

Field Guide to the Freshwater Mussels of Minnesota

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About this Guide

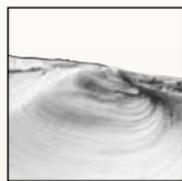
This field guide is a tool for professionals, students, and amateurs who are interested in the identification of freshwater mussels (Order Unionoida) in Minnesota. It contains photographs, descriptions of shell characteristics, general habitat associations, and distribution maps for all the freshwater mussel species known to occur in Minnesota. This guide also contains general information about mussel biology, the importance of mussels, threats to mussels, collection methods, and collection regulations.

Freshwater Mussels: an Introduction

Freshwater mussels are mollusks, and are relatives of snails, slugs, octopuses, and other members of the Phylum Mollusca. More specifically, they are bivalves, members of the Class Bivalvia, a very large group of marine and freshwater mollusks that have two shells or “valves” held together by an elastic hinge. Freshwater mussels are commonly referred to as “clams” but are also known as “naiads” or “unionids.” They are similar in many ways to better-known saltwater mollusks, such as oysters and scallops.

plain pocketbook
Lampsilis cardium

STATUS: UNCLASSIFIED



Beak sculpture



Shell Characteristics

Inflated, valves moderately thick; periostracum yellow to light brown, usually with green rays. Sexually dimorphic; females rounded and truncate posteriorly, males oval. Beak sculpture: two or three heavy ridges drawn up slightly in the middle. Pseudocardinal and lateral teeth well developed, nacre white, sometimes pink near the beak cavity. Length: up to 6 inches. Similar to: fatmucket, fat pocketbook, Higgins eye, and mucket.

Distribution and Habitat

Found statewide in creeks to large rivers in soft or coarse substrate. Rare in the Rainy River and Lake Superior drainages, and possibly extirpated from some southern streams. Common elsewhere but rarely abundant.

