



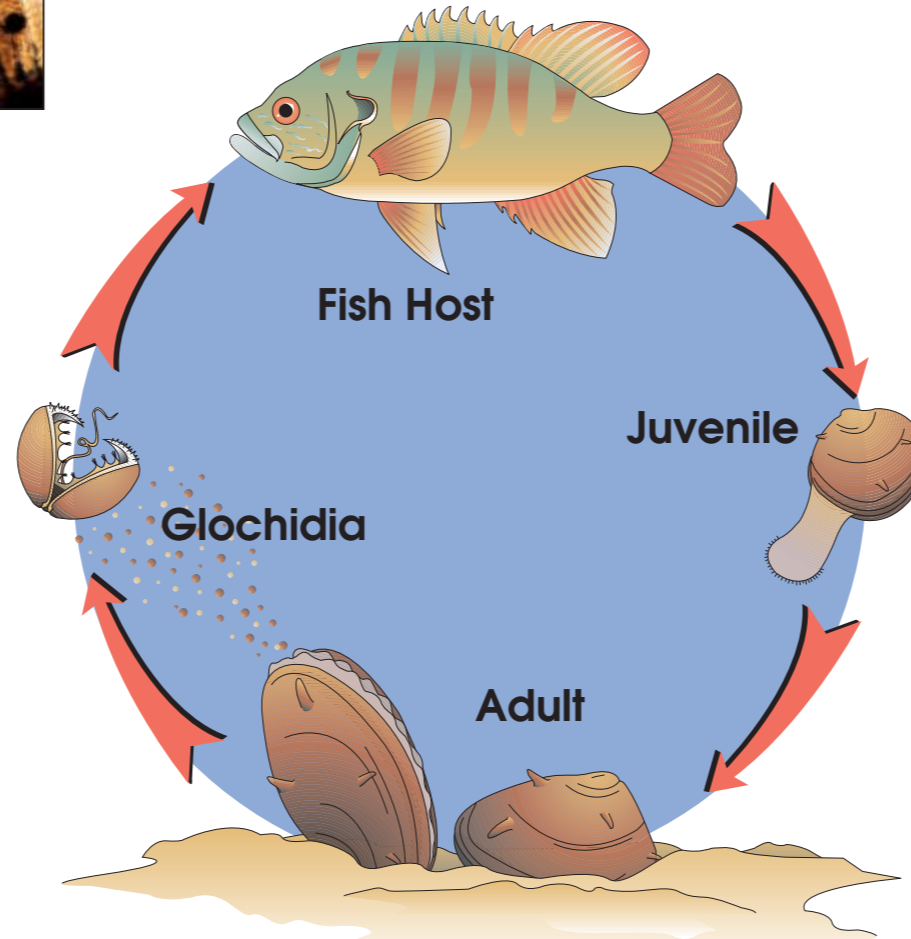
Life Cycle of a Freshwater Mussel



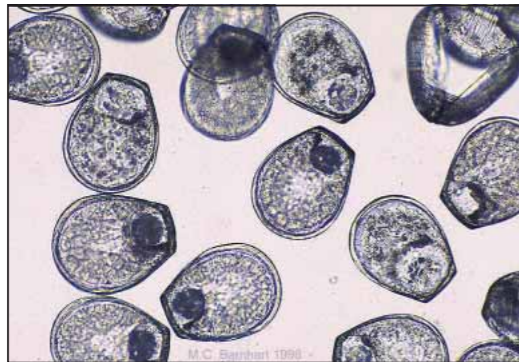
The glochidia of freshwater mussels are parasitic and must attach to the gills or fins of a suitable host fish. Glochidia usually die within a couple of days after release from the female's gills if they don't attach to the right host fish. Some female mussels use specialized behaviors and structures such as conglutinates (packet of glochidia) in an attempt to release their glochidia directly onto fishes.



The fertilized eggs develop into larvae called glochidia, which resemble pac-man. The glochidia are microscopic in size and are held in the female's gills for future release into the water column. Females with mature glochidia are noted as gravid and can usually be identified by an inflation or color change of the gills.



4). If a glochidium attaches to the proper host fish, it will remain on the fish for a couple weeks to a few months while it transforms into a juvenile mussel. Once mature, the juvenile mussel will drop off the fish and settle into the substrate of the stream where it feeds and grows. If successful, the juvenile will mature into an adult and the process will repeat itself.



Each year fresh water mussels reproduce as males release sperm into the water column. As the sperm passively drift with the water currents, it may enter females as they are siphoning and fertilize her eggs.