

# THE HICKORYNUT

*the one-legged sand surfer*



Did you know that the Ottawa River has the largest known density of Hickorynut in Canada? Sadly, over the past few decades, we have seen a decline in Hickorynut populations throughout the country. So much so that on August 16th, 2019 the Hickorynut was officially listed as an endangered species in Canada.

## SUMMARY



The Hickorynut (*Obovaria olivaria*) is a species of freshwater mussel that calls the Ottawa River home. It lives on the sandy or silty bottom of deeper stretches of the river (at depths of 3-5 meters) with moderate to strong currents, and is most likely to be found in areas where its host fish, the Lake Sturgeon is present.

Living partly or completely buried in the sand, the Hickorynut can be found with their siphons exposed allowing them to filter river waters

for planktonic foods like microscopic algae and bacteria, where they provide the added benefit of improving water quality at the same time! While the Hickorynut is predominantly sedentary, it can still move, using its muscular foot to crawl along the river bottom.

The Hickorynut is dependent on Lake Sturgeon to complete their life cycle, so any threat to the Lake Sturgeon is in turn a threat to the Hickorynut; if Lake Sturgeon populations continue to decline it could lead to the extirpation of the Hickorynut in the Ottawa River.

## DID YOU KNOW?

You can determine the age of a Hickorynut by counting the number of dark bands on its shell!

The number of dark bands  
=  
the number of winters it has lived



**Can you tell how old this hickorynut is?**

*(answer on reverse side)*



## THREATS to the HICKORYNUT

1. Construction of dams that destroy habitat and limit the movement of the Lake Sturgeon and in turn the dispersion of the Hickorynut
2. Competition with the invasive zebra mussel, which can attach onto the Hickorynut in the hundreds making it difficult for them to move, feed, and even breathe!
3. Other threats to the Hickorynut include habitat degradation and degrading water quality due to agricultural and industrial pollution.

## YOU CAN HELP!

1. Wash your boats when moving from one water body to another to help limit the spread of the invasive Zebra Mussels.
2. Release Lake Sturgeon back into the waters if caught while fishing.

# THE HICKORYNUT

*the one-legged sand surfer*

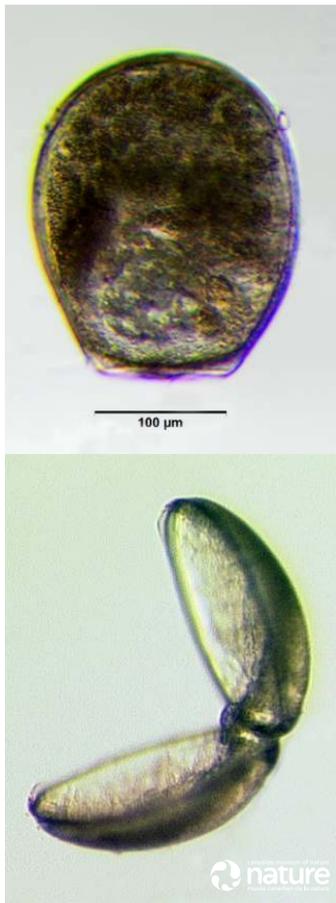
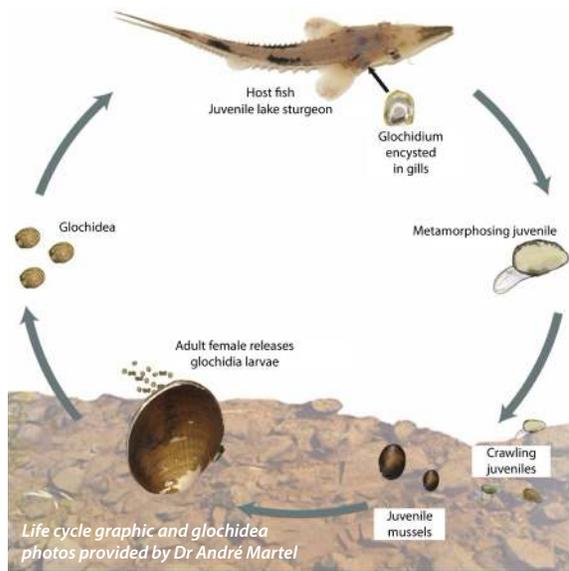
## WHERE ARE THEY?



Given their deep, river bottom habitat, locating populations of the Hickorynut in the Ottawa River has been a challenge. While evidence of their presence has been reported as far as Lake Timiskaming, the majority of observations have occurred in the stretch of the Ottawa River between Île aux Allumettes and McLaren's Landing. Populations of Hickorynut have been identified by Dr. André Martel and his team at the Canadian Museum of Nature, in the Ottawa River near Mohr Island (Pontiac, QC) and most notably near the Finlay Islands (Waltham, QC), where the largest population density of mussels was observed.

## LIFE CYCLE OF A HICKORYNUT

The larval form of the Hickorynut (called glochidia) are able to disperse throughout a river system by attaching to the gills of the Lake Sturgeon where they feed and grow until they are mature enough to detach and live independently.



## PREDATORS



The Hickorynut is a food source for many animals including the Common Muskrat, the North American River Otter, the American Mink and turtles.

Answer: ~18 years

For more information, contact Ottawa Riverkeeper:

275 Bay St, #301, Ottawa, ON, K1R 5Z5  
(613) 321-1120  
www.ottawariverkeeper.ca