Clapper rails are small birds that live in the salt marshes. They rarely fly, but they can swim. Their long, chicken-like legs allow them to sink deep into the mud and not get their feathers muddy. They eat seeds and vegetation, but a really tasty treat is the fiddler crab— if they can catch them out of their burrows.

Baby clapper rails less than two weeks old are carried on the parent’s back to avoid high water!

Did you know that the Salt Harvest Mouse is only found in the San Francisco Bay Area wetlands?

This tiny mouse is at home in the pickle weed that grows in the salt marshes. And pickle weed is the mouse’s favorite food. The Salt harvest mouse is the only mammal to inhabit these watery areas. Because it is so small it can clamber over pickle weed to move from place to place.

Fiddler crabs live in the muddy parts of the salt marshes. They dig burrows underground as deep as 12 inches. When the tide comes in they quickly seal up their burrows to prevent water from coming in. This also allows them to breathe while they wait for the tide to recede, since they cannot live underwater for too long. They breathe air! When the water is gone, they pop open their burrow, and they are at the surface again.

Do you know why the Fiddler Crab gets its name? The male crab has an oversized front claw that he waves at the girls, like a violinist bowing the violin!

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