



# Eelgrass Beds: Sheltering Stabilizers

Eelgrass grows in shallow waters where sunlight can reach deep enough to support the plant's growth; the roots help stabilize soft bottom sediments from being eroded by tidal currents

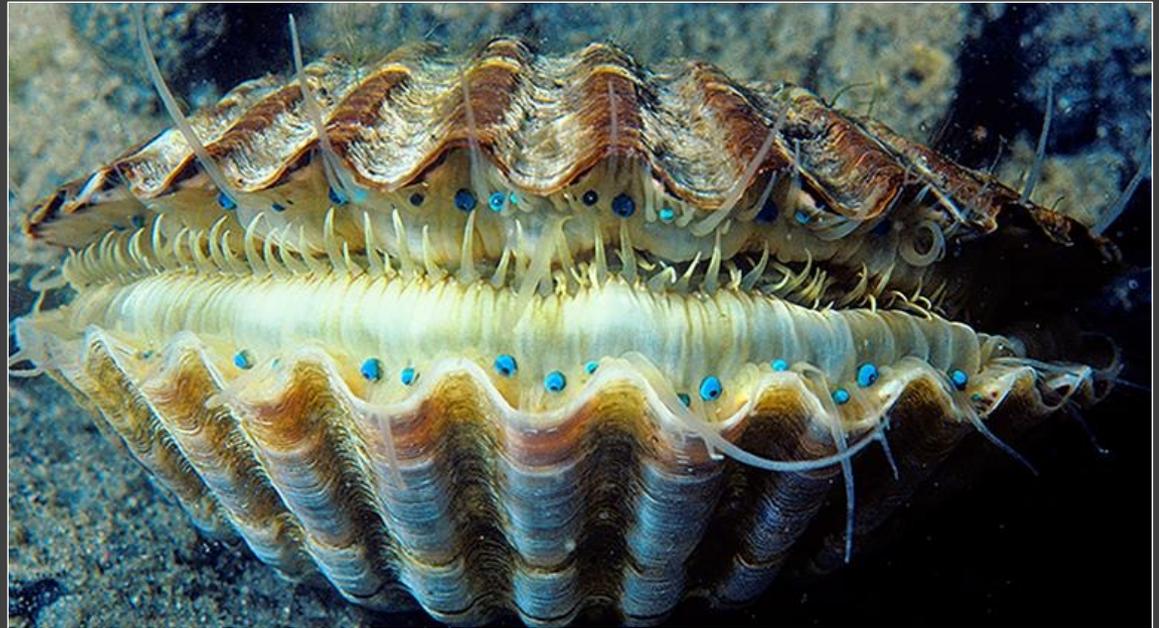
Many eelgrass beds in the Sound have disappeared due to disease, predation, or poor water quality



Photo: Eelgrass roots, *Zostera marina*; courtesy of Tessa Getchis

Eelgrass beds provide young fish and bay scallops with shelter from predators

Juvenile bay scallops attach to the eelgrass blades during their first few weeks, which may help them avoid predation from crabs



Photos: (left) Juvenile bay scallops, *Aequipecten irradians*, on eelgrass blade, *Zostera marina*; courtesy of Peter Auster; (right) Bay scallop, *Aequipecten irradians*; courtesy of Robert Bachand



Photos: (left) Daggerblade shrimp carrying eggs, *Palaemonetes pugio*;  
(right) Grass shrimp, *Palaemonetes vulgaris*, courtesy of Robert Bachand



Translucent grass shrimp are common shallow-water inhabitants, finding shelter among aquatic vegetation such as eelgrass; they are preyed upon by many organisms



Mute swans dine heavily on eelgrass and the green seaweed, sea lettuce; their long necks enable them to reach down and pull the eelgrass out by its roots, destroying the beds

Canada geese also feed on aquatic vegetation and seaweed; they often concentrate in large flocks, and their wastes can cause local water quality problems

