

Mussels

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



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MUSSELS

FAMILY: Aphididae

ORDER: Homoptera (means "same" wings)

IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ two-piece hinged, oval-shaped shell
- ◆ muscular foot protrudes from the shell
- ◆ soft body
- ◆ fleshy mantle - a fold of skin that encompasses soft body parts



Where to Look

Mussels are found primarily in streams and rivers. They prefer sandy or rocky bottoms.

What It Eats.

Mussels are filter feeds. Using their 'foot', they attach themselves to rocks or other surfaces and as the current passes they strain algae, bacteria and organic matter from the water.



LIFE CYCLE

Female mussels lay eggs that are released into the water and collected in gills of fish as they swim by. The eggs hatch into juvenile mussels. They drop off of the host fish after a few weeks, attach to the substrate of the stream where they mature into adult mussels.

Who Eats It?

Mussels provide food for ducks and other aquatic birds, raccoons, opossum, and fish.



Did You Know...

Georgia has close to 100 different species of mussels, one of the greatest diversities worldwide. Most, however, are threatened or endangered due to pollution, build up of sediment in stream and river bottoms and other human alterations to their habitat.

Role in the Ecosystem

Mussels are an important food source for many aquatic animals. They also help recycle nutrients in the water.