



Photo: Ph 08537 Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Ilnagaay, Skidegate, BC, Canada

Despite coastwide fishing prohibitions in place since 1990, Northern Abalone populations are still at risk. Illegal harvest is currently the single, largest threat to the survival of Northern Abalone in BC.

The significance of Northern Abalone in BC

First Nations in BC have relied upon and been stewards for Northern Abalone through a relationship that has evolved and continued over countless generations. Harvested over millennia by coastal First Nations as a delicacy and traditional food source, Northern Abalone have also played an important role in shaping their cultural and spiritual society. Historically, Northern Abalone were an essential source of dietary protein, and relied upon during travels and times of food shortages, as well as being used in trade between First Nations communities. Abalone stories, shells, and sustenance were central to many First Nations cultures. Now, after decades without it, the loss of abalone continues to strongly impact communities and individuals alike. Many communities fear they will never see Northern Abalone again, and that the final wishes of elders at the end of life will continue to be unfulfilled.

The closure of Northern Abalone fisheries in 1990 to allow for population recovery also impacted recreational, commercial and First Nations' Indigenous fisheries. The Abalone Recovery Implementation Group (AbRIG) has been working collaboratively to promote the recovery of this species. AbRIG shares information about the abalone population, rebuilding techniques, research and goals related to recovery of Northern Abalone. AbRIG is a technical working group consisting of First Nations fisheries staff and stewards; communities participating in Northern Abalone recovery programs; Parks Canada Agency; and representatives from the DFO Abalone Recovery Team.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is working in partnership with coastal communities, First Nations, and Federal partners to stop illegal harvesting and assist in Northern Abalone recovery. Conservation efforts focus on research, monitoring and stewardship. Collaborative programs such as the Indigenous-led Abalone Coast Watch programs, educational activities, population assessments, population rebuilding, and research projects have been the result of 30 years of stewardship efforts along the coast.

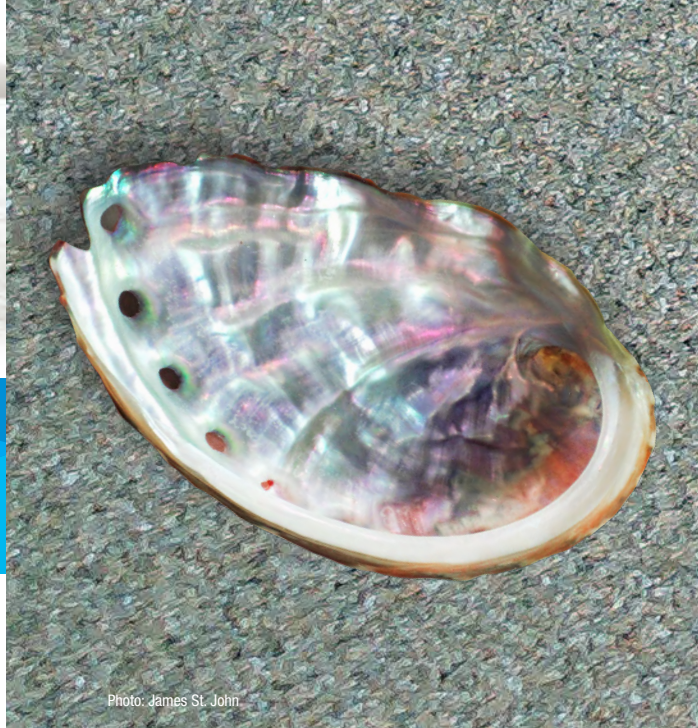


Photo: James St. John

Under Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) it is illegal to possess, harm, harass, or kill a Northern Abalone, or to destroy its critical habitat.



Do not harvest, harm or harass Northern Abalone



Do not buy or eat Northern Abalone



Do not buy or keep Northern Abalone shells

Report suspicious activities or
illegal harvesting of Northern Abalone:

1-800-465-4336

Observe, Record, Report (ORR)



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

Protecting British Columbia's Northern Abalone


Under Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SARA)
Northern Abalone is listed as **ENDANGERED**



Photo: ©Jackie Hildering; TheMarineDetective.com

www.sararegistry.gc.ca

Canada



Northern Abalone use tentacle-like structures called epipodium to sense things like food in their environment.

