

## Did you know

that trade in **Date mussel**, both national and international, is taking place at a considerable level

• that **Date mussel** reaches the price of EUR 60 (app. \$ 70) per kg on the black market

• that many range states have no or innadequate legislation for protection of this species

• that there is extensive and well organised illegal international trade in **Date mussel**

• that each year several tonns of this highly appreciated seafood are confiscated



International trade in **Date mussel** takes place mainly in North Africa and among the East Mediterranean countries. Despite the fact that the species is protected in a number of range states, the control of its exploitation and commerce is not effective nor sufficient through its distribution range.

**Regulating trade in Date mussel throughout its range will contribute to the protection of this species and its ecosystem.**



## Date mussel (*Lithophaga lithophaga*)



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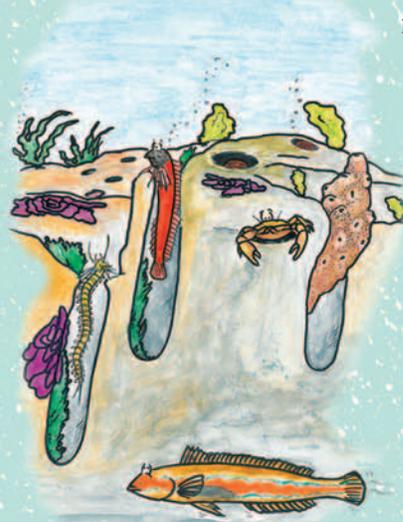
is a mollusc of the family Mtilidae. Its shell grows up to 12 cm in length and 70 g in weight. This species is distributed throughout the Mediterranean Sea and in the Atlantic Ocean from Portugal down to Senegal and northern coast of Angola. It can be found in coastal areas where it inhabits limestone rocks in which it bores holes 10-20 cm long.



### Did you know that Date mussel:

- needs specific substrate for its growth
- 
- is very slow growing (it needs 15 to 20 years to reach the size of 5-6 cm)
- 
- is not suitable for commercial breeding
- 
- has a very distinctive and well known date-like appearance

**Date mussel** is a pioneer species, the first to inhabit bare limestone rocks. Tunnels and holes burrowed by **Date mussel** form a basis for the settlement of other sessile species, providing nutrition, shelter and breeding grounds for numerous marine organisms. Without **Date mussel** burrows, it would have been almost impossible for other species to inhabit bare rocks.



The main purpose of **Date mussel** exploitation is human consumption.

In a great part of its distribution range, the extraction of this marine resource is still carried out with traditional methods (hammers, chisels and pincers) as well as by highly destructive methods (pneumatic hammers and explosives). In many Mediterranean areas populations of **Date mussel** have been seriously thinned out due to overexploitation. **Date mussel** is also very sensitive to pollutants.



### Did you know

- that harvesting of **Date mussel** causes the dismantling and destruction of large bottom areas on Mediterranean rocky shores
- that destructive **Date mussel** harvesting is one of the most dramatic threats to biodiversity in the whole Mediterranean basin caused by a single type of human activity
- that the restoration of biological communities destroyed by **Date mussel** extraction is very slow and often impossible
- that the destruction caused by **Date mussel** exploitation seriously affects littoral fish populations.

