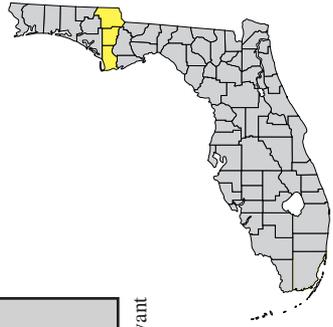


CHIPOLA SLABSHELL

Elliptio chipolaensis

Order: Unionoidea
Family: Unionidae
FNAI Ranks: G1/S1
U.S. Status: Threatened
FL Status: None



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Description: A medium-sized bivalve mollusk reaching a length of 3.3 in. (85 mm). Valves (shell) chestnut colored, usually with one to four dark, concentric bands and dark umbos (raised areas on valves near hinge); smooth, oval to nearly elliptical, somewhat inflated (deep) though with slightly concave posterior slope; umbos prominent, extending well above hinge line. Posterior ridge extending from umbo to posterior end starts out rounded but flattens to form two angles along shell margin. Internally, cavity of umbo relatively deep; nacre (inner lining of valves) salmon-colored, more intense near hinge, somewhat iridescent.

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Elliptio chipolaensis

Similar Species: Pattern of light and dark bands on valves in combination with salmon nacre distinguish this species from most other Florida mussels. The dark bands and slightly concave posterior slope help to distinguish from other species of *Elliptio*, including *E. complanata* and *E. icterina*, both of which are brownish and inhabit Chipola and Apalachicola rivers. Because many mussels are similar externally, identity should always be confirmed by an expert.

Habitat: Main channel of river and lower reaches of larger tributaries.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present year-round.

Florida Distribution: Restricted to Chipola River system above Dead Lake.

Range-wide Distribution: Only non-Florida record is one site in Chattahoochee River, southeastern Alabama, but that population appears to be extirpated.

Conservation Status: Portions of Chipola River floodplain are publicly owned, but river still faces multiple threats from habitat degradation and introduced Asian clam (*Corbicula fluminea*).

Protection and Management: Protect Chipola River system from pollution, siltation, impoundment, and other disturbance. Monitor and attempt to control Asian clam. Limit withdrawal of surface and subterranean waters as necessary to maintain normal stream flows, especially during drought. Protect forests along floodplain and at least 150 ft. (ca. 50 m) of adjoining upland from timber harvest, livestock, and development. Situate roads at least 0.25 mi. (0.4 km) from heads of all tributaries, and even more on steep slopes. Use silt fencing and vegetation to control runoff and siltation at all stream crossings, especially during construction and maintenance. Prohibit dredging and damming of streams and river. Avoid introduction of non-native invertebrates, especially zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*). Use and maintain sewer systems rather than septic tanks and stream-dumping for management of waste water. Ban use of agricultural pesticides on porous soils near streams. Identify and maintain fish populations that serve as mussel larval hosts.

Selected References: Brim Box and Williams 2000, Deyrup and Franz (eds.) 1994, Georgia DNR 1999, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1998b.