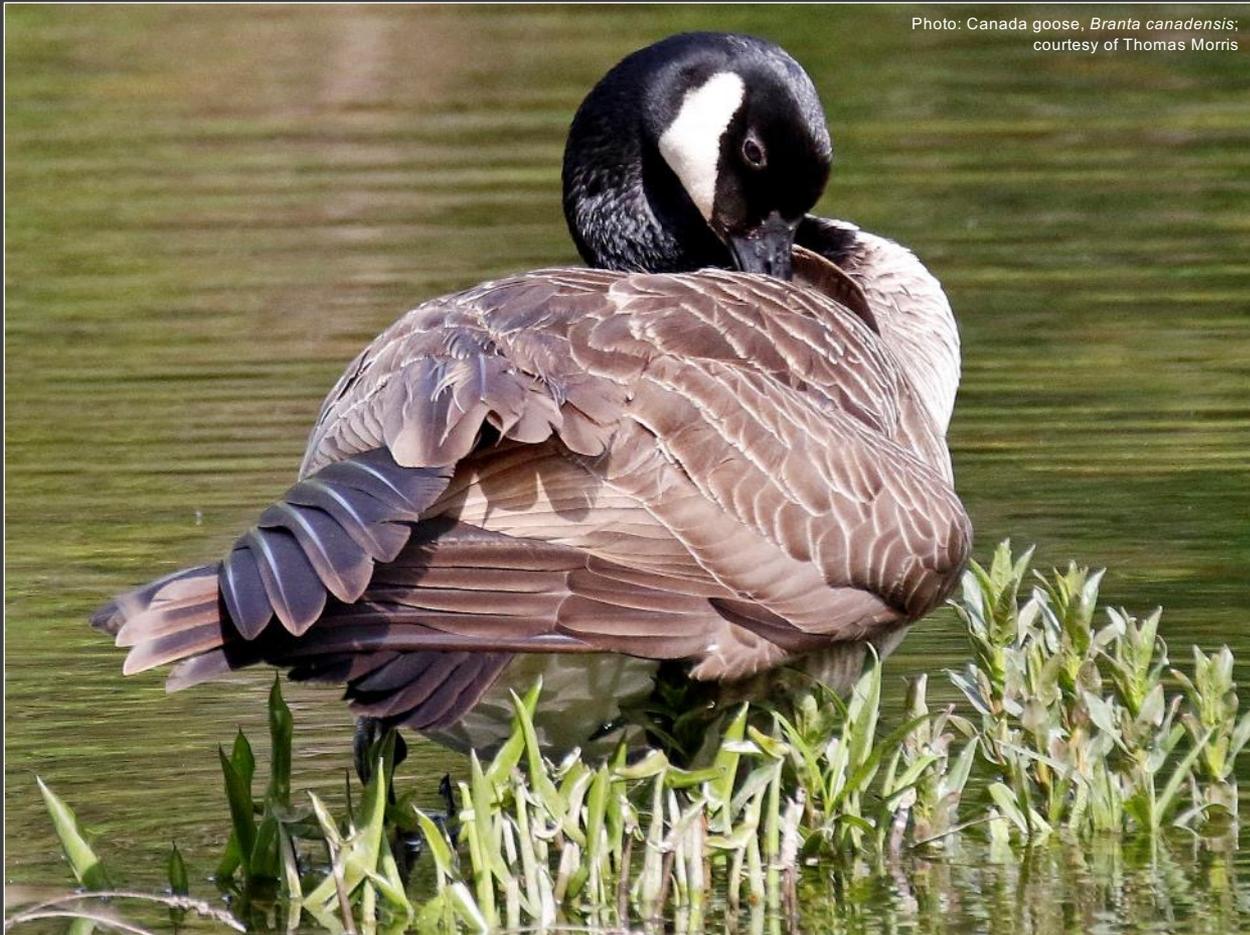


Photo: Canada goose, *Branta canadensis*;  
courtesy of Thomas Morris