OCEAN OBSERVATORY SCOTLAND

HORSE MUSSEL BEDS - ANSWERS

1. What is the scientific name of the horse mussel?
   - ***Modiolus modiolus.***
2. How large can horse mussels grow?
   - ***Horse mussels can grow up to 20 centimetres in length.***
3. How do horse mussels attach themselves to each other to form beds?
   - ***They attach themselves using strong, golden byssal threads, which bind the shells together to form large beds.***
4. Where do horse mussels usually live, and what type of conditions do they prefer?
   - **Horse mussels live partly buried in sediment or attached to rocks, from shallow water to deep areas and prefer sheltered locations with strong tides.**
5. Name two types of animals that live on or among horse mussel beds.
   - **Animals living among horse mussel beds include brittlestars, crustaceans, worms, molluscs, and seaweeds (any two correct).**
6. Why are horse mussel beds important for commercially valuable shellfish?
   - ***Horse mussel beds provide healthy habitats for commercially important shellfish like scallops and whelks, which feed in and around the beds.***
7. Why are young horse mussels more likely to be eaten than adult mussels?
   - ***Young mussels are more likely to be eaten because they are smaller and easier for predators like crabs and starfish to eat, while larger mussels are safer.***
8. What is the Scottish Gaelic name for horse mussels, and what does it mean?
   - ***The Scottish Gaelic name is "clabaidh-dubha", meaning "big black mouths."***
9. Name one area in Scotland where horse mussel beds are found.
   - **Horse mussel beds are found in places such as Shetland, Orkney, the Outer Hebrides, the west coast of Scotland, or the Moray Firth (any one correct).**
10. Why does damage to horse mussel beds have a negative impact on the whole marine ecosystem?
    - ***Damage to horse mussel beds destroys habitats and disrupts the food web, which negatively affects many other species and the wider marine ecosystem.***