



Photo Ian Shaw



Estuaries are among the most biologically productive ecosystems in the world and contain a high diversity of life. They are the 'nurseries of the sea', providing nutrient-rich breeding grounds for fish, crustaceans and other aquatic species, many of which have commercial and recreational value. Estuarine habitats are important feeding and nesting areas for birds, and act as safe places for migratory stopovers.

Threats such as marine debris, erosion, recreational fishing and boating all have an impact on estuarine species and the habitats that they rely upon.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ▶ **Avoid driving powered vessels directly over seagrass patches** as seagrass is easily damaged by boat propellers and takes a long time to recover.
- ▶ Rather than anchoring in or around seagrass patches, **drift or use a drogue anchor** as this helps to preserve the unique root system of the seagrass.
- ▶ **Travel at slower speeds** in areas where seagrass occurs to reduce the risk of prop damage.
- ▶ Seagrass is easily smothered by excess sediment in the water, so **use established or marked paths along the banks of the river** to reduce erosion.

KEY FACTS

Seagrass has an important role in estuarine health and productivity. It **provides food and habitat for marine species**, particularly juvenile fish and crustaceans.

The extensive **root systems** of seagrasses, which extend both vertically and horizontally, help to **stabilise river beds** and **reduce erosion** by trapping and binding sediment.

Estuarine vegetation, such as **seagrass and mangroves, can store more carbon than terrestrial forests**. Most of the carbon stored by seagrass is found in the sediment beneath each seagrass bed.



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