



Alliance Adventures

Fall 2014



Oysters

Food, Foe, or Friend?

Oysters are bivalve or two-shell mollusks, similar to clams and mussels. As newborns, oysters free-float through the water until they reach the "spat" life stage. At that point, the oyster spat attach to a hard surface where they will remain for the rest of their lives. During the first year of life, most oysters are male, but many will become female within two to three years!

These **invertebrates**, or creatures without a backbone, serve many important functions. Live oysters are filter feeders that filter the brackish and salt water they call home. As filter feeders, they consume any loose dirt, algae, and nutrients found in the water around them. This makes the water they release much cleaner than it was before. In fact, just one adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water per day!

Invertebrate: animal without a backbone

Did you know Eastern Oysters, like me, live in the Choctawhatchee Bay?

I am a member of the mollusk family, which means I can make my own shell!

As adult oysters we can filter up to 50 gallons of water a day!



O.Y.S.T.E.R. Recycling Program

Even beyond their life cycle, an oyster's shell provides a surface for young oysters to attach themselves. This helps to build oyster communities, and the more oysters there are, the more the water is being filtered and cleaned.

Here at CBA, our O.Y.S.T.E.R. Recycling Program works to build oyster reefs. We pick up oyster shells from local restaurants, clean them, and put them in mesh bags to form building blocks for the oyster reef. An oyster reef eventually becomes its own ecosystem, providing a habitat for other creatures like barnacles, blue crabs, and various fish.

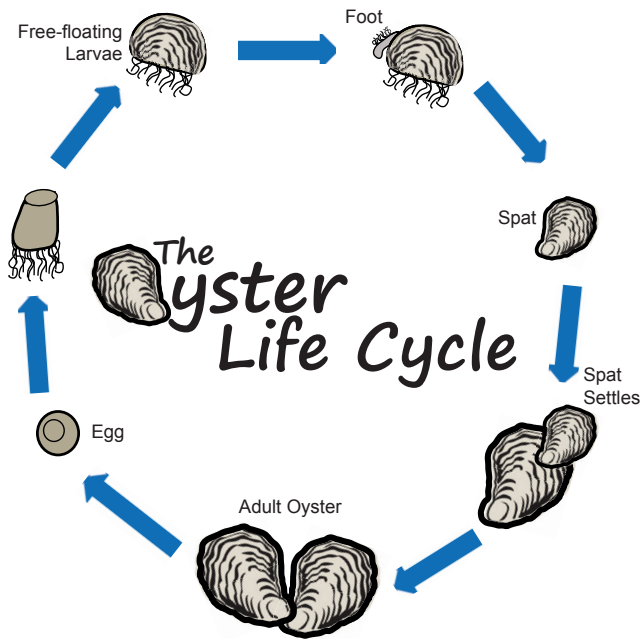
When placed on the shoreline, these reefs slow heavy wave action, preventing erosion on the shore of the bay.



For more information about oysters and CBA, please visit our website at basinalliance.org.



Alliance Activities

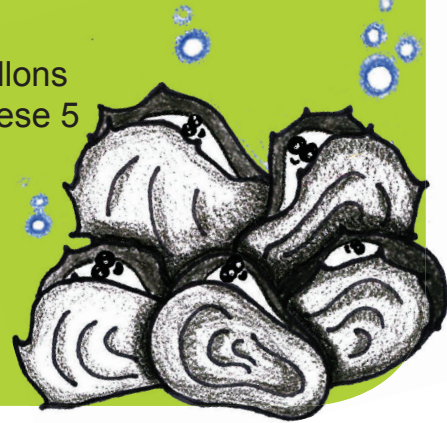


We Need Your Help!

We are 5 oysters that live together on a reef. Every day we each filter 50 gallons of water. But we want to know how many gallons of water we filter together everyday.

How many gallons of water do these 5 oysters filter in one day?

_____ gallons of water



Can you find me on the reef?

All of these animals use oyster reefs as a habitat and are hiding in the reef below.



Blue Crab



Shrimp



American Eel



Stone Crab



Toadfish



2 Hermit Crabs



Find and color the creatures hiding in the oyster reef!