THE SYDNEY ROCK OYSTER *(SACCOSTREA GLOMERATA)*

The Sydney rock oyster *(Saccostrea glomerata)* is the dominant oyster species in the salty bays and inlets of eastern Australia. This remarkable organism can create vast, low oyster beds and high oyster reefs. These structures create ecosystems, providing homes and refuge for numerous aquatic plants and animals. Historically, oyster ecosystems were a dominant feature of most east coast estuaries, where they shaped the ecology, hydrology, and water chemistry. By the early 1900s, oyster ecosystems had become functionally extinct. Today, 85% have been lost across Australia and globally, and need help to recover.

Oyster shell – inner surface. Photo © John Healy

Oyster shell – Outer surface. Photo © John Healy

Juvenile oysters growing on oyster shell. Photo © Ben Diggles

HABITAT

Found in sheltered temperate to subtropical, saline, and brackish bays and estuaries from Wingham Inlet in northern Victoria to Hervey Bay in south east Queensland. Endemic to Australia. Attaches to hard surfaces such as rock, gravel, tree roots, other oysters, and shelled invertebrates, as well as artificial structures e.g. seawalls, jetties, pylons.

SHAPE

Widely variable, depending on the environment where the oyster is attached. The shell is radial, rounded and often extremely rough and sharp. Lower shell moderately/well cupped generally with fine lamellae externally. The lower shell has broad folds. Chomata not always visible on the ventral margin.

COLOUR

External colour is pale grey/brown often with dark pigmentation around the margin. Internally the shell is white, black, or grey, and sometimes with a black/grey or yellow margin (shell valve), and pale coloured adductor scar.

SIZE

Up to 10cm in length and 60 grams in weight.

FEATURES	THE SYDNEY ROCK OYSTER
Scientific name	*Saccostrea*: 'true' oyster, *glomerata*: 'to gather, heap up'
Size (adult shell)	Up to 10cm in length
Shell colour	External: Pale grey/brown, can have dark pigmentation around the margin. Internal: white, black, or grey. Shell (valve) Margin: black/grey or yellow.
Shape of upper shell/valve	Moderate/well cupped with external fine lamellae. Lower shell has broad folds.
Habitat	Estuarine. Intertidal zone down to 8 metres.
Habitat value - HIGH	Provides habitats for numerous marine species e.g. fish, invertebrates, marine plants.

RESTORING LOST OYSTER ECOSYSTEMS

To learn more about our work to restore shellfish ecosystems across Australia, visit **natureaustralia.org.au/shellfishreefs**

The Nature Conservancy Australia