

Asian Clam



Species Description

Scientific name: *Corbicula fluminea*
AKA: Asiatic Clam, Golden Clam, Pygmy Clam
Native to: Southern and eastern Asia
Habitat: Rivers, lakes, canals. Requires well-oxygenated water and prefers sand and gravel substrate.

Corbicula fluminea is a small bi-valve clam, with an inflated shell and is slightly round to triangular in shape. They can grow to length of 50-65mm, but usually are less than 25mm. They have a thick shell with prominent and evenly spaced concentric ridges. The outside shell is yellow-green to brown which can flake off leaving white patches. The inside shell layer (nacre) is a glossy light purple. They have a lifespan of 1 – 7 years. Reproduction requires water temperatures greater than 15°C.

In Northern Ireland *C. fluminea* has been recorded in the River Foyle and also in a number of rivers in Ireland. Likely pathways of introduction to Northern Ireland are from ballast water from international shipping, food imports and aquarium trade. Along with the natural dispersal through a river system; boating, angling and other water based activities can spread the already present populations.

Where they are established the Asian clam can occur in very high densities (several 1000/m²). The numbers of individual significantly alter the ecosystem by filtering nutrients, altering substrate and potentially increasing sedimentation through pseudofaeces production.

Can compete with native species for nutrients and substrate space. In large numbers they can also displace or clog the spawning grounds of native species. Their high numbers can also blocking drainage or intake pipes and restrict water flow.



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Key ID Features



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Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>

Field signs

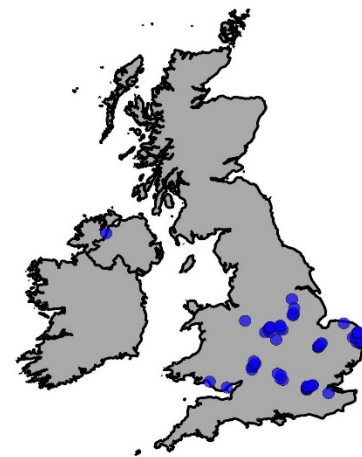
Where established, dead shell can wash up on edge of water bodies.



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Distribution

1 record in Northern Ireland. Records concentrated in Southern England and Wales.



Source: NBN atlas

<https://species.nbnatlas.org/search/?q=corbicula+fluminea>

Check website for current distribution

Similar Species

Orb cockles (*Sphaerium spp.*) and pea cockles (*Pisidium spp.*) are native freshwater clams. They have a similar appearance to Asian clam, but they are much smaller (15mm). Shells are very thin and lack prominent ridges.

Giant pea shell

Native
(*Pisidium amnicum*)

Growing up to 11mm,
it is the largest
pisidium species



Glossy greyish white
to brown, with
greenish cast

Public domain. <https://www.qbif.org/occurrence/2632944346>

Zebra mussel

Invasive non-native
(*Dreissena polymorpha*)

Alternating
dark and light
zigzag stripes



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Can grow up to 30mm

Distinctive
'D' shape

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European fingernail clam

Native
Sphaerium corneum



Very fine, irregular
concentric ridges

9 – 11mm
in length

Smaller than
Asian clam

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References and further reading:

- Booy, O., Wade, M. and Roy, H. 2015. Field Guide to Invasive Plants and Animals in Britain. Bloomsbury. London.
- CABI *Corbicula fluminea* (Asian clam) data sheet - <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/88200>
- Millane, M. & Caffrey, J. 2014. Inland Fisheries Ireland and the National Biodiversity Data Centre Risk Assessment of *Corbicula fluminea*. Available <http://nonnativespecies.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Corbicula-fluminea-Asian-Clam1.pdf>
- Zieritz, A. 2015. GB Non-native species Rapid Risk Assessment (NRA) of *Corbicula fluminea*. Available <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1370>

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