Florida's Freshwater Mussels and Clams

More than 60 species of mussels and clams live in Florida's fresh waters. They usually inhabit shallow, sandy bottoms of lakes and streams and are an important functional component of freshwater ecosystems. Their filter-feeding activity cleanses the water by removing bacteria, algae, and organic material. They are an important food source for many fishes, birds, and mammals. Freshwater mussels and clams are affected by poor environmental conditions, therefore, their populations serve as valuable indicators of water quality and the overall health of aquatic ecosystems.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has protected seven Florida mussel species by listing them as Threatened or Endangered. These listed species occur from the Suwannee River system north and west to the Georgia and Alabama borders. Possessing or disturbing listed species is prohibited and can result in substantial penalties. The listed species are illustrated in this pamphlet and include Gulf Moccasinshell, Ochlockonee Moccasinshell, Chipola Slabshell, Shinyrayed Pocketbook, Fat Threeridge, Oval Pigtoe, and Purple Bankclimber.

Mussel species not listed as Threatened or Endangered by the USFWS may be harvested for personal use by persons in possession of a valid Florida fishing license. The daily bag limit for these unlisted mussels is 10 per person (or 20 half-shells). The possession limit is two days bag limit (20 live individuals or 40 half-shells). Mussels can be taken by hand-picking only. Use of tools or power equipment for collection is prohibited. Freshwater mussels, live or dead, may not be taken for later sale. Contact the local office of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission if you have questions concerning mussel identification.

Dark Falsemussel

Pea Clam

Asian Clam

Ochlockonee Moccasinshell

Gulf Moccasinshell

Oval Pigtoe

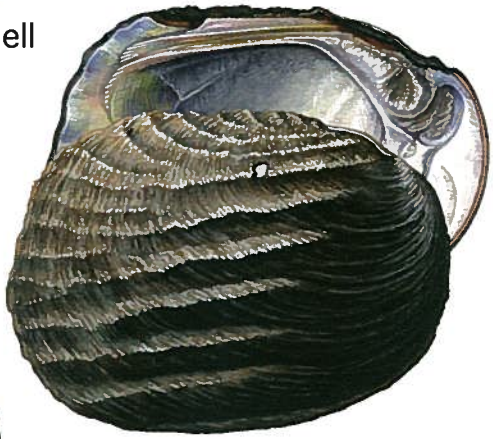
Suwannee Pigtoe

Florida Shiny Spike

Shinyrayed Pocketbook

Paper Pondshell

Chipola Slabshell

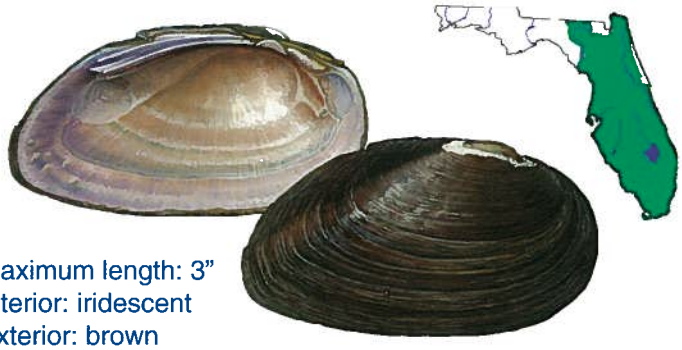


Fat Threeridge

Purple Bankclimber

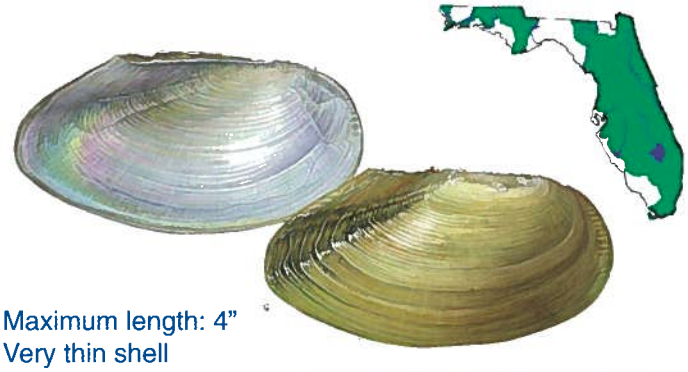
Freshwater Mussels - Family Unionidae

Harvest of unlisted species is restricted to 10 individuals (or 20 half-shells) per day



