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Clam Identification Key

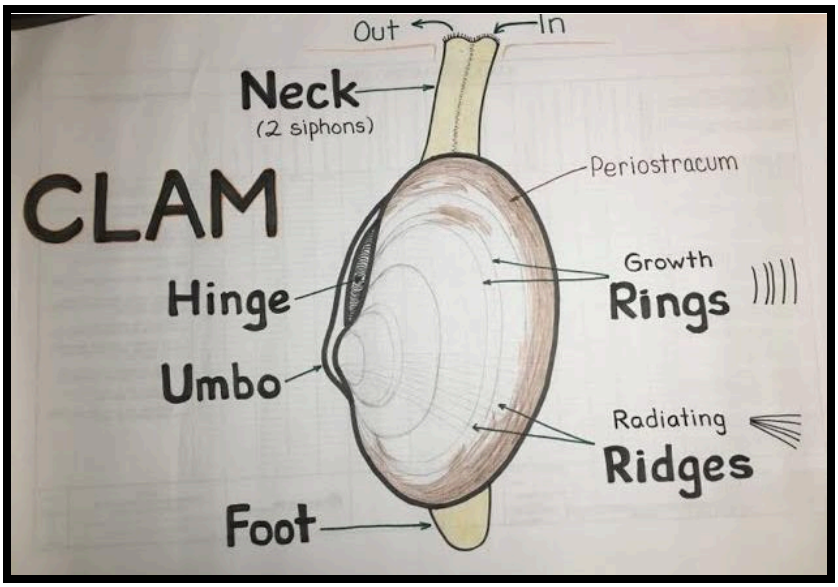
Adapted from King County Beach Assessment program

Anatomy Terms

- Umbo
- Hinge
- Siphon
- Periostracum

Things to Note:

Shape:
Round vs Oval/Elliptical vs Triangular
Patterns:
Concentric Rings vs Radiating Ridges
Color



Can you see a leathery hinge connecting the shells? (Beside the Umbo, the leathery hinge is visible outside of the live clam or closed clam shell.)

If no, go on to "A"

If yes, skip to "B"



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A. No leathery hinge visible:



(hinge is hidden inside)



1. Outlines of both shells are mirror images of each other, flaps are present on the tips of siphons. It is a **Horse Clam**.

[two horse clam species: "Horseneck" (*Tresus nuttalii)* or "Fat Gaper" (*Tresus capax*). They are often *misnamed* "geoduck" when large, but these are *not* geoducks!]



2. Shells are not mirror images, one shell overlaps onto the other at the top; no flaps are present on the tips of siphons. The shell has elliptical shape. It is an **Eastern Softshell** Clam.

Both Eastern softshell and horse clams often have a brown-black papery skin (periostracum), on outer (newer) edge of shell, wearing off over time. When small, the shells may seem thin and fragile, when large (as large as an adult's hand!) the shells can get thick and robust.

B. Yes, leathery hinge visible on outside of shell **(next page)**

(clam key continued, page 2)

B. Yes, leathery hinge visible on outside of shell



1. Shell is half circular, half like triangle, pointed on one end. Often has brown or black skin-like periostracum, which may flake off older parts of shell.
    a. Has a more blunt point. Reddish-brown periostracum may cover whole shell or where flaking off, shell may look purplish-white. It is a **varnish clam** (or "purple varnish clam", "savory clam")



    b. Triangular edge often more pointed, sometimes tip is curved up. Grayish Periostracum may be worn off or with just a little around edge… It is a **Macoma** (includes many species: "bent-nose", "pointed"/"polluted", sand, and Baltic macomas)

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2. Shell is **mostly circular or oval, rather thick and strong**. Rings or ribs are easily seen on the shells. No periostracum

    a. Shell has **heavy ribs**, shell is heart-shaped when viewed from one end. It is a **Cockle**. (aka. "heart-cockle")

    b. **Rings and ribs** are equally visible. Shells may have patterns of color



(1) Shell is elongated, oddly oval. there is a smooth, flattish groove where shells meet near the umbo (non-hinged side of umbo). It is a **Manila clam**.
(also called "Japanese littleneck")



(2) Shell is rounded, there is no pit near the umbo – more of a ridge that continues all the way to umbo.
It is a **native littleneck clam**



3. A thick oval shell, rounded on both ends, has faint rings. Plain chalky white or stained gray from mud. Live clams have a noticeably strong leathery hinge. It is a **butter clam**.



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Description:	**Drawing of shell**
Color:	
Shape:	
Markings:	
Bigger than 1.5 inches (YES/NO)	
Type of clam	