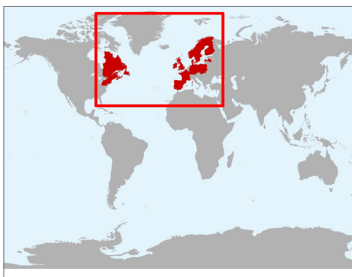




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Geographical range

Species of the Day: Freshwater Pearl Mussel

The **Freshwater Pearl Mussel**, *Margaritifera margaritifera*, is listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. Its distribution stretches from northern Spain through France, the United Kingdom and central Europe, to Scandinavia and northern Russia. Individuals develop very slowly; in Sweden, recently discovered specimens are up to 280 years old.

The presence of reproducing populations of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel indicates a high quality of freshwater ecosystems. The main threats to this species are degradation of its habitat (particularly intensification of land use leading to sedimentation), river regulation and nutrient pollution. The majority of European populations have mainly adult mussels remaining, with unsustainable levels of reproduction. This is due to the continued loss of juvenile mussels from a lack of oxygen reaching the river bed gravels, where they are completely buried for their first five years.

Catchment management to restore river bed habitat conditions is considered to be vital to the prevention of the extinction of this species. As an indicator species, it can be seen as a model for designing management plans for freshwater ecosystems.

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