

WHEELS.CA FOR TABLETS.
TEST DRIVE IT TODAY!

Whccs.ca

THEnetwork

The CBC & Public Broadcasting: A National Conversation

Join the conversation NOW!

Tuesday, April 24, 2012

moneyville.ca Wheels.ca thekit.ca healthzone.ca parentcentral.ca yourHome.ca TORONTO.COM



4°C Forecast | Traffic



Connect with Facebook | Login | Register



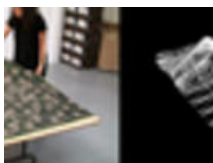
thestar.com Web find a business advanced search full text article archive

Home News GTA Opinion Business Sports Entertainment Life Travel Columns Blogs More Autos Careers Classifieds Deaths Rentals

HOT TOPICS ALBERTA ELECTION THRIVE ORNGE BLUE JAYS TV REVIEWS THE NETWORK POLITICS PAGE TULIP PROJECT

Home News Insight

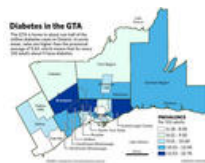
Inside thestar.com



A blanket that monitors health



Pedestrians need head start at intersections



Diabetes hot spots



'Superficial' polls missed the mark



Girl plunges through sidewalk

Award-winning documentary "Shellshocked" details wild oyster reefs' destruction

Article

Published On Mon Apr 23 2012

Email | Print

Mary Ormsby
Feature Writer

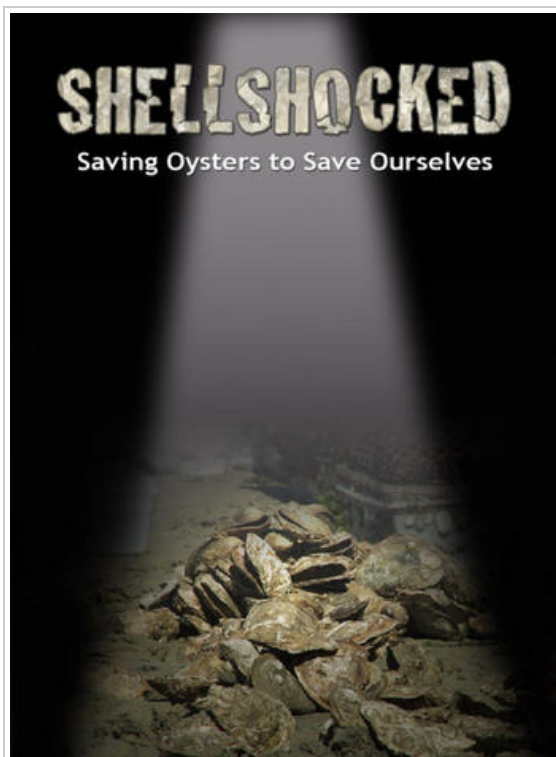
Recommend 43

A shimmering mound of Atlantic oysters chills atop shaved ice, shucked and inviting, lining a platter at a downtown Toronto gathering.

Succulent. Briney. Plentiful.

It's been that way with oysters — particularly the plentiful part — for more than 100 years in Toronto.

Citizens, the grand and the humble, have slurped the slippery mollusc in public oyster houses or stirred the ocean creatures into bubbling stew pots for family meals. An 1894 ad in Toronto's *Evening Star* shows oysters were cents to buy; a cheap, nutritious, democratic food pulled



- Advertisement -

THEnetwork
The CBC & Public Broadcasting: A National Conversation

Join the conversation NOW!

BE THE FIRST TO KNOW

Get the biggest stories sent to your inbox as they happen.

Sign me up for Breaking News »

thestar.com

BOOKS
NEWS / REVIEWS / RECOMMENDATIONS / EXCERPTS

Facebook Activity

from wild maritime coastal reefs and shipped west to Toronto.



Movie poster for the film Shellshocked: Saving Oysters to Save Ourselves.

But no more.

Today's pricey oyster menus are filled almost exclusively with meat farmed through aquaculture businesses.

Wild oysters — which clean our water and protect species in our food chain — have been eaten, poisoned and suffocated to virtual extinction. In Canada, that demise began around confederation.

Researchers have found 85 per cent of the world's wild oyster reefs have died, a human-engineered destruction detailed in an [award-winning documentary](#), *Shellshocked*, by American filmmaker Emily Driscoll. The film made its Canadian premiere April 16 in Toronto at [Rodney's Oyster House](#) on King Street West.

"Wild oyster reefs are functionally extinct and that means they no longer have a significant role in their ecosystem," says Driscoll, who was raised in New York City, once considered the world's economic and gastronomic oyster capital.

Only a handful of wild oysters remain in New York Harbour, recently the site of aggressive restoration projects.

"In my film, wild oysters are called ecosystem engineers. So for something that vital in the ecosystem to no longer have a role. . . is a big fall."

Wild oysters are a [keystone species](#) that thrives in [coastal estuaries](#).

Oysters purify water (an adult can filter up to 190 litres daily), neutralize killer nitrogen and provide a three-dimensional habitat for hundreds of fish and plants (oysters usually glue themselves to other shells shortly after fertilization — eggs and sperm are sprayed into open water, the soft, floating larva latches to a hard surface permanently where, it too, will grow a rock-like shell). Those wild reefs, so thick and large early French explorers had trouble navigating Canadian waters, also acted as erosion protection of shorelines.

Inka Milewski is the science adviser to the Conservation Council of New Brunswick and a wild oyster reef expert. She estimates only 10 per cent of the historic natural reef remains in all of Atlantic Canada.

The environmentalist recalls trying to pinpoint a "last remnant of reef" to study a decade ago. She found it in the Northumberland Strait, at Bouctouche Bay, but what was left to explore "was so sad."

