

WHAT ONE MAY LEARN FROM THE MOLLUSK'S SHELL?

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Summary

Diversity of shells of various mussel species was, particularly in the past, the basis for their taxonomic classification. Several-year old shells of snails and bivalves often reflect the history of their individual life. In aquatic mollusks, habitat conditions such as water chemistry, eutrophication, type of the bottom, water flow (if present) affect the size, thickness and growth of their shells. Annuli observed on shells are regularly formed in the wintertime but they may also appear for other than seasonal reasons. For example, in the zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) annuli may appear in summer as a result of dinoflagellate blooming in water. Parasites, colonies of zebra mussel attached to other mollusks and impeding their growth or mechanical damages, are responsible for shell deformations, which may further affect shell reconstruction.