

Mud Snail – *Omphiscola glabra*

1. Current status

The Mud Snail (*Omphiscola glabra*) is a rare and declining wetland mollusc. Historically, this species was widespread throughout acidic lowland areas of England and Wales. Although possibly under-recorded, it is thought that this species has undergone a marked decline and is now nationally scarce.

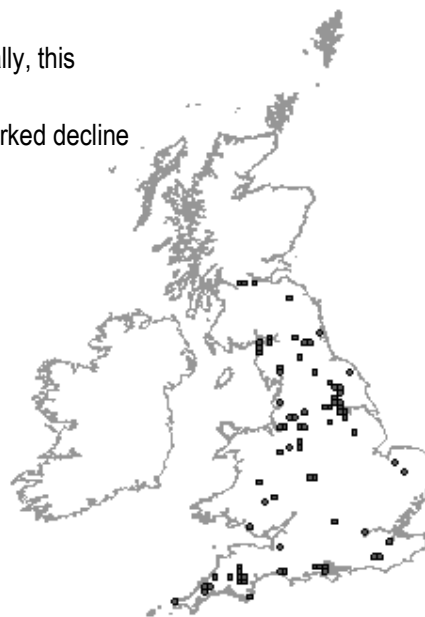


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Adult Mud Snail



Reproduced from the NBN, records from 1988 - present

Current distribution of Mud Snail in the UK

2. Habitat requirements

The Mud Snail is typically found in nutrient poor waters. These include freshwater marshes, including amongst shallowly flooded tussocks of purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*), small ditches, temporary pools or seepages and track-ruts that dry up or significantly diminish in summer, and have a tendency towards acidity. When pools dry out in summer the snails may be difficult to locate as they burrow into the exposed soft mud and become dormant (aestivate) at a depth of 1-6cm. Occasionally this species is found in larger water bodies such as swampy drainage dykes and permanent ponds.



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Contrasting Mud Snail habitats

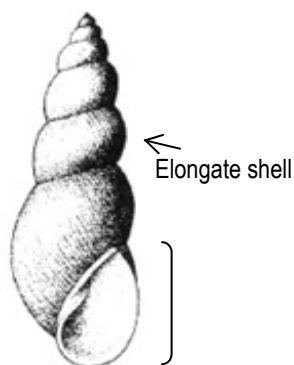
3. Threats

- Improvements in field drainage destroying boggy areas
- Loss of small ponds and wetlands
- Habitat fragmentation
- Dredging shallow and seasonal ponds to deepen them
- Pollution (e.g. agricultural or urban run-off)
- Lack of grazing and poaching by livestock in ponds and marshes

4. Identification

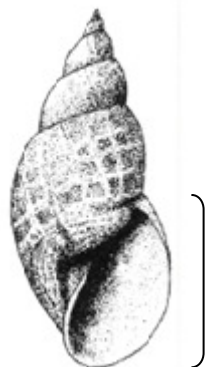
Adult Mud Snail are typically 14-25mm in length. They have a smaller aperture than most similarly-sized water snail. The shape of the adult snail is distinctive shells, but juveniles can be confused with young *Lymnaea palustris* (Marsh Snail) and *Galba truncatula* (Dwarf Pond Snail). Mud snail also looks similar to *Aplexa hypnorum* (Moss Bladder Snail, and they often inhabit the same ponds. However *Aplexa* is very shiny and its aperture, when facing you, opens on the left side of the shell (sinstral).

Omphiscola glabra
(Mud Snail)



Small aperture: around one third the height of the shell

Lymnaea palustris
(Marsh snail)



Aperture close to half the height of the shell

Galba truncatula
(Dwarf pond snail)



Aplexa hypnorum
(Moss bladder snail)



Aperture opens on the left side of the shell

Species	Length	Breadth	Shell	Aperture
<i>Omphiscola glabra</i> (Mud Snail)	14 - 25mm	4 - 7mm	Elongate, brown, with very fine longitudinal striations	Small aperture about one third the height of the shell Aperture opens to the right
<i>Lymnaea palustris</i> (Marsh snail)	19 - 24 mm	8 - 11 mm	Less elongate, whorls rather flattened. Shell thick, usually with strong longitudinal and spiral sculpting, dark reddish brown	Aperture about half the height of the shell. Lip of the aperture laid back against the body whorl Aperture opens to the right
<i>Galba truncatula</i> (Dwarf pond snail)	8 - 12 mm	4 - 6 mm	Shell less elongate, rather thin shelled, with fine longitudinal striations. Lightish brown in colour	Aperture about half the height of the shell. Opens to the right
<i>Aplexa hypnorum</i> (Moss bladder snail)	9 - 15 mm	4 - 6 mm	Glossy, rather translucent and thin shelled	Aperture opens on the <u>left</u>

6. Survey method

At each pond spend 1 minute (net-in-the-water time) sampling the pond. Divide the one minute equally between the different edge and shallow habitat types you see in the pond (e.g. grassy pond margins, rushes, shaded areas). Thus for 3 habitats you'd sample each for 20 seconds. It's best to further divide the time up into approx 5 second bursts of netting collected in different places within each habitat.

- The most efficient way to survey snails is to use a standard long-handled sampling net with a 0.5mm mesh. However a strong plastic kitchen sieve is also usable (clip off any bowl supports).
- Fill your tray or bucket with water (before you disturb the pond and make it muddy) and place it at the pond's edge.
- Using the net, sweep vigorously through an area of the pond for 3 - 5 seconds. Ensure you firmly net the bottom of the pond where the snails often sit. But don't dredge up lots of sediment.
- Empty the contents of your net into the tray/bucket of water. Swirl it around a little to help any snails settle to the bottom. Agitate vegetation with your hand to knock off snails clinging there.
- Gradually pour the water back into the pond, also removing vegetation as needed. Take care near to the bottom of the tray (where the snails will be sitting) not to pour out the snails too! If its muddy, swirl out carefully with a little more water.
- Count any Mud Snails. If there are many individuals e.g. >30 per tray, then estimate if you wish. Note the results on the recording sheet.
- Return the snails to where they were found. Repeat from other sampling areas until the 1 minute sample is complete.

7. Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Mike Tynen who's Mud Snail sampling technique we adopted for PondNet.

8. Further reading

Baker, P. An Action Plan for the Mud Snail - *Omphiscola glabra*.