

Even the most cursory swim over a seagrass meadow reveals a wonderful diversity of fauna in, on or under the seagrass canopy and its sediments. The fauna is typically dominated by small crustaceans and molluscs, but seagrass meadows also support larger fauna such as fish, crabs, clams and swans.

Large seagrass meadows generally have the most abundant and diverse fauna. For example, an *Amphibolis* meadow can support more than 100 species of invertebrates and 70 species of fish. Some of the associated fauna have important commercial or recreational value; the western rock lobster fishery in south-western Australia is valued at hundreds of millions of dollars each year. Even sparse seagrass can support dozens of species of fish and invertebrates.

The Black Swan is associated with temperate seagrass meadows and commonly feeds on *Ruppia* and *Halophila* in estuaries of southern Australia. The loss of *Ruppia* in the Coorong, South Australia, has been linked to the decline of waterbirds in this RAMSAR site. In Shark Bay, close to the northern limit of the Australian temperate seagrass species, the world's largest dugong population feed on several seagrass species, including *Amphibolis*. In southern Australia, the leafy sea dragon is well camouflaged in the seagrass it inhabits as are pipefish, whose elongated bodies mimic seagrass leaves, helping them to avoid predators but confining them to seagrass meadows. At least 74 species of concern on the IUCN Red List are associated with seagrass habitats and the survival of seven species of threatened shark has been linked to the health of seagrass meadows.