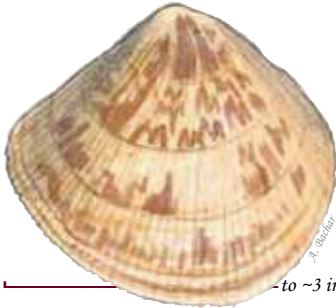


Pacific Littleneck Clam



Six native species

commonly known as littleneck clams or *chiones* are found on the California coast, but only one is found statewide: the Pacific littleneck clam. This clam is often found in coarse, sandy mud in bays, sloughs, and estuaries. On the open coast, they may be found near rocky points or reefs with small cobbles and coarse sand. They are usually easy to find at Malibu Point, Los Angeles County, in southern Orange County, and in Bodega and Tomales bays.

Distinguishing Characteristics

Yellowish-gray or gray in sloughs and bays, whitish along the open coast. Geometric patterns of wavy brown lines or blotches on sides; highly variable in color and pattern. Oval shells with well defined, radiating ribs and less prominent concentric ridges.

Life History Notes Pacific littleneck clams feed on plankton and bits of food suspended in the water. They are believed to spawn from late spring to early summer, and again in winter. The young drift with the currents for

about three weeks, after which they settle and bury themselves in the sediments.

Because of their short siphons, this species is generally found within six inches of the surface. Harvesting is accomplished using rakes, shovels, garden hand forks, or trowels. Intertidal areas are usually targeted during daylight hours and at minus tides. Pacific littleneck clams are one of the most abundant clams on the West Coast, and are highly esteemed for food.

Pacific Littleneck Clam

SCIENTIFIC NAMES

Protothaca staminea

OTHER COMMON NAMES

rock cockle, bay cockle, rock clam

RANGE & HABITAT

Statewide in various habitats along the outer coast in mid-to-low intertidal zones and in bays, sloughs & estuaries

LENGTH

To ~3 in.

LIFE SPAN

To 10 years

DIET

Feeds on suspended plankton and detritus