Native Mussels – A Unique and Significant Resource

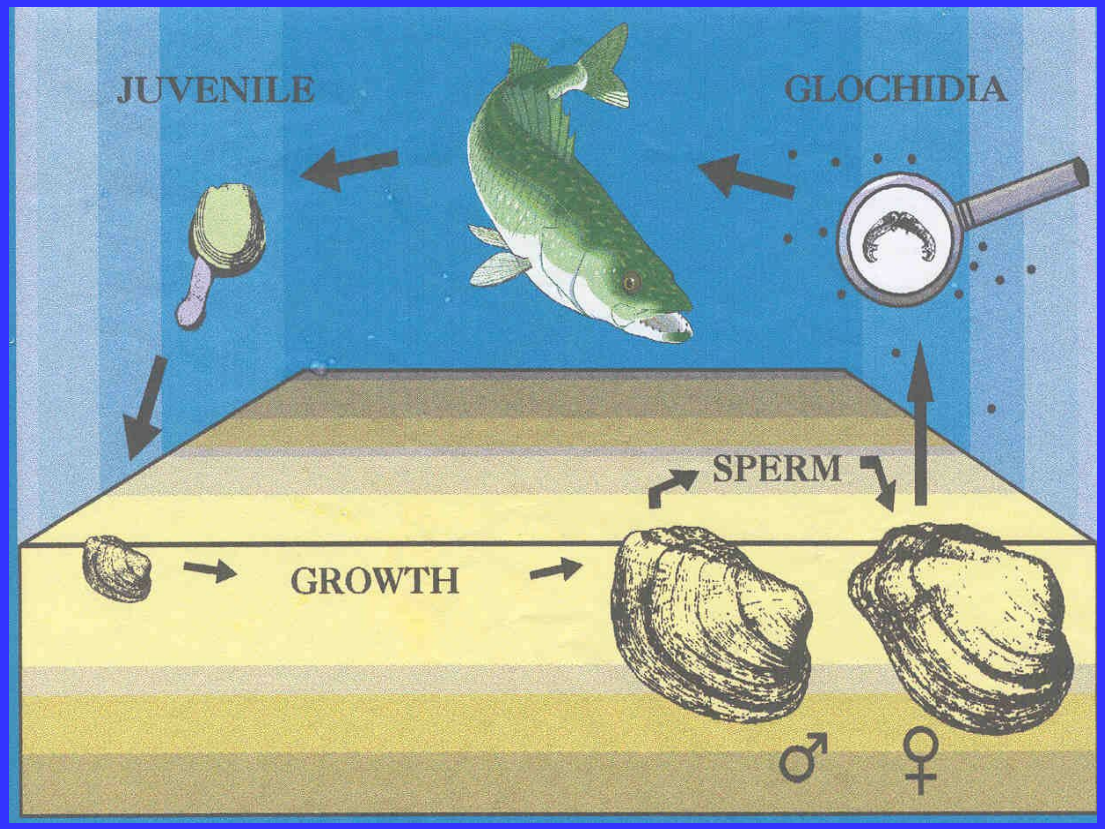
Lisie Kitchel - Wisconsin DNR Natural Heritage Conservation

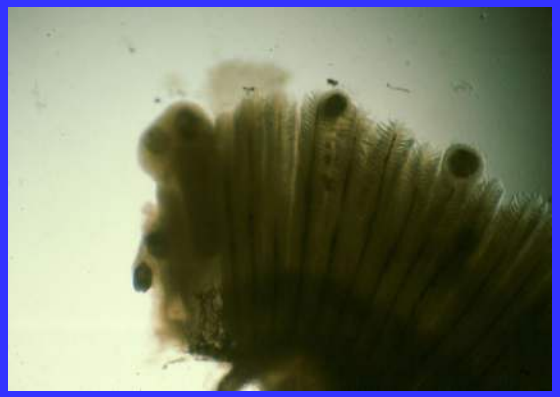
50 species of Native Mussels occur in Wisconsin

