



## pink papershell

*Potamilus ohiensis*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Mollusca  
Class: Bivalvia

### Features

The shell of the pink papershell mussel is elongate, compressed, thin, and fragile. The anterior and posterior ends are rounded. A large “wing” is present behind the umbo (hump near the hinge) with a smaller “wing” in front, but often is missing in older shells. The outside of the shell is very shiny. It is tan, pink, or olive green to dark brown or gray. The inside of the shell is light purple, occasionally pink, and highly iridescent. The pink papershell may reach lengths up to seven inches.

### Natural History

The pink papershell is found in medium to large rivers with quiet water or slow current in silt, mud, or sand. Freshwater mussel distribution in Iowa is not well documented. They have an elaborate reproductive system. During spawning, males release sperm into the water. The sperm are drawn inside the female's shell, where they fertilize eggs in her body. The fertilized eggs develop into larvae (glochidia) and are stored for a time in the female's gills. When the glochidia mature, the female generally expels them into the water where they must attach as parasites to

the gills or fins of fish. Larvae remain on the host fish for a period of weeks or months. Young mussels then detach from their host and drop to the bottom of the body of water. Hosts for this mussel include white crappie and freshwater drum. Mussels are filter-feeders, bringing in water and the organic matter it contains through the incurrent siphon, filtering the particles out, then sending the rest of the water away from the body through the excurrent siphon. Particles filtered include plankton and detritus. Mature mussels spend most of their lives, which range from 10 to 100 years, partially or wholly buried in the bottom substrate.

### Habitats

interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River; Missouri River

### Iowa Status

common; native

### Iowa Range

Mississippi River and lower reaches of its large tributaries; south-central Iowa; northwest Iowa; Missouri River

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.