

Scottish Natural Heritage

Working with freshwater pearl mussel

Avoid damaging this vital species



Freshwater Pearl Mussel

What are they and how do I recognise them?

- Freshwater pearl mussels are large dark-coloured molluscs with two shells.
- They are one of the longest lived invertebrates known, capable of living over 100 years.



Where and when might I expect to find them?

- Freshwater pearl mussel larvae live on the gills of salmon and trout, juveniles and adults live in river beds.
- Scotland is a global stronghold for the endangered freshwater pearl mussel, which is found in fast-flowing rivers and burns from Shetland to Galloway.

What do I do if I find a freshwater pearl mussel?

- You need to be aware that it is an offence for any person to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, take or disturb freshwater pearl mussels or to damage their habitat.
- The following general do's and don'ts apply when working near freshwater pearl mussel habitat:

Do:

- Ensure SNH and SEPA have been consulted for your particular works.
- Before entering a watercourse, refer to and adhere to relevant conditions and/or method statements.
- Ensure silt does not enter rivers and burns.
- Assume responsibility for your actions.

Do not:

- Attempt to move any freshwater pearl mussels you may find - consult an expert.
- Enter cordoned off areas where no works are permissible.
- Commence works before contacting SEPA or SNH.
- Cross the watercourse with plant other than at agreed designated crossing points.

If in any doubt whether you have found a freshwater pearl mussel, stop all works and consult an expert