



Whether strolling on a sandy beach at low tide or cruising over similar habitat as a diver in the shallow subtidal or intertidal zones, you are quite likely to see large clam siphons protruding from such surroundings. Photograph A, taken by David Ingram of Courtney, B.C., nicely illustrates this phenomenon. Sometimes called “horse clams”, the two species of gaper clams *Tresus* species are the ones most likely noticed as their large siphons frequently protrude to 3 inches (7.5 cm) above the substrate’s surface. For the reader particularly interested in distinguishing the two species, consult *Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest*, page 196, MC76 and MC77.

When disturbed by an approaching beach comber, a retreating siphon (via its muscular contraction) often sends a squirt of water skyward – usually startling the unsuspecting explorer. Such a contraction underwater generated by a diver’s approach does not produce the same drama but rather simply results in the structure’s slow disappearance from view.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR DIVER AND NON-DIVER

Written by Editor

While exploring Miracle Beach, a British Columbia Provincial Park, near Campbell River, on Vancouver Island, David, with his youngsters Alden and Clara encountered numerous siphons on May 29th of this year. Particularly noteworthy though, was their discovery of a gaper pea crab *Pinnixa littoralis* (page 304, AR116) that had crawled from inside one of the siphons and into full view. This very unusual event was opportunistically documented by photograph B! A commensal species that always “buddies” (nestling inside) with a gaper clam, this tiny crab is consequently seldom observed by the diving or beach walking naturalist.

A former park employee, David is happy to share his experiences (including this one) via his blog www.islandnature.ca . ☐