Eastern mudsnail

What are they?
These tiny animals are gastropods. Gastropods are part of the mollusk family (animals like clams and oysters that have some kind of hard shell). Gastropods are animals that have one large foot (the word gastropod means “stomach foot.”) Many gastropods, including eastern mudsnails, have a coiled shell.

What do they look like?
These small creatures are often less than one-inch long. Their spiral shells are often covered with a slimy growth—made up of mud and algae—that helps it hide from predators.

Where can you find them?
In the winter eastern mud snails live in the eelgrass beds around the Bay. In spring, they crawl into the intertidal flats.

How do they behave?
Mudsnails crawl around on the bottom of intertidal flats, searching for food. As they move around, they leave a tiny trail. They can also burrow into the mud to avoid drying out or to escape from predators.

We often think of snails as slow-moving creatures. However, eastern mudsnails can actually move quite quickly.

What do they eat?
Eastern mudsnails have a great sense of smell. They can detect dead or decaying food—as tiny as algae and as large as a fish—from relatively far away. Mainly, they eat whatever they can find in the sediment, usually tiny phytoplankton like algae.

What eats them?
Birds and fish prey on these tiny snails.

Creature Feature
Hermit crabs in the lower Bay like to live in eastern mudsnail shells.