

## **Atlantic Jackknife (Razor) Clam, *Ensis directus***

The Atlantic Jackknife Clam looks just like its namesake, a long, straight edge knife. The Jackknife Clam is also referred to as a Razor Clam. Clams have a foot (and no it does not look like an actual foot), which is a strong muscle the clam uses to feel around, move and burrow itself deep in the sand. However, watch out for these sharp little critters as they can slice your feet or hands.



Photo credit: Kira Dacanay, Senior Fisheries Biologist, Marine Fisheries Administration

## **Stout Tagelus, *Tagelus plebeius***

The Stout Tagelus is often called a Jackknife Clam, but should not be confused with the Atlantic Jackknife Clam. They get to be four inches across and 1.5 inches tall. You can find them in sandy/mud mixes in low intertidal zones. Geographically they range from Cape Cod to Brazil.



## Surf Clam, *Spisula solidissima*

Did you know Surf Clams can live up to 35 years? They are also the largest clam along the Atlantic coast, growing to around six inches across. They are different from the hard clams that you can get on the half shell. Surf Clams are tough. Once they land at a processing plant, they are chopped up for canning or sliced into clam strips.



## Hard Clam/ Northern Quahog, *Mercenaria mercenaria*

The Hard Clam goes by different names: Quahog, Round Clam, and Chowder. They also go by different names according to size: Little Neck, Special (Middle Neck), Top Neck, Cherry Stone, and Chowder being the biggest size. These are the clams that you can buy in a store or order in a restaurant. Most often, Hard Clams are farm raised, however they are still found in the wild. To tell the difference, a farm raised Hard Clam will have dark brown zigzag/stripe markings on its shell (see photo, below right). A wild Hard Clam will have no markings. Clams are known to burrow themselves in the sand or mud, only exposing their siphon. They use their siphon to filter feed, collecting phytoplankton and other small organisms in the water.



Photo credit: Colin Holden, Bayfarm Inc.

## **Blue Mussel, *Mytilus edulis***

Blue Mussels belong to the same family (bivalve mollusks) as clams, oysters, and scallops. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), “Females can reproduce between 50 and 200 million eggs during a spawning event.” They can also filter over 17 gallons of water a day and have been consumed by humans for roughly 8,000 years.



Photo credit: Kira Dacanay, Senior Fisheries Biologist, Marine Fisheries Administration

## **Ribbed Mussel, *Geukensia demissa***

Very common in tidal marshes, the Ribbed Mussel can grow up to four inches in length. Mussels attach themselves to hard surfaces like rock or embed themselves in sediment to stay in place. They have a lifespan of 15 years or more. You can determine how old a Ribbed Mussel is by simply counting the ribs on its shell. This type of mussel is edible; however, they are tough and not as sweet tasting as the Blue Mussel.



## **Bay Scallop, *Argopecten irradians***

Bay Scallops can be a variety of colors: tan, beige, gray, brown, orange, green or a shade of red. They can grow up to three inches across and can be found in shallow water in eel grass beds. Unlike other bivalves, scallops do not have a foot to help move around. Instead, they swim by opening and closing their shell while jetting water out from their cavity. Did you know scallops have blue eyes?! Blue eyes are how the scallop senses light, darkness, and movement that is going on around them.



## **Atlantic Sea Scallop, *Placopecten magellanicus***

A Sea Scallop can live 20 years or more. They are filter feeders, consuming phytoplankton and other small organisms suspended in the water. Scallops move by swimming, unlike other bivalves such as clams, oysters, mussels, and oysters. They use their shell to swim by opening and closing it quickly to flutter through the water. This helps them to avoid predators. A scallop's biggest threat beside humans is a Sea Star (starfish). The Sea Star will wrap its "arms" around the scallop and pull the two shells apart. Once open, the Sea Star will consume the soft parts of the scallop. Humans only eat one part of the scallop, the abductor muscle. This muscle holds the top and bottom shell closed.



## **Eastern Oyster, *Crassostrea virginica***

This oyster is also known as the American Oyster or Atlantic Oyster. Throughout history, oysters have only been harvested during months with the letter “R” in the name. This was due to spawning timing and lack of refrigeration during warmer months. Adults can filter around 50 gallons of water a day.



## **Jingle Shells, *Anomia simplex***

Jingle Shells are similar to clams, oysters, mussels and scallops. Like all bivalve mollusks they have two shells (top and bottom) and a hinge. Jingle Shells have a couple common names: Mermaid Toenails and Neptune’s Toenails. Due to their pearly colorful shells, they are commonly used for jewelry and windchimes. These shells were given their name from the sound they make when a bunch of them are tossed together. But don’t let their thin shell fool you, it is pretty strong.



## **Blood Ark, *Anadara ovalis***

The Blood Ark is also known as the Bloody Clam due to the red color of its blood. The reason for this is they are one of the few bivalves to have hemoglobin, a protein responsible for transporting oxygen in the blood. The hemoglobin found in the blood ark has been used to study the properties of human hemoglobin. They can be found in either mud or sand in shallow subtidal waters.



## **Variable Coquina, *Donax variabilis***

These little colorful clams only get to be  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in length. When walking along the beach in the surf, you will find these colorful bivalves burrowing down into the sand. Some people commonly mistake coquinas as baby surf clams. They come in a variety of colors: yellow, orange, pink, red, mauve, purple and even blue. Ranging from New Jersey to the Gulf of Mexico, they are a very active clam, migrating up and down the coastline with the tides.

