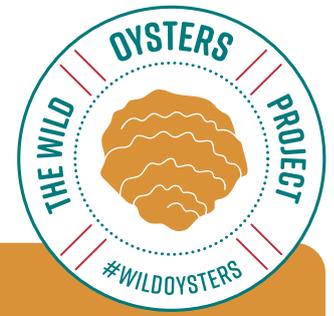


# European native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*)



## 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.