round pigtoe

Pleurobema coccineum

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Mollusca
Class:	Bivalvia

Features

The shell of the round pigtoe mussel is thick and round. It is compressed in individuals living in medium-sized rivers and “inflated” in those in larger rivers. The anterior end is rounded and the posterior is rounded to bluntly pointed. The ventral side usually is curved. The dorsal (hinge) side is straight or slightly curved. The outside of the shell is smooth and is greenish brown, light brown, or reddish brown in younger individuals, turning chestnut or dark brown in adults. The interior of the shell is variable – white to pink to rose-colored. Round pigtoes may grow to four inches long.

Natural History

Round pigtoes live in medium to large rivers in mud, sand, or gravel. 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. 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

Iowa Status

uncommon; native

Iowa Range

northeastern three-fourths of Iowa

Bibliography

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