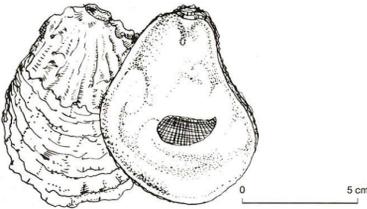


# American oyster

*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 to 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.



**Sources for Base Map:**  
National Ocean Survey World Aeronautical Charts, 1980, No. C-1-25, 4th ed., No. C-1-26, 4th ed., Scale 1:1,000,000. Patrix Series - Mapes de los Estados (Mexico): Quintana Roo, Map No.22, Scale unknown. Yucatan, Map No.30, Scale 1:1,000,000. Campeche, Map No.4, Scale 1:800,000. Tabasco, Map No.26, Scale 1:600,000. Vera Cruz, Map No.29, Scale 1:1,000,000. Tamaulipas, Map No.27, Scale 1:1,000,000.  
Uchupi, E., 1966, Map Showing Relation of Land and Submarine Topography, De Soto Canyon to Great Bahama Bank, Map Series I-475. Uchupi, E., 1968, Map Showing Relation of Land and Submarine Topography, Mississippi Delta to Bahia de Campeche, Map Series I-521. U.S.G.S. Topographic Maps, Scale 1:1,000,000. U.S. Naval Oceanographic Office and U.S.G.S., 1975, Bathymetry Chart of Gulf of Mexico Region, Scale 1:2,500,000.

**Map Projections:**  
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection  
Bathymetric Depth Intervals:  
Above 200 meters depth: 20 meters  
Below 200 meters depth: 500 meters

**Scale Bars:**  
Nautical Miles: 0, 25, 50, 75, 100, 125, 150, 200  
Kilometers: 0, 25, 50, 75, 100, 150, 200