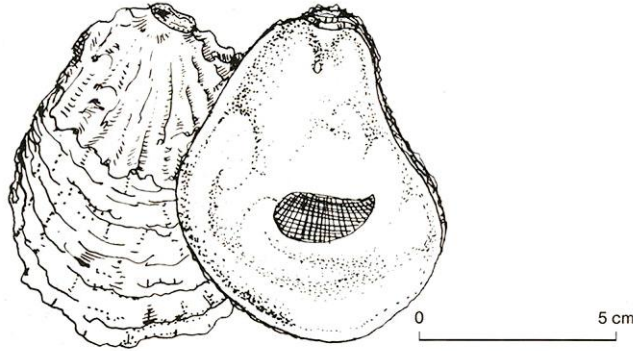


American oyster

Crassostrea virginica
Ostión americano



Description

Range: The American oyster, a bivalve mollusc of the family Ostreidae, is found in the western Atlantic from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Yucatan Peninsula. In the Gulf, this species occurs throughout estuaries, shallow nearshore waters, and on reefs located near river mouths.

Habitat: Large populations of this benthic invertebrate are found in the large estuarine bays and sounds of the Gulf (with most concentrations found within 10-meter depths). Sedentary in character, this invertebrate attaches in clusters to shell reefs, firm mud/shell bottoms and other hard substrates.

Feeding and Behavior: The American oyster filter-feeds principally on small unicellular algae and incidentally on suspended detrital particles. It is found in association with numerous predators, commensals, and parasites.

Reproduction: Spawning also occurs in estuarine habitats. In the Gulf of Mexico, April t October are the most active months, although spawning has been reported during all months except February and March. Nursery areas are found in estuarine waters.

Movement: Planktonic larvae drift with the tides and currents until they settle on solid substrate.

Fisheries: This species is commercially harvested throughout its range for its meat, the seasonality for harvesting being state regulated. The fishery for this species is the fourth largest in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and there is also a commercial fishery in Mexican waters. The species is harvested recreationally.

References: Cake, E.W., Jr., pers. comm.; Ekdale, A.A., 1974; Fischer, W. ed., 1978; Galtsoff, P.S., 1964; Maghan, B.W., 1967; Van Sickle, V.R., et al. 1978.

- Adult Area (Year-round)**
- Major Adult Area (Year-round)**
- Commercial Fishing Ground***

Year-round spawning and nursery areas occur throughout adult areas.

*Seasons for commercial fishing grounds are state regulated:

- Alabama – all year unless closed by health department
- Florida – September to May
- Louisiana – season variable
- Mississippi – September to April (staggered openings)
- Texas – November to April
- Mexico – Year-round

References

Cake, E.W., Jr., pers. comm.; Heald, E.J., 1970; US DOC, NOAA, 1980; US DOI, Bureau of Land Management, 1978.

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