

## Texas Mussel Watch, a Citizen Science Volunteer Monitoring Program

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*Abstract:* Freshwater mussels (family:Unionidae) play an important role in aquatic ecosystems. Approximately 53 unionid species exist in Texas and 38% of these species are thought to be highly imperiled. In 1998, Texas Mussel Watch (TMW), a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Texas Nature Trackers Program, first trained a group of 20 volunteers to help TPWD document the presence or absence of freshwater mussel species in the rivers, lakes, streams, and ponds of Texas. Over 200 volunteers have participated in TMW workshops since the inception of the project, logged over 1,000 volunteer hours, covered over 150 sites in 18 Texas river systems in 53 counties, and recorded the presence 39 unionid species. During TMW workshops, participants are presented with information on the distribution, biology, and identification of unionids in Texas, as well as information on non-native species such as Asian clams (*Corbicula fluminea*) and zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*). Highlights include the discovery of the rare golden orb (*Quadrula aurea*) in the San Marcos River in central Texas; the discovery of two species that had not previously been found in Austin County, the Texas lilliput (*Toxolasma texasensis*) and tapered pondhorn (*Uniomerus declivis*); and seven live Texas fawnsfoot (*Truncilla macrodon*) in the Brazos River in Washington County. TMW is reaching out to more Texas citizens through partnerships with Texas Master Naturalist Chapters and Nature Centers.

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