

Buffalo Pebblesnail

Gillia altilis

Contributor: Jennifer Price

Taxonomy and Basic Description

The Buffalo pebblesnail has a simple, smooth shell with a very low spire. It is tan or brown in color and reaches a size of 6 to 8 mm (0.24 to 0.32 inches) in length (R. Dillon, College of Charleston, pers. comm., March 6, 2005).

Status

The status of the Buffalo pebblesnail is currently under review for state listing by the South Carolina Natural Heritage Program; this state appears to represent the southern end of this snail's range. It is considered stable (S5) in both Virginia and North Carolina and critically imperiled (S1) in New York (NatureServe 2005). However, lack of recent records for the Buffalo pebblesnail in Virginia and North Carolina leave some doubt about the accuracy of the S5 rankings in those states. In South Carolina, the Buffalo pebblesnail has only been found at one site in recent years.



POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND SIZE

The historic range of the Buffalo pebblesnail is along the Atlantic coast from South Carolina to New Jersey. It has been introduced to the Great Lakes area and possibly to Vermont (Benson 2005). In South Carolina, it was originally reported in the Santee Canal, which ran from the Port of Charleston to the Santee River (Lea 1841). In the late 1980s, the Buffalo pebblesnail was found in many localities in Virginia (Steve Roble, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, personal communication, February 8, 2005) and was common in Lake Champlain in Massachusetts (Doug Smith, Assistant Dean, University of Massachusetts, personal communication, January 27, 2005). However, very few populations have been found in recent years. It is not clear whether reduced sightings of the Buffalo pebblesnail is due to a decline in its global abundance or to the fact that few people are conducting extensive surveys for snails.

HABITAT AND NATURAL COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS

Little is known about the habitat requirements for the Buffalo pebblesnail. Its presence in the great lakes indicates that it can be found in cold, clear lakes; however, it can also be found in streams and rivers (Benson 2005).

CHALLENGES

Currently, the relative abundance of the Buffalo pebblesnail is unknown. More information about this species' habitat requirements and population trends is needed to determine specific challenges.

CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

There are currently no known conservation accomplishments for the Buffalo pebblesnail.

CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct surveys to determine the range, status and habitat requirements of the Buffalo pebblesnail to better understand this species.
- Explore the need to determine special concern status for the Buffalo pebblesnail, based on survey results.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Additional knowledge about the Buffalo pebblesnail will allow for proper management of this species.