

Wherever oyster beds are in the Elizabeth River, you are likely to find an oyster toadfish as well!



Oyster Toadfish

Opsanus Tao

Size: Up to 12 inches

Lifespan: 2-4 years

Habitat: You can find oyster toads all throughout the Elizabeth River within or around oyster reefs. Their olive-brown back and dark blotches helps them camouflage amongst oyster beds.

Range: These bottom dwellers are abundant throughout the Elizabeth River year-round. You can find them in shallow regions of the river in warmer months, and in deeper regions in the winter months.

Diet: Oyster toadfish love to eat...can you guess? Oysters! You can also find them feeding on small crabs and other crustaceans.

Appearance: Flat bodied, scale less fish with olive-brown back and dark blotches, and a pale belly. They have fleshy flaps that appear on their jaws and cheeks.

Predators: Oyster toads have very few predators. They may be eaten by the occasional shark, but they stay very well hidden amongst oyster beds and have a spiny dorsal fin for protection.

Fun Facts: These fish have powerful snapping jaws! This allows them to crack open oyster shells to eat the oyster inside. You can also frequently see an oyster toadfish aboard the Elizabeth River Projects Dominion Energy Learning Barge, as they are regularly donated to us by fisherman passing by.

What can you do? Protect oyster toadfish habitats by protecting oyster populations and keeping our river clean. Eat at restaurants that grow their own farmed oysters. Do not catch or eat wild oysters.



On-Line Resources

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/S=0/fieldguide/critter/oyster_toadfish

<https://www.britannica.com/animal/oyster-toadfish>

<https://www.edc.uri.edu/restoration/html/gallery/fish/toad.htm>



www.elizabethriver.org