

A “wreck” of Pacific horse clams, *Tresus nuttallii*, at French Creek, east coast of Vancouver Island, BC
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French Creek is situated between Parksville and Qualicum, on the east coast of Vancouver Island, B.C. Strong northwest winds and waves pounding on the sandy beaches there in late March, 2021, resulted in large mortalities of the Pacific horse clam, *Tresus nuttallii* (Figs. 1-2). The winds and waves likely liquefy the sand in such a manner that the clams are easily washed out and driven up on the beach. Once these large clams are washed out of the sand, they are unable to rebury. The clams, stranded on the shore and in tidepools, provide a welcome food source for the many gulls, crows and eagles on the beach (Figs. 3-4). A similar “wreck” was recorded in “A Winter’s Fest” (Harbo, 2019).

Only a few fat horse clams, *Tresus capax* were found. The *T. nuttallii* are more common and abundant in the sandy, shallow subtidal region (Lauzier et al.1998). The exterior tips of horse clam siphons have leathery plates (Fig. 1), while Geoduck siphons are smooth. No geoducks, *Panopea generosa*, were observed in the washed up debris at French Creek.

David McKay, our club member in Scotland, introduced me to the term, a “wreck of clams”. Similar storm events, in the UK have resulted in large wrecks of common otter clams, *Lutraria lutraria*, being washed up on sandy beaches. Similarly, birds washed up after severe storms are called a “wreck of birds”.



Figs. 1-2 (above). Pacific horse clams, *Tresus nuttallii* and other clams washed up on the shore near French Creek, east coast of Vancouver Island, April 2021. Images by Maryanne Pope
Figs.3-4 (below) , Gulls eating horse clams, *T. nuttallii* French Creek 2021.04.02 Images by Rick Harbo



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