

## **What are These Crazy Creatures? Creating Interactive Horseshoe Crab and Filter Feeder Trivia Cards**

*Jackson Sullivan, Stockton University*

Quite possibly two of the most interesting, but often misunderstood animals at The Wetlands Institute (TWI) are horseshoe crabs and filter feeders. In talking with visitors, people are fascinated by horseshoe crabs, but nervous or scared to interact with them, while at the same time overlook lesser-known filter feeders like clams, mussels, and barnacles as being boring or unimportant. However, both horseshoe crabs and filter feeders are complex organisms that play an important and understated role in the surrounding ecosystem. In efforts to help visitors better understand these creatures, TWI has several exhibits and programs highlighting them, but still visitors frequently approach Education Staff and Volunteers with a wide variety of questions, ranging from the most basic to the extremely obscure.

This project provides answers to these questions, while also serving as an important source of information about these locally found organisms. Utilizing *Canva*, an online graphic design tool used to create engaging visual content, two sets of trivia flip cards were developed, each containing the answers to eight questions related to horseshoe crabs and filter feeders. These trivia flip cards serve as a fun and interactive educational resource for visitors heading into Terrapin Station or the Secrets of the Salt Marsh Aquarium. The creation of these trivia cards reinforce what visitors learn during TWI's general admission programs, while also engaging them in a creative, simple, and fun way to learn more about these animals and their importance to the salt marsh and surrounding environment.

## **Through the Eyes of an Artist: Creating an Artistic Representation of Seasonal Changes in the Salt Marsh**

*Francesca Jacobs, Washington College*

The salt marsh is a vital place of life, not only in Stone Harbor but also around the coastal regions of this country. Throughout the seasons, the salt marsh changes in both the animals that inhabit it and its physical appearance. During spring, summer and autumn, Education Staff and Volunteers conduct daily guided Salt Marsh Safari tours, educating the public on the animals, plants, and unique things you can find in the salt marsh at that time. Prior to starting the tour, a short video is played that briefly hints at what life is like in the salt marsh during all four seasons. Being a slow progression of seasonal change, these changes often go unnoticed by the visitors to The Wetlands Institute, specifically if they are only here once a year, making it difficult to understand how much this special area changes each season.

Aided by *Procreate* and *Photoshop*, two drawing and editing software applications, this project adapts The Wetlands Institute's *Secrets of the Salt Marsh* video to print format using digital media to create a series of four one-of-a-kind, hand drawn posters. Each high quality vinyl poster, measuring 36 inches high and 24 inches wide, highlights the key species seen in the salt marsh each season. On year-round display in Wetlandia, these labeled posters act as a visual supplement to our Naturalist-led Salt Marsh Safari general admission visitor program, allowing people to enjoy the benefits of the program throughout the year, or at their own pace.

**Illustrating the Salt Marsh, One Page at a Time: The Creation of an Engaging Young Adult eBook**  
*Kayla Thanner, Eckerd College*

One of the most important attributes to retaining knowledge and intriguing one's interest in the natural world is understanding it. Without the component of understanding, most information gets lost and forgotten. Specifically in Environmental Education, there can be a significant decline in interest and learning as children progress into young adulthood and "grow out" of their childhood curiosities. This decline in interest leads to a gap in Environmental Education, making it challenging for educators to successfully engage this age group.

This project strives to close this gap by introducing young adults to the animals and plants of the salt marsh through the creation of a *Young Naturalist's Guide to the Salt Marsh and Back Bays*, available as part of the Virtual Wetlands Experience on The Wetlands Institute's website. *Canva*, a graphic design software platform, allows a collection of words and images to come together to create an engaging eBook that includes over 50 different plants and animals that one might see in the salt marsh, and provides a new way of understanding the salt marsh that sparks interest in a young adult and keeps that interest going forward. This eBook includes both pictures for identification, as well as words for learning and understanding, and in doing so is meant to allow readers of different attention spans to gain information how they would like. Pictures are just as important as the words, and for some, that is just the boost of knowledge they need to get started.