


# Magellan, Ribbed or Cholga Mussel

*Aulacomya atra*


D

 Pathway • Hull fouling

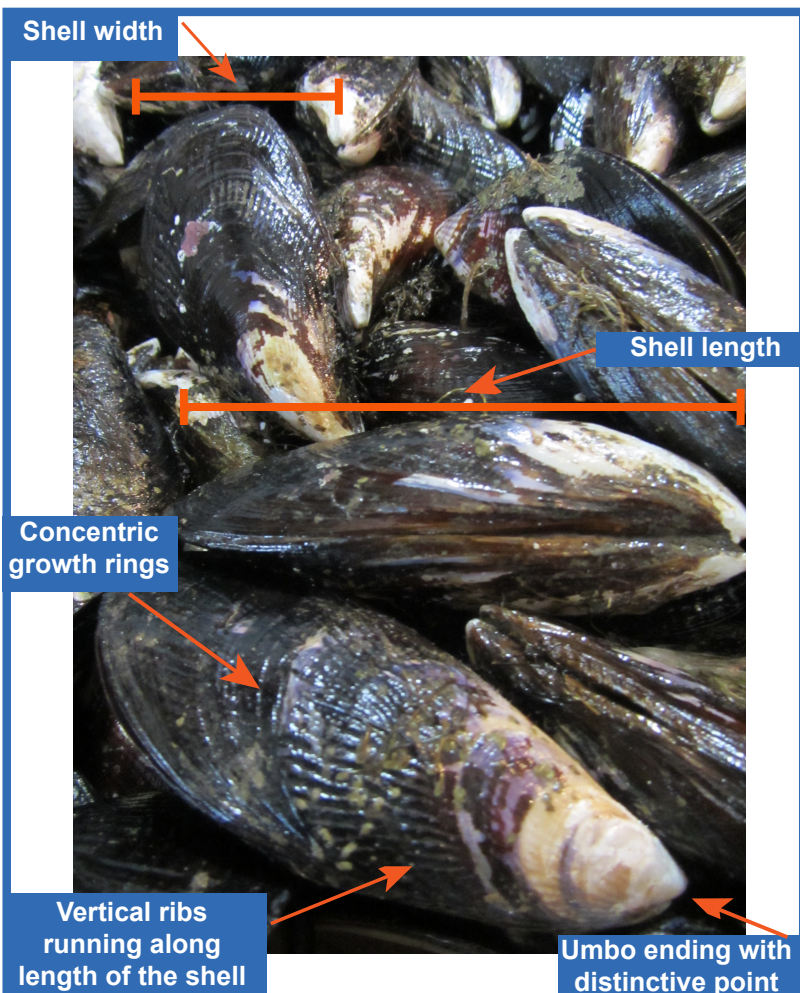
## Impacts

 **Biodiversity**  
Effects on the environment unknown.

 **Human Health**  
None known.

 **Economy**  
It is a fouling organism but not of serious economic concern.

## Key ID Features



## Description

All individuals have distinctive ribs that run the length of the shells, giving them one of their common names. Concentric growth grooves can be seen along the width of the shell. At the narrow end the umbo of the shell is curved and ends in a distinctive point. The shell is triangular in shape, tapering to a wide curve at the posterior end.

### Size

4.7 - 6.3 cm in length but some individuals can reach max 20 cm in length.


### Colour

Dark brown shells that darken to black with age, the shell can also have blue and purple hues while small mussels can be beige or yellow. The soft body of the mussel known as the mantle inside the shell is a creamy-yellow in males and beige with purple spots in females. The inner surface of the shell has a mother of pearl appearance.

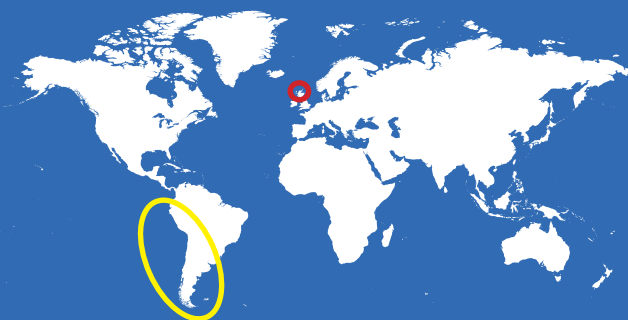
\*Note: Images not to scale



## Distribution

 **Native range:** Peru, Chile, the Falkland Islands and Argentina.

 **Non-native range:** It has been found in the Moray Firth in Scotland in 1994 and 1997; but no other European populations are known.



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## Habitat and Ecology

**Habitat:** Usually found in enclosed bays and intertidal, shallow water on isolated rocks or muddy, rocky ground. Its depth range is 0 - 100 m but is typically found at 20 - 40 m. It can form dense reefs on rocky substrates, is found in forests of giant kelp and can also be found in isolation.

**Environmental preference:** They tolerate a wide range of temperatures, from 7 - 16°C, and the success as a non-native species is attributed to this tolerance.

**Diet:** Filter feeders which extract plankton and other particulate matter from the water.

**Reproduction:** Individuals become sexually mature at 6.5 cm in length. Studies in Chile have shown spawning occurs multiple times between November and February where free-swimming larvae are released into the water before settling and changing into adult mussels.

## Confusion with similar species

Similar to *Mytilus chilensis* (see below).

Distinguishable by its distinctive vertical ribbing.



If you think you have seen this species, please contact the person below who will confirm its identity.

Please also refer to the mitigation strategies guidance document, provided as part of the Marine Biosecurity Toolkit.

## Further Information

- <http://www.fao.org/fishery/species/3533/en>
- <http://archive.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1719>
- <https://www.sealifebase.ca/summary/Aulacomya-ater.html>

## Images

Front: © Rodrigo Fernandez  
Reverse: © Pacaypalla