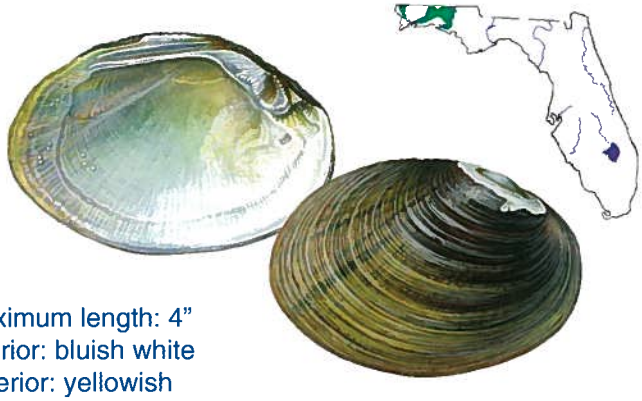
Maximum length: 3”
Interior: iridescent
Exterior: brown

Florida Shiny Spike
Elliptio buckleyi



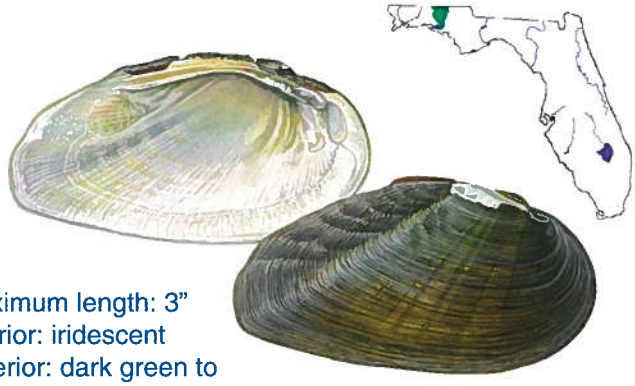
Maximum length: 4”
Very thin shell
Interior: iridescent
Exterior: greenish yellow to brown

Paper Pondshell
Utterbackia imbecillis



Maximum length: 4”
Interior: bluish white
Exterior: yellowish brown with thin rays

Choctaw Bean
Villosa choctawensis

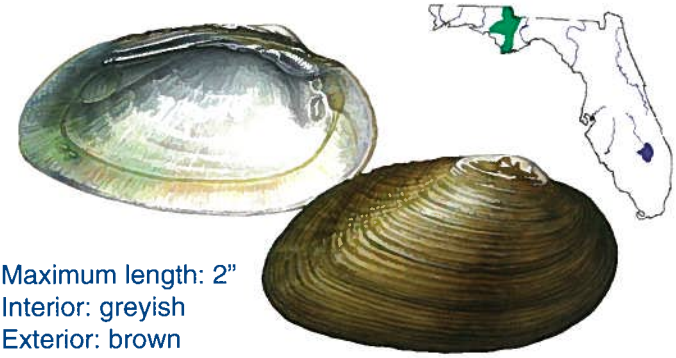


Maximum length: 3”
Interior: iridescent
Exterior: dark green to black with ridges & rays

