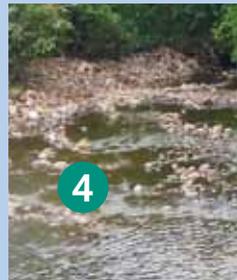




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We need your help if you see any of this



- 1 Piles of dead shells in or near the river
- 2 Persons wading and using a cleft stick and glass bottomed bucket
- 3 Excessive siltation or pollution
- 4 River works that may be causing damage
- 5 Stressed or stranded mussel beds

Contact Details

In the first instance always contact your local police.

Riverwatcher

tel 01463 783505
 mob 07789 793199
 riverwatcher@rafts.org.uk

Crimestoppers

If you suspect a crime has taken place call Police Scotland on 101 (or 999 if a crime is in progress).

Reporting – how you can help

- ✓ Record the time and date
- ✓ Identify location by GPS or map
- ✓ Take a description of persons involved including gender, height and clothing
- ✓ Make a note of vehicles including registration, make and model
- ✓ Take photographs or video, but only if safe to do so.
- ✗ Don't approach suspects
- ✗ Don't interfere with evidence
- ✗ Don't disturb the scene
- ✗ Don't ignore an incident and please...
- ✓ Report anything suspicious no matter how small. Evidence of wildlife crime is not always obvious.



www.pearlsinperil.org



Riverwatch

Pearls in Peril is a LIFE+ project co-funded by many organisations across Great Britain, running from 2012 to 2016.



This partnership will act to safeguard the future of important freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) populations at key Natura 2000 sites.

The freshwater pearl mussel is a fascinating and important part of our biodiversity and cultural heritage. It is one of the world's most critically endangered species and Scotland is one of its few remaining strongholds. Freshwater pearl mussels are dark in colour and grow up to 15cm long.



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Illegally fished freshwater pearl mussel shells dumped next to a river.

Why are freshwater pearl mussels important?

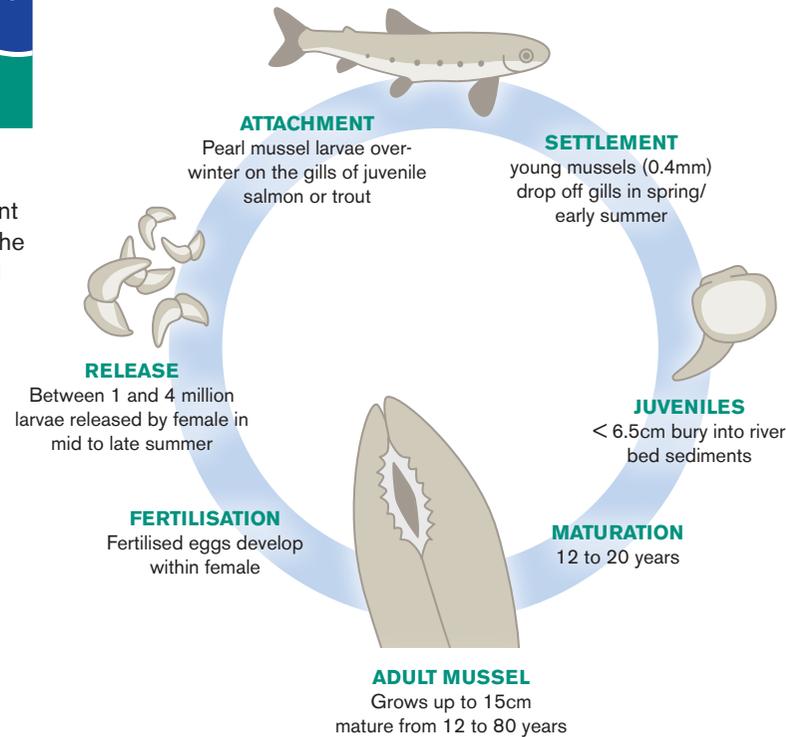
They live in the bed of clean, fast-flowing rivers where they can be completely or partly buried.

Looking after freshwater pearl mussel benefits the whole river. They feed by drawing in river water and filtering out fine particles making them vitally important to other species that need clean water, especially salmon and trout.

They have a complex lifecycle and, in their first year, they harmlessly attach on to the gills of young salmon or trout before falling off and burying themselves in the river bed where they continue to grow.

Freshwater pearl mussels are fully protected under law because they are so threatened. It is a crime to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, take or disturb freshwater pearl mussels or to damage their habitat.

Lifecycle of the freshwater pearl mussel



A history of exploitation

Exploitation of freshwater pearl mussels has taken place since pre-Roman times. Julius Caesar's biographer, Suetonius, stated that Caesar's admiration of pearls was a reason for the first Roman invasion in 55BC. In Scotland, the earliest reference dates back to the 12th Century when Alexander I was said to have the best pearl collection of any man living. The medieval poem, *The Parl* which dates from the late 14th century is another early reference to freshwater pearl mussels in Scotland.

By the 18th century the first references to a decline in pearl mussel numbers can be seen. This decline accelerated during the 20th century, such that more recently there was evidence that freshwater pearl mussels became extinct from an average of two rivers every year in Scotland between 1970 and 1998 (when the species gained full legal protection).

The Riverwatch scheme

The Riverwatch scheme is aimed at combating illegal activities affecting the freshwater pearl mussel in Scotland. This will be done by:

- ✓ Raising awareness of the threat to the freshwater pearl mussel;
- ✓ Implementing co-ordinated action to reduce and report illegal activities affecting pearl mussels; and
- ✓ Working with landowners, local communities, Police Scotland, fishery boards/trusts and other river users.

The Riverwatch scheme is an integral element in the conservation of the species and along with Police Scotland acts as a point of contact for reporting any suspicious activity concerning freshwater pearl mussels.

RAFTS (Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland) aided by the River Ness and Beaulieu Fisheries Trust are hosting the Riverwatch scheme.

The Riverwatcher is visiting 16 Scottish rivers to gather and collate evidence and Riverwatch schemes combined with awareness raising events are being implemented.



Freshwater pearl mussel filtering river.

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