"Wild oyster reefs were once these three-dimensional emerging structures out of the sea bottom that were solid oyster clusters," Milewski says.

In the 2002 report she co-authored, "Oysters in New Brunswick: More than a harvestable resource," the scientist noted that French explorer Nicolas Denys wrote in 1672 of the region's oyster reefs growing almost to the water's surface.

"So imagine (an oyster structure) a height of six or seven or eight feet. When I go, I find something that is barely a foot off the sea bottom. Some of (the oysters) are covered in a green slime, which is a symptom of eutrophication — nutrient pollution from sewage systems runoff and fish plants "



Missing Toronto teen Michelle Yu makes contact with family

250 people recommend this.



Family can't bring violent son home from hospital

94 people recommend this.



Mike Holmes feels "terrible" over lost subscription money after magazine...

88 people recommend this.

Facebook social plugin

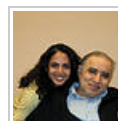
Must Reads

- » [Why asteroid mining isn't so spacey](#)
- » [Picasso mania hits AGO](#)
- » [Lamprey pie, anyone?](#)
- » [THE GRID: Future of the Galleria mall](#)
- » [THE KIT: Beauty Editor Secrets](#)

Follow The Toronto Star



Making News



Insane man who killed wife entitled to her insurance benefits

Appeal court overthrows an earlier court's...



Victims wait for justice as judges prepare for Charles Taylor verdict

On Thursday, an international war crimes court...



New map reveals diabetes hot spots in the GTA

Massive study finds nearly half of Ontario's 1...

See for Yourself »



'Wallace & Gromit' team take on 'Pirates'

systems, ranch and non-profit.

Government regulations to contain overfishing were enacted in 1867 but the legislation wasn't heeded and reefs were being stripped bare [faster than the oysters could reproduce](#). Diseases struck over ensuing decades, further depleting the fragile natural beds by the 1950s, including those holding the region's famous Malpeque oysters.

Aquaculture has put oysters back on tables in such robust quantities that it's easy to see why people don't understand the ocean environment is stressed, with little natural reef left, Driscoll says.

"The oysters people have on their plate, 95 per cent of the time it's a farmed oyster. So people would have no way of knowing (of the vanishing reefs) because in their day-to-day experience, oysters seem plentiful," the filmmaker says.

Milewski fears the economic upside of oyster farming has shifted governmental and scientific focus to aquaculture and away from examining the restoration, recovery and ecological importance of natural oyster reefs.

Milewski says it's important to understand that what happens under water, such as the extinction of keystone species, has a direct impact on the human food chain.

"I don't want to sound alarmist but really, it is alarming what is happening to our oceans."

Driscoll says her film, ultimately, is about hope — of people being caring and innovative in attempts to restore wild reefs as habitats and water purifiers.

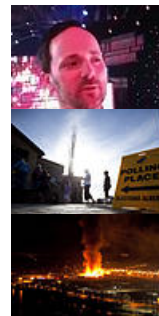
[Recommend](#)

43 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

[Email](#) | [Print](#) | [Republish](#) | [Add to Favourites](#) | [Report an error](#)

Top Stories:

- ['Superficial' polls missed the mark in Alberta election](#)
- [Victims wait for justice as judges prepare for Charles Taylor verdict](#)
- [Pedestrians need a head start at intersections, health chief says](#)
- [Alcohol off the table as Richmond Hill council votes on expenses policy](#)
- [City councillor brainstorming session to include road tolls](#)



Ivan Daigle on Canada's Got Talent

Alberta votes

'Catastrophic' sawmill explosion

[More Photos and Videos >](#)

Ads by Google

Greenpeace: Fishy Tactics

Seafood retailers: activists are trying to bully you into obeying.
www.tunafortomorrow.com

Alaska Seafood Free FedEx

Wild Salmon, King Crab, Scallops
Halibut, Prawns & Smoked Salmon.
www.great-alaska-seafood.com

chesapeake bay oysters

aquaculture oysters
meaty with slight hint of salt
www.bayoyster.biz






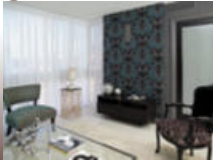






Coral Sale

Buy 3 Frags Get 1 Free
14 Day Guarantee
reefexotic.net/mm5/merchant.mvc

THEnetwork  **Changes are coming to the CBC**

The CBC & Public Broadcasting: A National Conversation

Other Star Sites

  Fired after 36 years,	  Cheaters are most	  Glamorous style on a	  Baby name: Couples	  Robert Kennedy was a	  Summer Entertaining
---	---	--	--	--	---

worker gets 2 years pay

likely to drive this car brand

budget

looks way back for daughter's name

trailblazer in the fitness industry

Guide: Hosting in the city made easy

thestar.com

- Today's News
- Corrections
- Contact Webmaster
- FAQ
- Site Map
- Behavioral Targeting

Toronto Star

- About
- Atkinson Principles
- Statement of Principles
- Subscribe
- My Subscription
- Contact Us
- News Releases
- Star Internships
- Careers @ the Star

Advertise with us

- Terms and Conditions
- Media Kit
- Online Advertising
- Print Advertising
- Special Sections

Initiatives

- Santa Claus Fund
- Fresh Air Fund
- Speakers Bureau
- Classroom Connection
- Community Giving

Stay up to date

- RSS Feeds
- Twitter Updates
- News Alerts
- Newsletters
- Mobile Devices

wheels.ca | toronto.com | Stock Photography | Cheap Flights | New in Homes | Car Insurance Quotes | Leasebusters.com | Save.ca | ShopTV | starsavers.ca |



© Copyright Toronto Star 1996-2012 | Terms & Conditions | Privacy Policy