European fingernail clam

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Common Name	European fingernail clam
Genus & Species	*Sphaerium corneum*
Family	Sphaeridae
Order	Veneroida
Class	Bivalvia

Diagnosis: Thin, oval shaped shell that is typically brown to gray in color and may be slightly inflated. The beak is fairly central in location with straight dorsal margin. The periostracum is covered with evenly spaced striations that become finer and fade out towards the margin of the shell. Inside the shell, the pseudocardinal teeth are narrow and close to parallel. This species can reach an average length ranging from 9 to 14 mm.

Ecology: The European fingernail clam has a maximum lifespan of 3 years. Sexual maturity is usually reached when the shell attains a minimum length of 4 mm. This species is considered hermaphroditic as well as ovoviviparous. Eggs are incubated within the brood sac where development of the embryo occurs. Young appearing as miniature adults (i.e. glochidia) are expelled by the parent once development is complete. The European fingernail clam is a filter feeder, but is also capable of deposit feeding. Its food source primarily consists of diatoms; however, other types of phytoplankton may be consumed as well. Within its native range the species is host to several digenean parasites.

Habitat & Distribution: The European fingernail clam may be found inhabiting freshwater lakes and slow moving rivers. This species prefers eutrophic conditions, shallow waters, and the presence of aquatic vegetation. Its native range is Eurasia. In the U.S., this species was introduced into the Great Lakes drainage basin around 1900. It has since dispersed to all of the Great Lakes and portions of the Hudson River in New York.

Status: In Illinois, established populations have been recorded in Lake Michigan since 1980. Presence of this species within inland waters outside of the Great Lakes basin has not yet been documented.

USGS Fact Sheet: http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/FactSheet.aspx?SpeciesID=131