

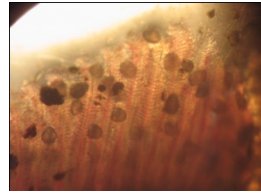
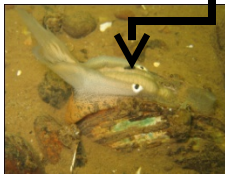
Life Cycle of Freshwater Mussels

Mussel Hosts

There has been much research over the last century to determine fish host for the nearly 300 mussel species known in the US. While some mussels are generalist and may use a whole family of fish such as Sunfish, others may only use one species. Many hosts have yet to be identified.

The female mussel broods her young in her swollen gills until mature as seen here in this Pocketbook mussel.

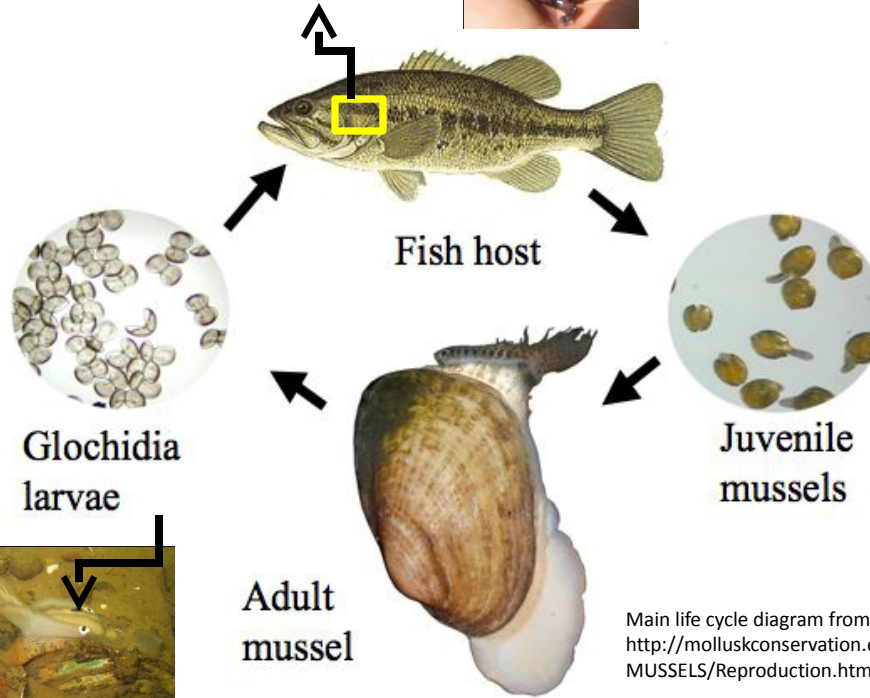
1. Mantle Lure



Larvae attach to the gills or fins of host from a few days to few months. Length of this period is species and temperature dependent.



While most known hosts are fish, the mudpuppy is known to be the host for the salamander mussel which once lived in Dunkard Creek

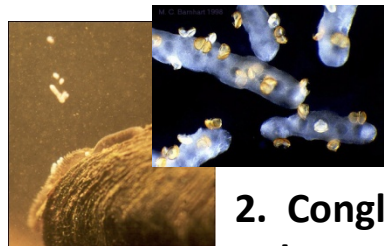


Main life cycle diagram from: <http://molluskconservation.org/MUSSELS/Reproduction.html>

Larval Release Strategies

There are 3 main strategies in which the mussels release their larvae in order to infest a fish.

1. Use modified mantle flaps to lure in the host fish.
2. The larvae from a single watertube within the gill are released in a packet called a conglutinant. This packet mimics a food organism and when bit, breaks open.
5. Larvae are released in mass or held within a mesh net, hoping a host fish comes in contact with them.



2. Conglutinant Release from Creeper



3. Mass Glochidia Release