

## B. Chesapeake Bay

### Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay is a beautiful and unique place located on the east coast of the United States. It is the largest estuary in the country and stretches across six states: Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. The Chesapeake Bay is not just any body of water; it is a national treasure and home to a wide variety of plants and animals.



### A Home for Many Creatures

The Chesapeake Bay provides a perfect home for many different plants and animals. The bay's calm waters are a safe haven for fish, crabs, oysters, and other marine life. It is also a crucial resting spot for birds as they migrate south for the winter. The bay's marshes and wetlands are essential habitats for birds, reptiles, and mammals.

### The Watershed

The Chesapeake Bay is not just the water you see; it is an entire region called a watershed. A watershed is an area of land where all the water drains into a common body of water, like a river or a bay. The Chesapeake Bay's watershed

covers more than 64,000 square miles! That's a lot of land that affects the health of the bay.

### **The Importance of Wetlands**

Wetlands are one of the most critical parts of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. They act like a sponge, soaking up excess water during heavy rains and then releasing it slowly during dry periods. This helps prevent flooding and keeps the bay's water clean. Wetlands are also home to many plants and animals that cannot survive anywhere else.

### **Oysters and Water Quality**

Oysters are small, bivalve creatures that are a vital part of the Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem. They help improve water quality by filtering the water. A single oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water in one day! Unfortunately, oysters in the bay have been declining due to pollution and disease. People are working hard to restore oyster populations and keep the bay healthy.

### **The Chesapeake Bay Bridge**

One of the most famous features of the Chesapeake Bay is the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. This impressive bridge stretches for 4.3 miles over the bay, connecting the eastern and western shores. It allows people to travel easily from one side of the bay to the other.

### **The Blue Crab**

The blue crab is a well-known resident of the Chesapeake Bay. These colorful creatures are famous for their delicious meat and are an essential part of the bay's ecosystem. Many people enjoy catching and eating blue crabs, but it's essential to follow rules and regulations to make sure there are always enough crabs in the bay.

### **Threats to the Bay**

While the Chesapeake Bay is a beautiful and valuable ecosystem, it faces many threats. Pollution from farms, cities, and industries can harm the water quality and the animals that call the bay home. Climate change is also a concern, as rising sea levels and warmer waters can impact the bay's delicate balance.

### **The Bay's Watersports**

The Chesapeake Bay offers plenty of opportunities for watersports and recreational activities. Many people enjoy fishing, boating, swimming, and kayaking in the bay's waters. It's essential to be mindful of the environment and follow rules to protect the bay while having fun.

### **The Chesapeake Bay Foundation**

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation is an organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the bay. They work with communities, businesses, and governments to find solutions to the bay's biggest challenges. Their goal is to ensure that the Chesapeake Bay remains a healthy and vibrant ecosystem for future generations to enjoy.

### **The Circle of Life**

The Chesapeake Bay is a perfect example of the circle of life. The plants and animals in the bay depend on each other for survival. From the smallest plankton to the largest blue crab, every living creature has a role to play in the delicate balance of this unique ecosystem.

1. Which US states is the Chesapeake Bay located in?
  - A) Maryland and Virginia
  - B) Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York
  - C) New York and Delaware
  - D) Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia
2. What is the Chesapeake Bay's watershed?
  - A) The land surrounding the bay
  - B) The body of water formed by the bay
  - C) The area where all the water drains into the bay
  - D) The Chesapeake Bay Bridge
3. Why are wetlands important to the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem?
  - A) They are a popular spot for fishing and swimming
  - B) They provide a safe haven for birds during migration
  - C) They help prevent flooding and keep the water clean
  - D) They are a home for blue crabs
4. What is the role of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay?
  - A) They help improve water quality by filtering the water
  - B) They are a popular seafood dish for humans
  - C) They create beautiful pearls that are valuable
  - D) They provide a habitat for wetland plants
5. What is the Chesapeake Bay Bridge known for?
  - A) Being the longest bridge in the world
  - B) Connecting the eastern and western shores of the bay
  - C) Its bright blue color
  - D) Its unique design

6. Which creature is famous for its delicious meat and is a vital part of the bay's ecosystem?
- A) Blue crab
  - B) Blue whale
  - C) Blue tang fish
  - D) Blue heron
7. What are some threats to the Chesapeake Bay?
- A) Climate change and rising sea levels
  - B) Pollution and overfishing
  - C) Boating and recreational activities
  - D) Wetlands and marshes disappearing
8. What is the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's mission?
- A) To protect and restore the bay's ecosystem
  - B) To build more bridges across the bay
  - C) To create more wetlands and marshes
  - D) To develop new watersports and recreational activities
9. What does the Chesapeake Bay teach us about ecosystems?
- A) Every living creature has a role to play in the balance of an ecosystem
  - B) Oysters are the most critical part of any ecosystem
  - C) Pollution and climate change do not affect ecosystems
  - D) Watersports are harmful to ecosystems
10. Why is the Chesapeake Bay considered a national treasure?
- A) It is the largest bay in the world
  - B) It is a safe haven for migrating birds
  - C) It provides a home for many different plants and animals
  - D) It is a popular tourist destination for people around the world

## ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS

1. B - Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York.
  - The Chesapeake Bay stretches across six states in the United States.
2. C - The area where all the water drains into the bay.
  - The Chesapeake Bay's watershed covers more than 64,000 square miles and includes all the land where water flows into the bay.
3. C - They help prevent flooding and keep the water clean.
  - Wetlands act like sponges, soaking up excess water and releasing it slowly, which helps prevent flooding and keeps the bay's water clean.
4. A - They help improve water quality by filtering the water.
  - Oysters play a crucial role in improving water quality by filtering large amounts of water each day.
5. B - Connecting the eastern and western shores of the bay.
  - The Chesapeake Bay Bridge is famous for stretching over the bay and connecting the two shores.
6. A - Blue crab.
  - Blue crabs are well-known residents of the Chesapeake Bay and are essential to the bay's ecosystem.
7. A - Climate change and rising sea levels.
  - The Chesapeake Bay faces threats from climate change, which includes rising sea levels and warmer waters.
8. A - To protect and restore the bay's ecosystem.
  - The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's mission is to protect and restore the health of the bay.
9. A - Every living creature has a role to play in the balance of an ecosystem.
  - The Chesapeake Bay demonstrates how all living creatures in an ecosystem depend on each other for survival.
- 10.C - It provides a home for many different plants and animals.
  - The Chesapeake Bay is considered a national treasure because it is a unique and diverse ecosystem that supports a wide variety of plants and animals.