Tapered Pigtoe
Fusconaia burkei

THREATENED OR ENDANGERED FRESHWATER MUSSELS

Harvest is illegal



Maximum length: 2”
Interior: greyish
Exterior: brown with faint ridges

Gulf Moccasinshell
Medionidus penicillatus

Maximum length: 2”
Oval
Interior: bluish
Exterior: brown with ridges & rays

Ochlockonee Moccasinshell
Medionidus simpsonianus

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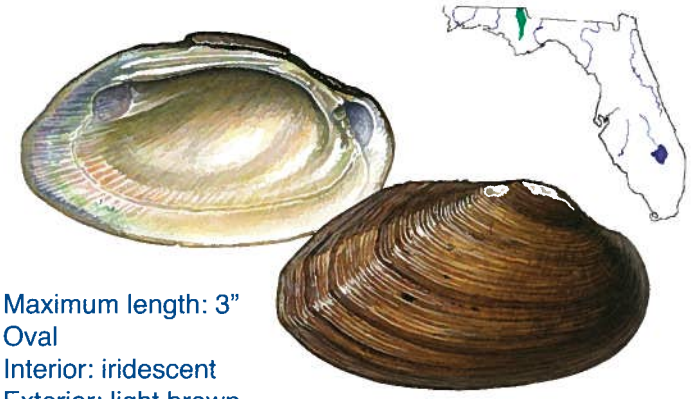
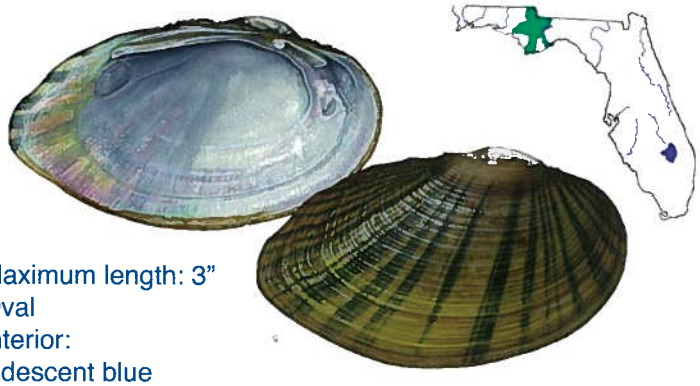
THREATENED OR ENDANGERED FRESHWATER MUSSELS

Harvest is illegal



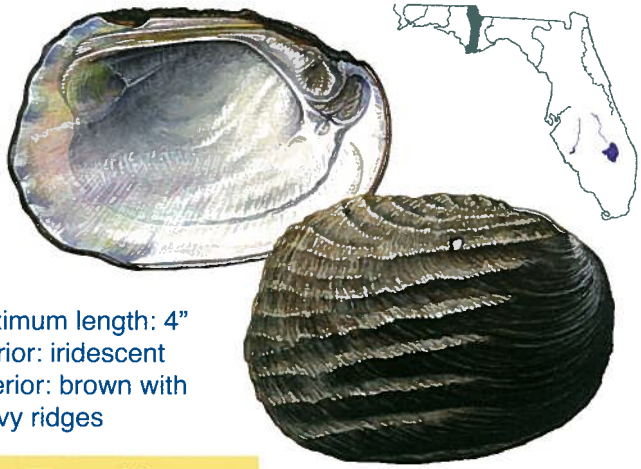
Maximum length: 3”
Oval
Interior: iridescent
Exterior: light brown

Chipola Slabshell
Elliptio chipolaensis



Maximum length: 3”
Oval
Interior:
iridescent blue
Exterior: green-yellow with rays

