



Overview

Hard clams are bivalve mollusks. **Mollusks** are a category of animals without a backbone (**invertebrate**) and **bivalves** are mollusks that are covered by two shells. Clams feed on microscopic plankton called **algae** and have many predators (marine birds, rays, crabs, humans, etc.) By contracting their **adductor muscle**, they can keep their shell sealed tightly.

Life History

After spawning, fertilized clam eggs become larvae within 12 hours and develop shells within 26-30 hours. After another 8-12 hours the **veliger** stage starts and the larvae become planktonic for 12-14 days. Although their lifespan is generally unknown due to stress, evidence suggests clams may live as long as 40 years!

Status

Although their abundance may have declined since historical levels, the hard clam is considered a stable species. Hard clams are ecologically and economically important, not only are they commercially harvested for sale and consumption, but also play a significant role in recycling organic material in the water column and keeping our bays clean!

How You Can Help

Did you know CCE Marine Program is currently spawning and growing millions of shellfish to be planted at designated sanctuary sites across Nassau and Suffolk Counties? For more information, or to get involved with the Long Island Shellfish Restoration Project, please visit: lshellfishrestorationproject.org

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