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Geographical range



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Amazing Species: Fan Mussel

The Fan Mussel (*Pinna nobilis*), also known as the Noble Pen Shell, is one of the world's largest living bivalves, with its two-part hinged shell reaching up to 1.2 metres in length.

Endemic to the Mediterranean Sea, this mollusc inhabits seagrass meadows and sandy or rocky bottom habitats at depths of up to 60 metres. It attaches itself to the seabed using extremely fine and tough silk-like byssus threads, with the inside of its shell lined with mother of pearl. The byssus threads have been used and traded for millennia to produce textiles of the highest value.

The species has long faced many threats, including overexploitation, habitat loss, pollution, and invasive species. Since 2016, the parasite *Haplosporidium pinnae* and associated infectious diseases have spread eastward from the Spanish Mediterranean Sea, causing mass mortality of up to 100% of affected populations. It is now present throughout the mollusc's range, though deeper populations below 50 metres may be impacted less.

To mitigate the effects of *Haplosporidium pinnae* and limit its spread, there urgently needs to be more research into this parasite, as well as the Fan Mussel populations that appear to have better resistance to it. Population recovery is expected to be slow even in the absence of disease, and habitat protection and conservation breeding may be vital to boost this.