



MARINE MOLLUSCS

On Monday 6 February an excited group of mollusc hunters gathered on Grotto Beach to take a closer look at how molluscs feed. We also discussed how the algal bloom in Walker Bay affects shell fish and the effects of micro-plastics on filter feeders such as mussels.

Soon everyone was digging for white mussels.



The trick was to find the right spot as they tend to move up and down the beach with the tide.



And found them.



Sheraine van Wyk demonstrated how the mussels filter feed by taking in nutrient-containing water through one siphon and expelling the filtered water through another.



Everyone was intrigued.



Checking black mussels and limpets on the rocks had its hazards.



Next the plough shells were lured with tempting bits of bait. Everyone marvelled at how quickly they picked up the scent trail.



Our Junior Reporter, Morgan Hendricks summed it up as follows:



These snails do not distinguish between bait and hand – rasping away at skin with a radula at the end of the proboscis.

My mom and I went on an expedition with Whale Coast Conservation. My favourite part was when we looked for white mussels on Grotto Beach because we really had to get our hands into the sand and dig deep. I had fun when we looked for black mussels in a smaller cove and when my new friend, Tink, and I found some small bugs feeding on a jellyfish. I felt sad when I heard about the red tide and how the algae cause many sea animals to die. We also saw how much litter had been collected from the beach. The worst is plastic items which break down into little bits, swallowed by marine animals, causing them to choke and die!

COMING SOON TO YOU: A beach clean-up!!!