

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

GOLDEN MUSSEL

(*Limnoperna fortunei*)

DESCRIPTION

Golden mussel

- Shells are dark brown, yellow or golden in colour on the exterior.
- Purple to white on the shell's interior.
- Average 2-3 cm in length but can reach up to 4.5 cm. Note that individuals this size are adults, larvae of this species are microscopic.
- Firmly attached to hard/semi-hard surfaces in freshwater and brackish waters.



Image credit: Gustavo Darrigran, Professor of National University of La Plata, Argentina

Image credit: Boltovskoy, Wikimedia Commons (CC-BY-SA-4)

REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

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PRIMARY THREAT:

Golden mussels modify the ecological environment; they decrease micro- and macroinvertebrate levels, displace aquatic plants, and outcompete native bivalves. Infrastructure is often clogged and damaged by dense colonies of golden mussels.



Image credit: Gustavo Darrigran, Professor of National University of La Plata, Argentina

SPREAD

Golden mussels are prolific invaders of new regions as they easily acclimate to different environments. Once introduced, mussels attach themselves to hard or soft substrates, forming dense colonies of up to 250,000 individuals/square meter.

Golden mussels can be found in fresh and brackish water. They attach to natural and manmade substrates and survive in waterbodies with extreme pollution, water temperature, pH, and nutrient levels.

DID YOU KNOW?

Golden mussels spread extremely quickly. They were introduced to the Plata River Basin in Argentina in 1991. Surveys showed that they moved upstream at a rate of 250 kilometers per year.



GOLDEN MUSSELS (*Limnoperna fortunei*)

DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

Golden mussels are native to rivers and creeks in China and southeastern Asia. They have been introduced to other parts of Asia (Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan) and Southern America. In October 2024 the golden mussel was detected in the Sacramento - San Joaquin Delta in California. This represents the first detection in North America. There have been no reports of the golden mussel in B.C.

LOOK-ALIKES:

The native freshwater mussels found in B.C. (Rocky Mountain Ridge, Western Pearlshell and various floater species) **are much larger in size as adults (> 12 cm long)** and **cannot attach to hard surfaces**. A good way to reference size is the native mussels will be the size of the palm of your hand while invasive mussels will be the size of a fingernail.

Invasive zebra and quagga mussels may be confused with the golden mussel as they are **small and also attach to hard surfaces**. If you find a small mussel that you think could be any of these three invasive species, it is important to report it immediately.

Native freshwater mussels (right)

Image credit: BC Ministry of WLRs (CCO)



Zebra/quagga mussels (left)

Image credit: BC Ministry of WLRs (CCO)

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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **CLEAN DRAIN AND DRY** all watercraft and gear when moving from one water body to another.
- **Pull the plug!** It's the law in B.C.! It is illegal to transport your watercraft with the drain plug still in place.
- Do not transport dead or alive golden mussels.
- **If you are transporting a watercraft in B.C., you must stop and report to all invasive mussel watercraft inspection stations along your travel route.** Watercraft includes sailboats, motorboats, car toppers, kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards being transported in B.C.



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