

Wild Harvest Intertidal Clams

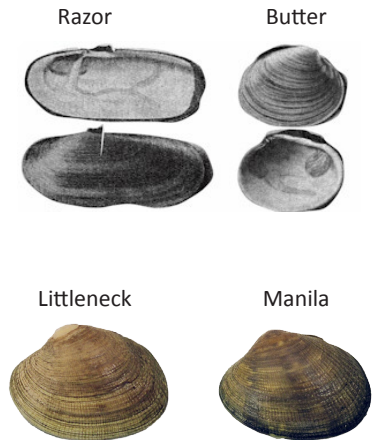
SPECIES

Razor Clam (*Siliqua patula*)

Butter Clam (*Saxidomus gigantea*)

Littleneck Clam (*Protothaca staminea*)

Manila Clam (*Venerupis philippinarum*; syn-*Tapes philippinarum*)



ABOUT

Clams are bivalve invertebrates. Butters, littlenecks, and Manilas belong to the family *Veneridae* and razors belong to family *Pharidae* of phylum *Mollusca*. Clams are found along the British Columbia (BC) coast from the mid intertidal zone to subtidal depth of 55 metres (180 feet) usually on sandy, mud or gravel beaches. Minimum commercial harvest sizes are: 9 cm (3.5 inches) for razor; 6.3 cm (2.5 inches) for butter; and 3.8 cm (1.5 inches) for Manila and littleneck clams, measured through the longest diameter of the shell. There are no size limits in recreational and First Nation fisheries. Intertidal clams are harvested by hand in shore areas throughout the BC coast.

STOCK STATUS

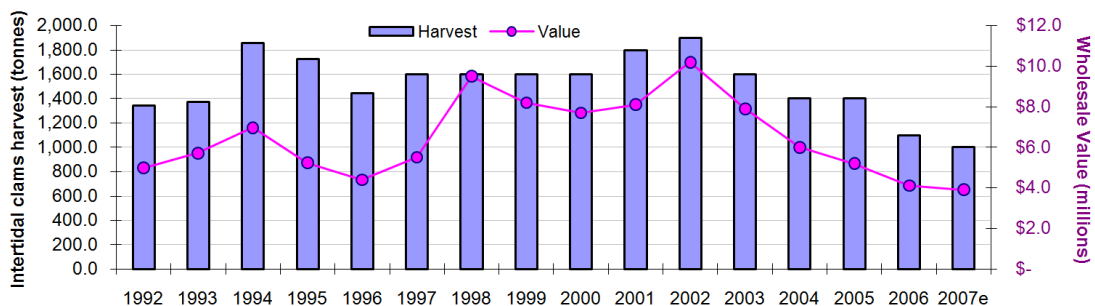
Currently there is no conservation concerns for intertidal clam stocks with the exception of littleneck clams, which have shown a decline in some areas (*DFO - Fisheries Management*).

MANAGEMENT

BC's intertidal clam fishery is managed federally by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Minimum harvest size, area licensing, and time and area closures are currently in place to manage the wild clam commercial fishery. There are additional requirements for pre-harvest biomass surveys for beaches assigned to depuration fishery harvest which occurs in marginally contaminated areas as classified under the Canadian Sanitary Shellfish Program. Environment Canada undertakes growing water quality surveys (*DFO - Fisheries Management*).

PRODUCT VALUE

In 2000, approximately 1,600 tonnes of wild clams were valued at \$7.7 million. Approximately 1,000 tonnes of wild clams sold at \$3.9 million (wholesale) in 2007. (*BC Seafood Industry Year in Review*).



e: estimate

LIFE HISTORY

Razor clam shells may be brown or yellowish-brown depending on the age of the animal. The exposed siphon (neck), and foot lack any colouration. The foot is large and powerful. The siphons are short and united except at the tip.

Butter clams are yellow in color when young, changing to gray-white with age. The shells are oval to square-shaped, large and heavy, and externally marked with concentric rings, but without radiating ridges.

Littleneck clam shells have less prominent concentric rings, stronger radiating ribs and a more rounded shape than Manila clams. Littleneck clams can reach a size of 7 cm (2.5 inches) measured at the greatest breadth of the shell.

Manila clam shells tend to be longer and flatter than those of littlenecks, and feature variable patterns. Manila clams can grow to a size of 7.5 cm (3 inches).

Clams achieve harvestable size in 3 – 5 years in southern waters and longer in the north. Life spans are as long as 14 years. Spawning and mass fertilization occurs in the water column. The larval phase includes several stages and lasts for 3-4 weeks, during which time the larvae drift in the plankton and are dispersed by water currents. The larval phase ends when larvae settle from the plankton.

Clams are suspension feeders, feeding mainly on phytoplankton, zooplankton, and detritus. Predators include crabs, fishes, moon snails, sea stars, and birds.

PRODUCTS

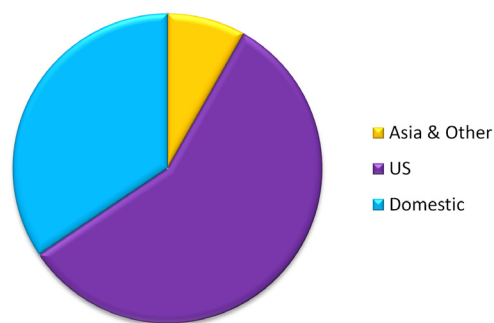
Clams are usually sold live.

PRODUCT MARKET

Market for clams is primarily in the United States. Razor and butter clams are predominantly frozen and used domestically for crab bait.

MARKET TREND

Wild fishery markets are in decline due to dollar exchange rates and competition from Washington, Mexico, and Chile. The wild fishery is limited due to aquaculture product being landed.

**LINKS**

DFO - Fisheries Management Plans: www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/fishmgmt_e.htm

BC Seafood Industry Year in Review: www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/reports/index.html

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA): <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/toce.shtml>

Environment Canada: http://www.ecoinfo.org/env_ind/region/shellfish/shellfish_e.cfm

BCSeafood.ca: www.bcseafood.ca/index.php

Fish and Seafood Online: <http://www.ats-sea.agr.gc.ca/sea-mer/index-eng.htm>