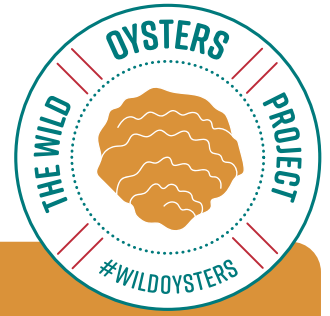


European native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*)



LOCATION: Europe



Previously found around the coast from Norway to Morocco, and in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.



DIET:

Algae and organic particles (tiny pieces of animals and plants).



LIFESPAN: 5–10 years...

...but some can live up to 30 years old!



SIZE: 10–12cm...

...but some can grow to over 20cm!



HABITAT:

Mud and sand in salty water.

Oysters are **molluscs**, like snails.

Molluscs are a type of **invertebrate** (they do not have a backbone).

All oysters are born male, then change between male and female throughout their lives.

This is known as being a protandrous **hermaphrodite**.

One oyster can clean up to **200 litres** of water per day!

They suck in water through valves like a Hoover, and trap small food particles on tiny hairs – this is called **filter feeding**.

Oysters have been eaten in the UK since Roman times.

Oyster fishing has been happening in the UK for so long it has become a big part of the **local culture** in some areas.

Each adult female can produce around **1 million** babies per year!

These babies are called **larvae**. Only a few will survive to become adults.

Oysters create **habitats** for other living things.

Oysters live together in big groups, forming reefs (like coral reefs). These provide **food and shelter** for species such as sponges, crabs, eels and seahorses!



95% of native oyster reefs have been lost in under 200 years.

Oyster reefs are one of the most threatened sea habitats in Europe.

Overfishing, pollution, habitat loss and disease are causing oysters to die out.