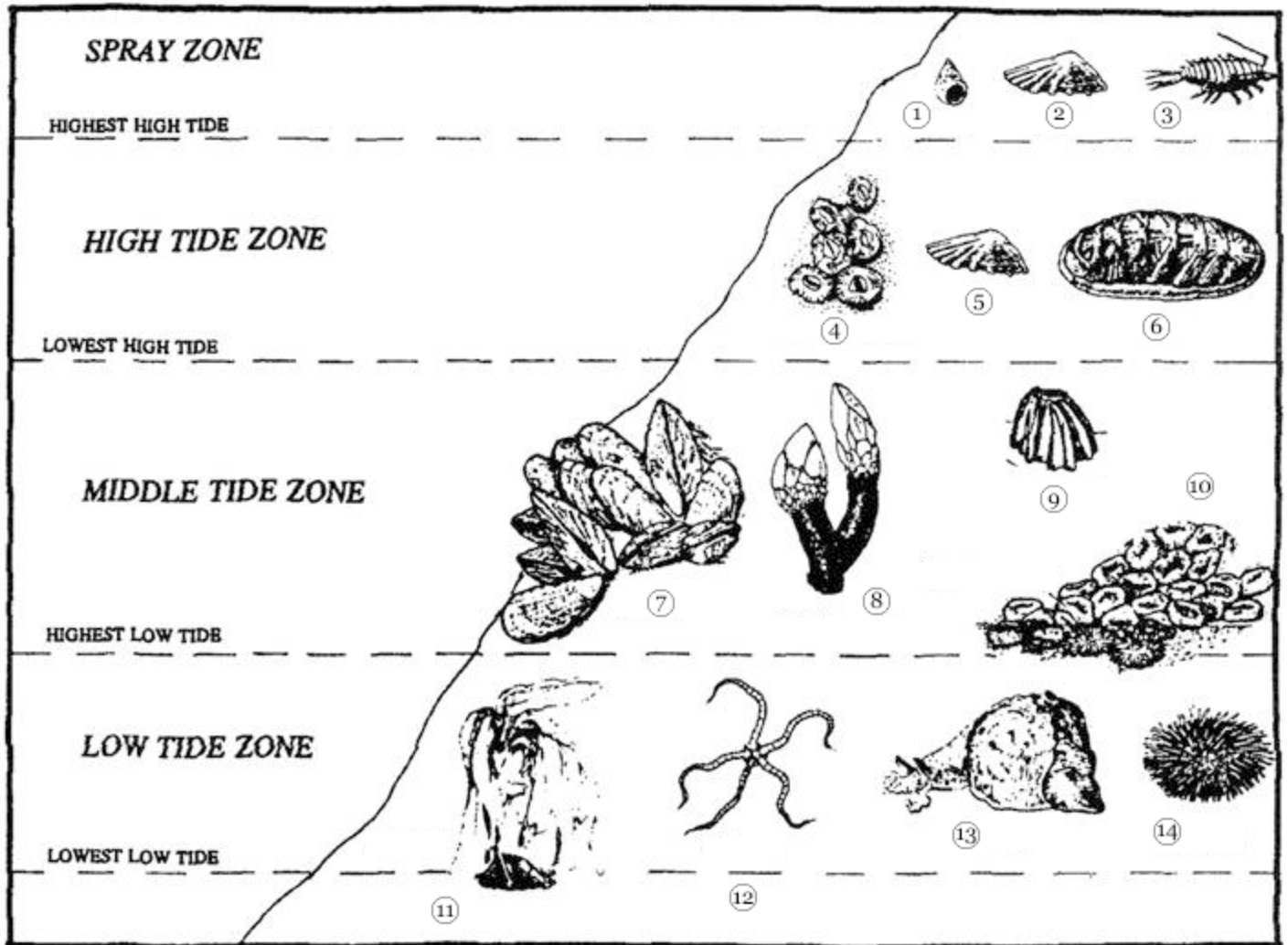


Stephanie Niu

A Guide to What Lives Between Land and Sea

To survive in this rugged environment, tide pool inhabitants often cling very tightly to any rock to which they can adhere.
—National Ocean Service, “What is a tide pool?”



Source: Mira Costa College, “Rocky Intertidal Field Trip Pre-Lab Exercise.” <http://home.miracosta.edu/kmeldahl/prelabs/tidepools-prelab.htm>

1. (*Periwinkle*) The science tells us Greenland is losing two hundred gigatons of ice each year.
2. (*Limpet*) Two hundred gigatons is two hundred Earths' worth of cars made of ice. Every car on the planet frozen and dropped into the sea.
3. (*Rock louse*) Imagine them all falling into the water: the windshields cracking but too thick to break, the sharp little tire treads carved in with an ice-knife, the cars colliding, cracking, the whole air shining with cold.
4. (*Buckshot barnacle*) The science tells us *We're fucked*.
5. (*Limpet*) As I child I loved visiting the beach to dig for clams, race their tunneling tongues after each wave. Plunge a hand in the mud to pull up the ones too slow to escape. My wrists like anchors in the saltwater, the earth safe in my fist.
6. (*Chiton*) Bivalve comes from *bi*, two, and *valve*, leaves of a door. A place to enter or disappear from.
7. (*Mussel*) The science tells us we are out of time.
8. (*Goose barnacles*) Locals of a Pacific Island nation called Tuvalu have been watching their houses flood for years. Their wells are growing salty. Their ancestors buried in the land that the sea is soon reaching. Submerged in the graves.
9. (*Acorn barnacle*) Do you pull the dead out of their graves to move them to safety? Do you leave them to the sea?
10. (*Aggregate anemone*) The headstone is not an anchor. You must enter, or leave.
11. (*Sea palm*) The clams are gone too, disappearing in search of cooler waters. Empty mud in my hands.
12. (*Brittle star*) How long until all our graves flood? Will we wait to drown all the ghosts?
13. (*Sea hare*) Passing through a door is choosing to be in or be out.
14. (*Sea urchin*) The science tells us we are out.

Stephanie Niu grew up in GA and earned her degrees in symbolic systems and computer science from Stanford University. Her poems have appeared in *The Southeast Review*, *Portland Review*, *Immigrant Report*, and elsewhere. She is the recipient of a 2021 Fulbright Award and currently lives in northern CA.