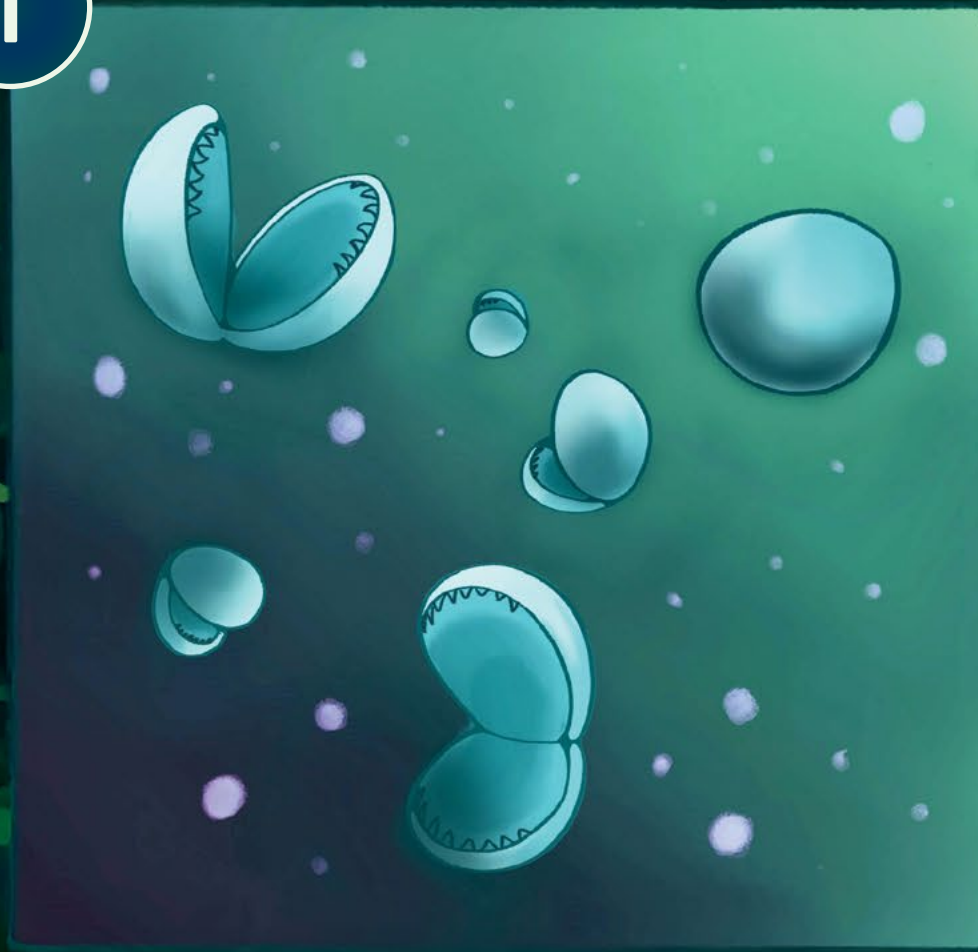


Life Cycle of the Freshwater Mussel

1

Glochidia are microscopic and resemble little clams with teeth. The fish inhales these glochidia and they snap onto the gills of the fish.



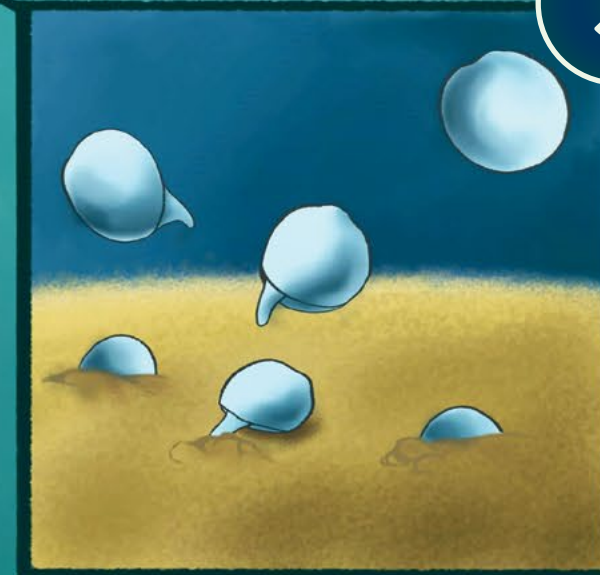
2

The glochidia develop on the gills of the fish as temporary parasites, using the oxygen and nutrients in the blood of the gills to complete their development into juvenile mussels. After a few weeks they detach from the gills and float to the bottom of the river, leaving the fish unharmed.



3

Juvenile mussels bury into the sediment. They will continue to grow into adult mussels, filtering and cleaning our water.



Native freshwater mussels have a unique life cycle: their larvae require a fish host to complete their development. The female mussel seen here is displaying her lure to attract a fish. This lure resembles a minnow which are prey for fish. Once the fish bites the lure, the mussel releases her larvae (called glochidia) into the water.

To learn more about the native freshwater mussels of Minnesota visit mndnr.gov/mussel



Illustration by Deanna Meyer
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