Shinyrayed Pocketbook
Hamiota subangulata

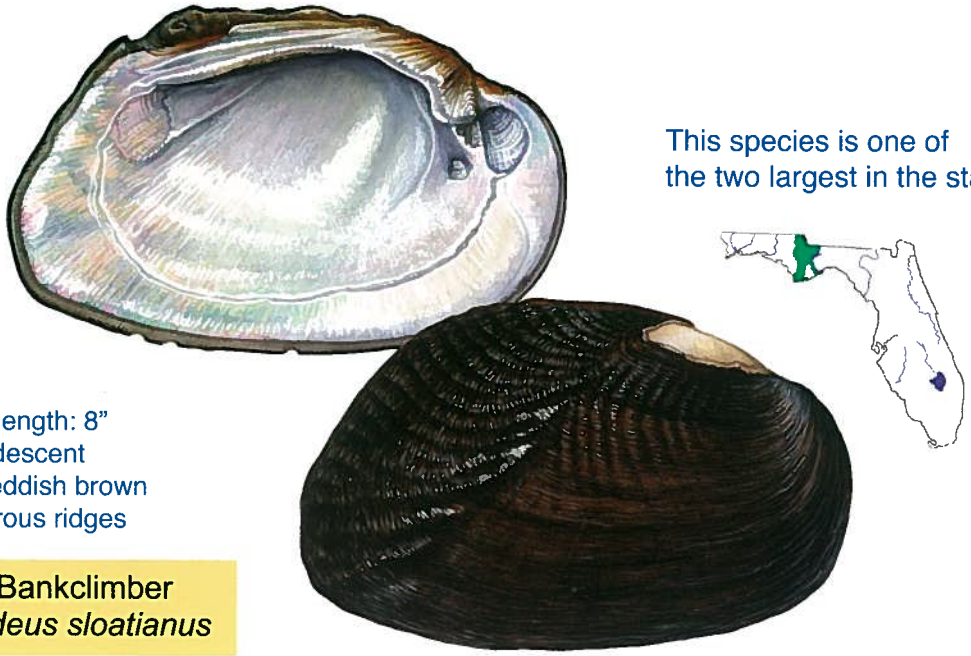


Maximum length: 4”
Interior: iridescent
Exterior: brown with
heavy ridges

Fat Threeridge
Amblema neislerii

Maximum length: 2”
Oval
Interior: bluish white
Exterior: brown

Oval Pigtoe
Pleurobema pyriforme



This species is one of
the two largest in the state

Maximum length: 8”
Interior: iridescent
Exterior: reddish brown
with numerous ridges

Purple Bankclimber
Elliptoideus sloatianus

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Estuarine Species Sometimes Found in Coastal Fresh Waters

Harvest is not restricted

Maximum length: 3"
Interior: bluish white
Exterior: yellow to brown

Atlantic Rangia
Rangia cuneata

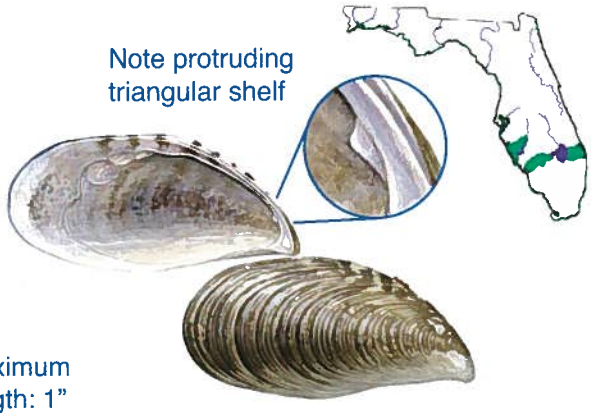
Maximum length: 3.5"
Interior: white with purple
Exterior: yellow to brown

Carolina Marshclam
Polymesoda caroliniana

Native Species and Their Invasive Look-alikes

Native Species

Note protruding triangular shelf



Maximum length: 1"

Harvest not restricted.

Dark Falsemussel
Mytilopsis leucophaeta

Maximum length: 0.5"
Interior: creamy grey
Exterior: light brown

Harvest not restricted.

Fingernail Clam or Pea Clam *Eupera, Musculium, Sphaerium or Pisidium sp.*

Invasive Species!

Not known to occur in Florida

Maximum length: 1.5"
Interior: pearly grey
Exterior: brown markings may vary from striped to plain

Possession prohibited. If you think you see a Zebra Mussel in Florida, please report to 1-352-955-3220 Ext 110

Zebra Mussel
Dreissena polymorpha

Maximum length: 2"
Ridged shell
Interior: purplish
Exterior: yellow to brown

Harvest not restricted.

The Asian Clam is common throughout Florida.

Asian Clam
Corbicula fluminea

Fish and wildlife regulations change annually. Consult the FWC Division of Law Enforcement for the most recent information.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
100 8th Avenue SE, St. Petersburg, FL 33701 · 727-896-8626 · http://research.MyFWC.com

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