

PEARL FISHING ON THE TAY



INTRODUCTION

Until 1998, people regularly fished for freshwater mussels in the waters of the Tay, hoping to find freshwater pearls to sell. Freshwater pearl fishing may not seem like an obvious choice of study topic for the primary schools, but a mini-topic investigating this ancient practice raises issues of sustainability within an interesting local context.

Below, we suggest some approaches for an investigation of the topic. Following these, we provide background information, further resources and an link to the content for pupils shown on the website.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES



Show the class some pearls (charity shop?) or (easier!) some pictures of pearls – possibly the Scottish Crown Jewels.

Show pupils a picture of a freshwater mussel, or, even better, if you can find one an actual freshwater mussel shell.

See if pupils can make the connection between pearls and mussels.

There are some good images of pearls and mussels here:

<http://www.rafts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Pearls-in-the-classroom-education-sheets.pdf>

and a downloadable poster here:
<http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/education/poster/musselposter.pdf>

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SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CURRICULAR AREA

Sciences
Planet Earth:
Biodiversity and
Interdependence

EXPERIENCES & OUTCOMES

I can identify and classify examples of living things, past and present, to help me appreciate their diversity. I can relate physical and behavioural characteristics to their survival or extinction.
SCN 2-01a

I can use my knowledge of the interactions and energy flow between plants and animals in ecosystems, food chains and webs. I have contributed to the design or conservation of a wildlife area.
SCN 2-02a

KEY LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Find out more about the mussels themselves. Use this leaflet from SNH as a source for reading for information:
<http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/education/musselfactsheet.pdf>

Pupils could work in pairs, each with one side of the leaflet, and prepare questions for the other to read and answer.

Carry out the activity suggested in the leaflet, to create a mobile based on the life cycle of the mussel.

- What benefits do mussels bring to the river and other species?
- What threatens their survival?

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SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CURRICULAR AREA

Sciences
Biological Systems:
Inheritance

Literacy:
English Reading

EXPERIENCES & OUTCOMES

By investigating the lifecycles of plants and animals, I can recognise the different stages of their development.
SCN 2-14a

To show my understanding, I can respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and other close reading tasks and can create different kinds of questions of my own.
ENG 2-17a

KEY LEARNING ACTIVITIES

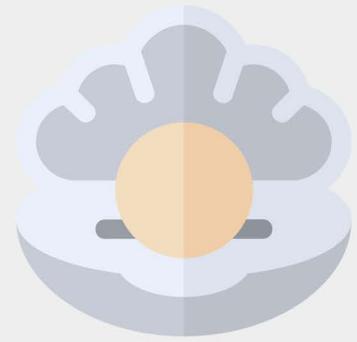
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Freshwater pearl mussels are large mussels which live on the **BOTTOM OF RIVERS**.

MORE THAN HALF of the world's freshwater pearls are in Scotland.

In the past pearl fishers would hunt for these mussels on the Tay. They would lean over the edge of a boat and use a **BOX OR A BUCKET WITH A GLASS BOTTOM** to make it easier to see the bottom of the riverbed. Then they would pull the mussel from the river with a **STICK** or with **BARE HANDS**, if the river was shallow enough. If the mussel had a pearl in it, these were sold and made into **JEWELLERY**.

They grow much bigger than the ones found in the sea, and can live more than **100 YEARS**.

Sometimes mussels create a **PEARL** which grows inside their shell.

There are pearls from freshwater mussels in the **CROWN JEWELS** of both England and Scotland.

They have become **RARE** partly because of pearl fishing in the past, but also because they cannot survive in **POLLUTED RIVERS**.

Pearl fishing was totally **BANNED** in Scotland in **1998**, but illegal **POACHING** still takes place.







Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