over 300 in North America…**of all sizes, shapes, textures**

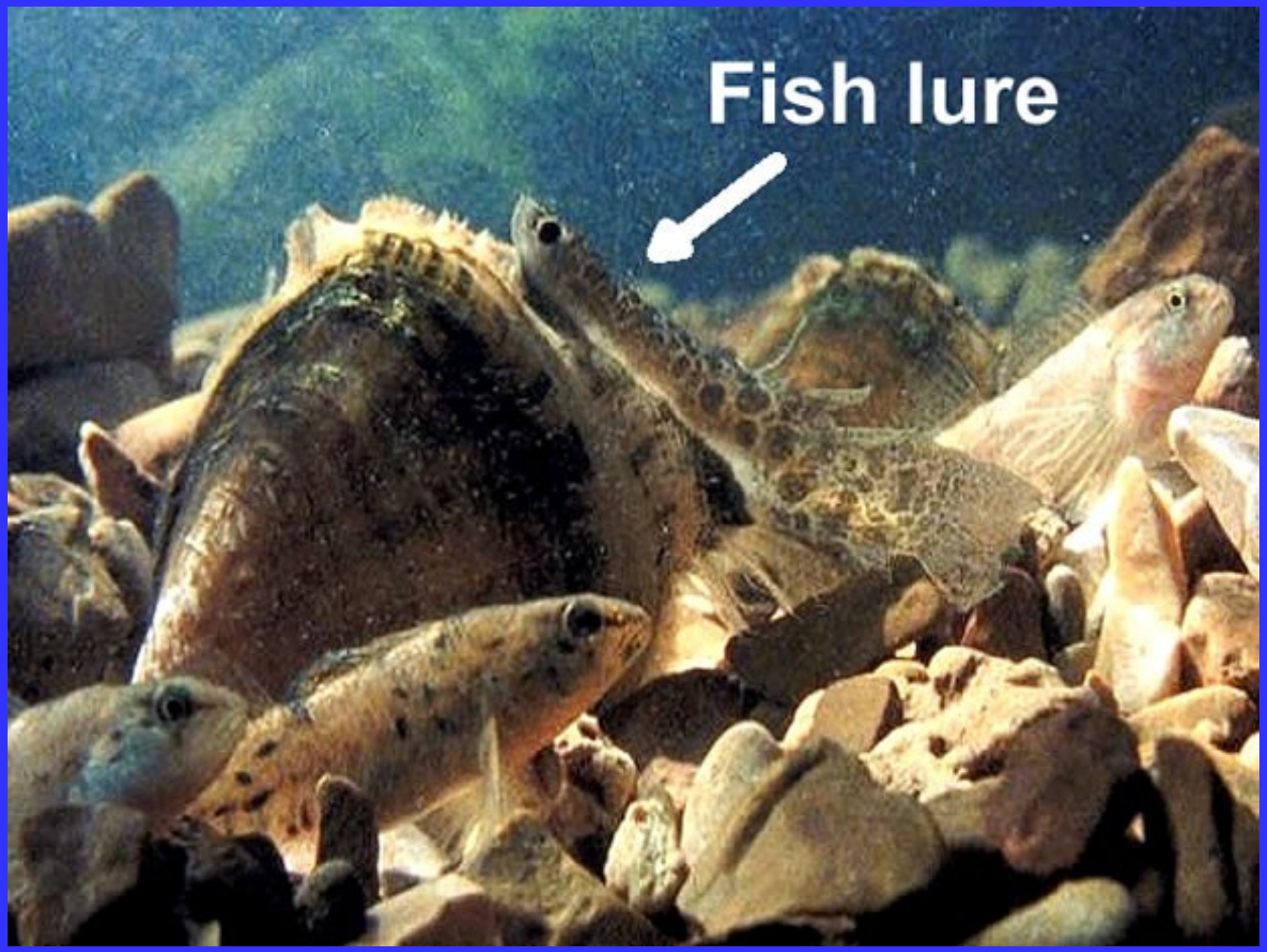
Important facts about our native freshwater mussels

- **Long lived, have separate sexes**
- **Require vertebrate host to complete life cycle**
- **Since the host is so significant, they have developed unique abilities to attract and attach to host species (usually a fish)**


JUVENILE
GLOCHIDIA
SPERM
GROWTH
♂
♀



A mussel in fish clothing….



Is it a fish or a mussel…….?

Fish like crayfish too…..

something worth eating…

some mimic aquatic insects

Snuffbox - predatory mussel?

And then you have the passive kind….that knows just how to attract its host

Why care about mussels?

What good are mussels?

How important are mussels biologically? ecologically?

- Provide important ecological services
- Provide food for fish and wildlife
- Provide habitat and food for benthos
- Remove pollutants – used as biomonitors
- Important component of the stream processes

Mussel are our Natural water filters

Questions?

Check out Mussel monitoring website

- www.wiatri.net/inventory/mussels/