**FAN MUSSEL**
*(pinna nobilis)*

**WHAT IS IT?**
- The *Pinna Nobilis* (Fan Mussel or Noble Pen Shell), is the largest species of marine mollusc from the Pinnidae (pen shell) family and found only in the Mediterranean.
- It needs a stable level of salinity, and can only survive in temperatures between 7-28 degrees Centigrade.
- It feeds off plankton which it filters from approximately 6 litres of water per hour!
- It is a hermaphrodite producing and alternately releasing male and female germ cells over the summer months. After fertilisation, free-swimming larvae develop which then form a thin, calcareous shell whereup they fall and embed themselves on the seabed.
- It attaches itself vertically to rocks using long keratin fibres secreted by its byssus gland, that used to be made into cloth known as ‘sea silk’.
- Growing up to 10-15 cm in its first year, fully-grown shells usually measure 30-50 cm long – although some can grow as tall as 120cm and can live for up to 20 years!

**WHY IS IT ENDANGERED?**
Large populations were recorded in the 18th Century – but have been rapidly declining since mid-20th Century due to human influence such as:
- fishing, trawling, anchoring
- pollution killing eggs, larvae, and adult mussels
- the overexploitation by recreational divers due to the large shells being lined with brilliant mother-of-pearl and being therefore collectable
- and the invasion of the non-native, toxic, green algae, *Caulerpa Taxifolia*.

**WHAT IS BEING DONE?**
*Pinna Nobilis* has been a protected species in the European Union since 1992. All forms of deliberate capture or killing of fan mussel specimens are prohibited by law – although many populations continue to be under threat, as the protection of the shell is not implemented or is often simply ignored.