

Discovering Diversity

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Part Four

In addition to place, our collections also tie us to both past and future worlds. For millennia, marine invertebrates (animals without backbones) have been highly prized as sources of food, tools, trade, and adornment. Today, species such as Northern Abalone, Wampum Tuskshell, and Dungeness Crab are widely considered iconic species of the Pacific Northwest. Other historically valued species such as the Olympia Oyster have been nearly erased from our collective memory. By showcasing the extraordinary collections at the Royal BC Museum, we hope to renew interest in our marine species so that future generations continue to appreciate their importance in this world.

Despite centuries of exploration and scientific inquiry, museum researchers are still making important discoveries. Newly described species and distribution records are forever improving our knowledge of the invertebrate richness and diversity that exists within our ocean.

With the advancement of molecular techniques, we are also able to characterize genetic uniqueness and diversity, and use such information to better understand historical and contemporary processes of gene flow and population connectivity. While such discoveries may seem somewhat academic, the knowledge that we gain about marine biodiversity is fundamental for becoming better stewards of these living treasures.



Connecting to the natural world. An ancient clam garden constructed by First Nations was used to improve shellfish harvests, and today provides practical insights into sustainability. Credit: RBCM

As we learn more about our natural world, it is becoming increasingly apparent that humans are inextricably connected to the ocean. Today, as in the past, we rely on the ocean for food, for trade, for inspiration and for solace. Our treasured collections help tell this valuable story: we live among a remarkably rich and diverse world that in turn enriches our lives. And vital to our future is a better understanding and improved stewardship of these living seascapes.



Treasuring the natural beauty of British Columbia. Through our collections and research, the Royal BC Museum aims to promote a better understanding and improved stewardship of our living seascapes. Credit: RBCM