

***Tresus allomyax* – Not Just a Southern Species**
By Linda Schroeder, Dr. Paul Dinnel, and Jason Young

A recent sighting in British Columbia of a valve of the Strange Gaper, *Tresus allomyax* Coan and Valentich-Scott, 2000, has brought this species back to our attention. In 2008, we published an article about this species in *The Dredgings*, Volume 48 No. 2. The article is also available on our website. At the time we had added a photo of the shell to the website as well, and due to its rarity, had requested that anyone finding a specimen to please contact us. And someone recently did.

In early July of this year, Jason Young contacted the club via email to report that he had possibly found a specimen which was further north than indicated on our website. He had posted photos of the specimen on *iNaturalist* and hoped we had someone that could confirm the identity. (Fig. 1,2) Up to that point we only had information for the range of the shell from California to Washington. Jason had found his specimen at Wickaninnish Beach in the Pacific Rim National Park on Vancouver Island, BC on June 27th.



After reviewing his photos, I agreed that his shell looked very much like our own photo of *T. allomyax*. This led to my contacting Dr. Paul Dinnel, who I knew had studied this species. Paul agreed that Jason had found a very nice specimen of *T. allomyax* and commented that it was unusual to find a specimen that still had much of its periostracum. This seems to be a subtidal species and shells are infrequently washed up onto the beach. When they do appear, the periostracum has already been scoured off. Being able to see a specimen with the periostracum partly intact was a real treat.

Paul indicated that this find would not be a range extension however. He had further information from a couple of trips he took in 2014 and 2015 along the coast of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. He had not had a chance to publish his information yet and graciously allowed us to report his findings here.

Paul surveyed a number of beaches and noted presence/absence of valves of the shell. He typically searched ¼ to ½ mile of beach at each location. Sometimes a number of shells were found and other times just a few. In the following list, “absent” doesn’t necessarily mean they weren’t there, just that no shells were present at the time of the search.

British Columbia

- Haida Gwaii between Masset and Rose Point - present
- Tofino, west Vancouver Island - present

Washington

- Kalaloch - present
- Moclips - absent
- Ocean Shores - present
- Grayland - present
- Long Beach - present

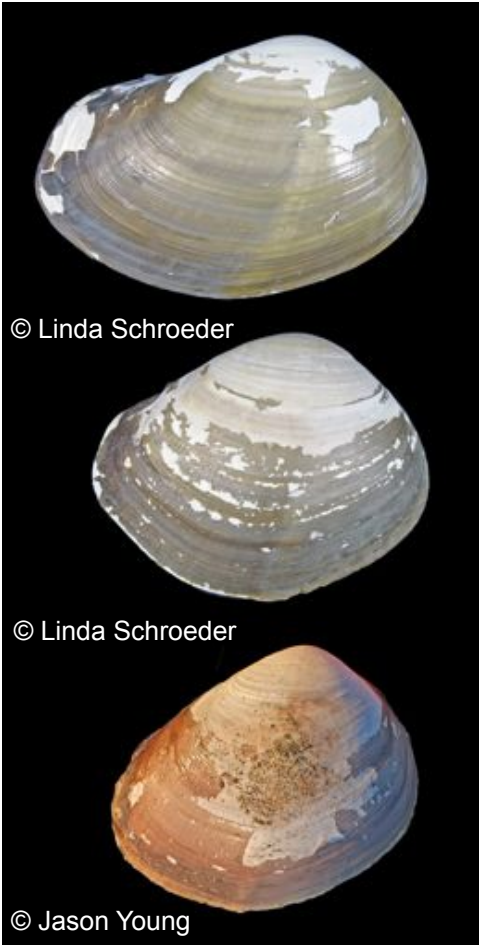
Oregon

- Gearhart - absent
- Manzanita - absent
- Rockaway Beach - absent
- Pacific Beach - absent
- Lincoln City - absent
- Newport (Agate Beach) - absent
- Waldport - present
- Neptune Beach - absent
- Umpqua Lighthouse State Park - present
- North Coos Bay (Horsfall State Park) – present

Valves of *Tresus allomyax* from north Haida Gwaii (top) and Tofino (west Vancouver Island) (bottom)



© Paul Dinnel



Our three *Tresus* species aren't too difficult to tell apart except as very small juveniles. The more common *T. nuttallii* and *T. capax* range from the mid-intertidal to subtidal along the coast and within the Salish Sea. *T. allomyax* seems to be strictly subtidal and is only present along the outer coast, and not within the Salish Sea. The top photo is *T. nuttallii* which is much more elongate posteriorly than the other two. The center photo is *T. capax* which may be ovate to rhomboidal, commonly tending toward the latter. The lower photo is *T. allomyax*, which is ovate. It also has a narrower siphonal gap than the other two. The posterior end is also more weakly truncated.

The three specimens shown at left were chosen because of their similar heights to best show the differences in proportions and shape. Each species can exhibit some variation in shell shape due to habitat differences, such as mud vs. coarse sand. The top two specimens were both collected at Birch Bay, WA. The lower specimen is Jason's find on Wickaninnish Beach in BC. The color difference of the periostracums shown here is partly due to being from different habitats and partly from different lighting situations.

References:

- Coan EV, Valentich-Scott P & Bernard FR. (2000). *Bivalve seashells of western North America: Marine bivalve mollusks from Arctic Alaska to Baja California*. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.
- Dinzel PA & DeMartini JD. (1974). "A supposedly extinct bivalve species found living off California (Mollusca: Bivalvia: Mactridae)". *The Veliger* 17(1) p. 44-46, 1plate.
- Holm, GP. (2008). "A Third *Tresus* Found in Pacific Northwest". *The Dredgings* Vol. 48(2).