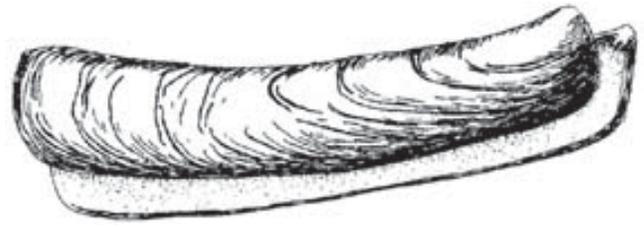


This Month

Razor Clam

Nicknames: Straight razor clam, Jackknife clam
Scientific Name: *Ensis directus*



Field Markings: Shell is brownish-green
Size: Up to 10 inches, about six times longer than wide
Habitat: Sandy and muddy bottoms of bays and estuaries, intertidal and subtidal zones
Seasonal Appearance: Year-round

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES AND BEHAVIORS

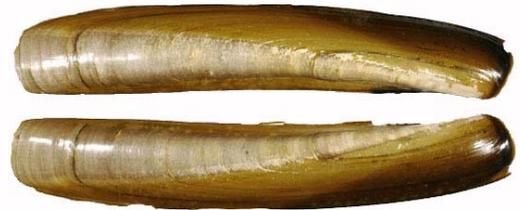
Razor clams are so named because their long, convex shape resembles an old-fashioned barber's straight-edge razor. The shell tends to be glossy with a purple region near the curving edge. The cream-colored muscular foot protrudes approximately five inches from the shell when extended. Like other bivalves, a siphon is present and the hole from which it protrudes is uniquely shaped, like a key hole.



This clam is well adapted for living in soft tidal substrates. Because of its sort siphones, the razor clam burrows just below

the surface to feed. When the tide goes out, it burrows quickly into deeper sand. The foot of the razor clam is larger and more agile than that of other bivalve clams. To burrow, the razor clam pushes its strong, narrow foot down deep into the substrate, then expands the foot as an anchor and pulls the body and shell deeper into the sand.

The razor clam is highly sensitive to vibrations and the impending danger of a nearby predator. Its strong muscular foot enables it to propel itself out of its burrow to escape an attack from below or to borrow quickly if a predator is attacking from above. Razor clams are preyed upon by clamworms and moon snails.



RELATIONSHIP TO PEOPLE

Razor clams are edible, but are not regularly harvested for consumption by people. They are extremely strong and almost impossible to remove from their substrate in one piece, as the shell can pull free from the body of the clam. Attempting to pull the razor clam from the burrow with bare hands can be dangerous, since the shell's edge is quite sharp. Clammers have found that pouring table salt into the burrow increases the salinity enough to irritate the clam, causing it to come to the surface.

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