Photo: © Jackie Hilderling; TheMarineDetective.com

What are Northern Abalone?

Northern (or Pinto) Abalone were once abundant along coastlines of the northeast Pacific Ocean, from the Gulf of Alaska to central Baja California. Due to significant declines in the population caused by overharvesting and subsequent lack of recovery, Northern Abalone are classified as 'Endangered', meaning that they are facing imminent extinction, and are therefore in need of our strongest level of protection.

A marine snail related to clams, scallops and octopus, the **Northern Abalone** is the only abalone found on BC's coast. This relatively sedentary species tends to stick close to home and has a compact, ear-shaped shell that's tough enough to protect the sophisticated animal inside. While it is well-adapted to surviving in a wide range of habitats from the intertidal zone into subtidal waters, life for Northern Abalone is not always easy.

Northern Abalone are extremely vulnerable

If tiny, drifting abalone larvae survive their first two weeks of life, they will settle onto specific habitats, grow in shallow subtidal waters, and later settle up to 100m below the surface, where they can live up to 20 years and possibly longer. In order for the population to grow, enough juveniles must survive into adulthood and reproduce successfully. This is dependent on favourable environmental conditions and other factors, such as having large enough groups of healthy spawners close together. If these conditions aren't met at the right time of year for long enough time periods, the reproductive adults that have died from natural causes or illegal harvest will not be replenished.

Northern Abalone in shallow waters are easily accessible to illegal harvesting. Large abalone continue to be rare, but they are important for reproduction because large females hold many eggs. For a spatially scattered species that requires a specific combination of factors to sustain its population, illegal harvesting of large reproducing abalone not only means a reduction in successful breeding – it means the threat of extinction.

What is our current state of knowledge?

All results from Northern Abalone genetic analyses has shown that there is one abalone population for all of BC. Given that major threats to abalone continue to persist, the population is still at risk of extinction. It is therefore essential to keep every individual abalone protected in order for their future survival and recovery.

What if endangered Northern Abalone disappear?

Northern Abalone may be small, but this seaweed grazer makes a large contribution to a delicately balanced food web within marine ecosystems like kelp forests. The act of taking just one abalone out of the ecosystem can have an impact on the whole abalone population and all the other species that rely on it. The future of this species and those linked to it depend on you and the collaborative conservation efforts of all Canadians to protect this endangered species from extinction.



Illegal harvesting represents the largest threat to Northern Abalone survival. Fishery closures in effect to protect abalone survival have had a significant cultural, social and economic impact on coastal communities.



For millennia, Northern Abalone have and continue to be integral to First Nations cultures throughout the BC coast.

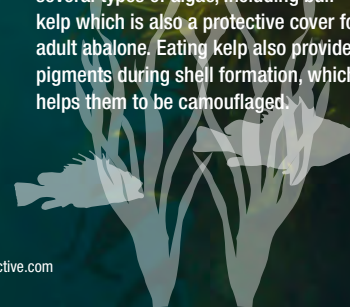


Northern Abalone are an important food source for many species, including Sea Otters, River Otters, Eagles, Black Oystercatchers, Giant Pacific Octopus, Sunflower Sea Stars, and fish like Cabezon.



Other species like Red Sea Urchins compete with Northern Abalone for space and food within the web. In urchin barrens, Red Sea Urchins can also help trap kelp food that abalone also get to feast on.

Northern Abalone survive by eating several types of algae, including bull kelp which is also a protective cover for adult abalone. Eating kelp also provides pigments during shell formation, which helps them to be camouflaged.



Northern Abalone photo (center): © Jackie Hilderling; TheMarineDetective.com

All harvesting of Northern Abalone is prohibited in British Columbia.
Help give them a fighting chance by reporting any suspicious or illegal harvesting activity:

1-800-465-4336