, including the curlew sandpiper, whimbrel and the red-necked stint. Find out more about each of these three birds and on a map of the world track their journey from their home country to an Australian saltmarsh.
- As a class, research and brainstorm a list of threats to saltmarsh wetlands.
- Saltmarshes are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for a number of reasons. Speak to an Elder to find out more about their connection to this vital ecosystem.

SCIENCE

- Visit a local saltmarsh. What do you observe there? Focus on one particular area and draw what you can see.
- Create a table of the animals that are found in the story. Use the headings from the book: birds, little ones, tiny ones. Then choose one animal from the table to research. Draw the animal and write down three interesting facts.
- Look carefully at the life cycles in the book. Each cycle of life shows a different aspect of the natural world found in a saltmarsh: insect, plant, fish, bird, crab. Choose one of the migratory or native birds from the story to create your own life cycle. In your life cycle diagram, you will need to use the following words: egg, hatchling, fledgling, adult.
- On the page with the heading 'I am water', the text cleverly describes the water cycle. Are you able to draw your own water cycle from the description? Check your drawing with classmates and/or find an image of a water cycle to compare.
- Using crayons and a watercolour wash, create your own saltmarsh wetland. What important elements will you include?

AUTHOR OF NOTES

KATHRYN BEILBY