

# Pearls in Peril

**An iconic and vital species is at critical risk of extinction...**

The River Ehen in Cumbria is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation due to the presence of the critically endangered freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*).

## **Why are they so special?**

- They can live for more than a century making them one of the longest-lived animals on the planet
- They clean our rivers, an individual can filter more water in a day than we use in an average shower
- They have an extraordinary life cycle. Mussel larvae spend their first few months growing on the gills of young Atlantic salmon or trout

A nationwide project, Pearls in Peril (PiP), is now underway to secure the future of the freshwater pearl mussel in Great Britain.

## **Freshwater mussels need:**

- Exceptionally clean and stable river beds
- Very low levels of nutrients
- Plenty of fish to carry mussel larvae

## **How can we help them?**

- Plant trees to reduce excess silt and nutrients entering the river
- Build fences to protect mussels from trampling
- Maintain drains and septic tanks to prevent pollution entering the river
- Involve local communities to learn more about this ancient and iconic species

## **Find out more or get involved**

West Cumbria Rivers Trust are managing this exciting and worthwhile project. Contact the PiP Project Officer on 017687 44347 or visit:

[www.westcumbriariverstrust.org](http://www.westcumbriariverstrust.org)

[www.pearlsinperil.org](http://www.pearlsinperil.org)

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