

Oregon bay clam identification*

Clams harvested in Oregon estuaries

Gaper *Tresus capax* (Empire, horseneck, blue)

- Identified by the large gape around neck and concentric rings of the shell. End of neck is covered by leathery sheath.
- Commensal pea crab pairs are often found within their mantle.
- Meat content of gaper clams is generally highest in the winter.



size 3-6"

- A thin skin-like coating called periostracum is often found on the shells of smaller gaper clams.



Butter *Saxidomus giganteus* (Beefsteak, Martha Washington)

- Identified by its smooth concentric rings.
- Found in lower areas of large estuaries.



size 2-4"

- Exterior coloration is often dark



Cockle *Clinocardium nuttallii* (Heart cockle, Nutall's cockle)

- Identified by its prominent radiating ridges.
- Their powerful foot allows them to quickly escape predators such as sea stars.



size 1½-3"

Purple varnish clam *Nuttallia obscurata*

- Identified by varnish-like coating and purple interior.
- Native to Japan, introduced to Oregon in the 1990s.



size 1½-3"

Littleneck *Protothaca staminea* (Steamer, native littleneck)

- Identified by concentric rings and radiating ridges.
- Longer lived and less abundant than cockles.



size 1½ -2½"

Razor clam *Silqua patula*

- Identified by its thin oval shell and smooth brown coating.
- Occasionally found within estuaries.



size 3-6"

Softshell *Mya arenaria* (Mud clam, eastern soft-shell)

- Identified by its concentric rings and oblong egg shape, slightly pointed at the neck end.
- Native to East coast of US, introduced in the late 1800s.



size 2-4"

- A comparison between a softshell (top) and small gaper (bottom). Note the difference in shell shape of the area around the neck.



Other intertidal clams

Bent-nose macoma *Macoma nasuta*

- Found throughout estuaries.
- Like other macoma clams, is generally sandy and not very palatable.



size 1½-3"

Bend of neck end

Bodega tellin *Tellina bodegensis*

- Found in the lower estuaries and on sandy beaches.



size 1½-2"

Jackknife clam *Solen sicarius*

- Similar color to razor clams, but with a distinctive "knife-like" shape.
- Common subtidally.



size 1½-3"

Arctic hiatella *Hiatella arctica*

- Primarily found in lower estuary.
- A nestling clam found among mussels and in vacant holes of burrowing clams.



size 1-1½"

Rough piddock *Zirfaea pilsbryi*

- Identified by gape at neck end and teeth (for burrowing) at foot end.
- A burrowing clam, found in rock or sandstone.



size 3-5"

Northwest ugly clam *Entodesma saxicola*

- Identified by their distinctive shape and orange color.
- Often found clinging to docks or nestled in rocks.



size 2-4"

Baltic macoma *Macoma balthica*

- A small clam found in middle estuary.
- Interior often rose colored, but can also be blue or yellow.



size 1-2"

interior

White sand macoma *Macoma secta*

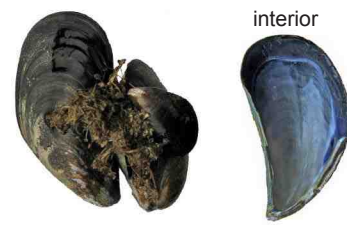
- One of the largest macoma clams.
- Distinctive ridge at neck end.



size 2-4"

Blue mussels *Mytilus edulis*

- Identified by oblong shape, and iridescent color of their interior shell.
- Smaller than the California mussel, which has radiating ridges and is not common to estuaries.



size 1½-3"

interior

Pacific oyster *Crassostrea gigas*

- Grown commercially, native to Japan.
- Much larger than native oyster.



size 3-8"

Native oyster *Ostrea conchaphila*

- Found in upper estuarine areas of Coos, Yaquina, and Netarts.
- Species name "conchaphila" translates to "shell loving" due to their shell settlement preference.



size 1-2"

Pacific falsejingle *Pododesmus cepio*

- Often found attached to docks.
- Is often mistaken for a scallop or oyster, distinguished by its muscular attachment on left valve and green interior.



Right valve



size 3-5"

Left valve (exterior)

* There are many other species of bivalves found in Oregon; these species are among the most commonly encountered.

** Size measurements given are average range of shell height typically found by recreational users.

For more information on Oregon shellfish, visit www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish.