

CLAM HABITAT (FACTS AND INFORMATION) LESSON 13-16

1. . . . from "Food from the Sea" by Rachel L. Carson, for the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington. 1943. Print.67.

"Soft clams are found chiefly north of Cape Cod, and their range extends all the way to the Arctic Ocean. . . . *Mya* is the clam of the tide flats, living buried in the sand or mud of the vast intertidal zone that is alternately exposed and submerged by the tides. When the water is over the flats the clams push their long, tube like siphons up to the surface of the sand. Water laden with food and oxygen is drawn in, and water containing carbon dioxide, nitrogenous waste products, and undigested food is expelled . . . Some soft shell clams live also in the shallow water below the low-tide mark" . . .

2. "During the summer months, the water over the flats is often teeming with the minute, swimming forms that are embryo clams. These tiny creatures are swept in and out by the changing tides, and are carried up and down the coast by prevailing currents and eddies . . . At this stage they are very sensitive to temperature changes, and a long, cold rain may kill them by the thousand. . . Sometimes large numbers settle on eel grass and sea weeds, and thick colonies of them may populate certain shore areas, leaving other areas practically barren. Probably these thickly settled areas are places where eddying currents have concentrated large numbers of swimming young. " (p.68)

3. . . . the young clam begins to dig among the sand grains with its sharp foot, gradually working the shell down into the bottom . . . a trial venture, and the young clam may come out of its shallow burrow. " (p. 69)

4. At about ½ inch in length, "the clam makes its final descent . . . never again leaves its subterranean chamber of its own accord." (p. 69)

5. from "Non-Indigenous Aquatic Species of concern for Alaska Fact Sheet 4 Softshell Clam *Mya arenaria*" for Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, 5/4/04. Print.

. . . "Larval growth, survival, and the length of the larval stage are dependent on salinity, temperature and food availability. . . Soil type seems to have little influence on the distribution of the Softshell Clam as they are found on muddy, sandy and gravelly bottoms. However, the highest densities of clams are found in muddy sand areas. The Softshell Clam typically inhabits the intertidal and shallow subtidal zones, and is typically found living in water depths up 250 ft. . . . Young Softshell Clams live in the upper inch of the substrate. With advancing growth longer siphons are developed which enable the Softshell Clam to bury itself deeper into the sediment, increasing . . . ability to escape predation. This clam is considered a hard-winter species and

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can tolerate water temperatures down to 28° F. The Softshell Clam adapts well to a wide range of salinities and temperatures, and can survive in pristine and disturbed habitats as well as polluted habitats.” (p.2)