



NATIONAL AQUATIC N<u>UISANCE SPECIES CLEARINGHOUSE</u>

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# Invasive Freshwater bivalves of the Neotropical Region

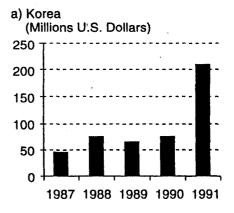
Investigator: Gustavo Darrigran, Facultad de Ciencias Naturales y Museo, Universidad Nacional La Plata. Paseo del Bosque (1900) La Plata. Argentina. E-mail: invasion@way.com.ar; or invasion@museo.fcnym.unlp.edu.ar. Group for Research on Invasive Molluscs. http://www.way.com.ar/~invasion

#### introduction

Since the 1960's, three species of freshwater bivalves: Corbicula fluminea (Müller) or "Asiatic clam", C. largillierti (Philippi) (Corbiculidae) and Limnoperna fortunei (Dunker) or "golden mussel" (Mytilidae), from the southeast of Asia, have reached the neotropical Plata Basin through the Río de la Plata (Table 1).

#### Limnoperna fortunei (Dunker, 1857)

The golden mussel is native to rivers and creeks from China and southeastern Asia. It invaded Hong Kong in 1965, Japan and Taiwan in the 1990's. Darrigran and Pastorino (1995) proposed the non-intentional introduction of this species into America in 1991, through ballast water of ocean vessels. Fig.1 shows the trade between Argentina and two countries where golden mussel inhabits.



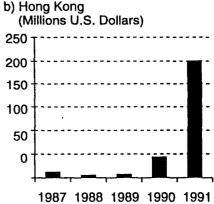


Figure 1. Trade between Argentine - Korea (a) and Hong Kong (b) (taken from Darrigran and Pastorino, 1995).

Table 1.	Exotic bivalves	in the	Plata Basin.	
			Limnoperna	fortunei

Origin
Mode of life
Maximal Size
Longevity
Sexuality
Development
Introduction
(way, place and date
of entrance)

First cite

ze 35 mm
36 months
Dioecious
ent Free
n \* Non intentional.
and date in ballast water of
ocean vessels
\*Río de la Plata- 1991
Pastorino, et al, 1993

Southeastern Asia

Byssal epifaunal

Corbicula fluminea
Southeastern Asia
Infaunal
42 mm
36 months
Hermaphrodite
Branchial incubation
\*Non intentional
\*Río de la Plata – end
of the sixtles, beginning
of the seventies
Ituarte, 1981

C. largillierti
Southeastern Asia
Infaunal
33 mm
30 months
Hermaphrodite
Branchial incubation
\*Non intentional
\* Río de la Plata – end
of the sixties, beginning
of the seventles
Ituarte, 1981

# Description of the Shell (Morton, 1973)

The shell of L. fortunei is equivalve and heteromyarian. It is dark brown above the umbonal keel and paler vellowbrown below. This is caused by the nacre of the interior of the shell being purple above and white below the keel. The presence of a nacreous layer in Limnoperna displaces this genus from all contact with Dreissenacea.

The outer periostracal layer of the shell is smooth and shiny and where it curls inwards at the shell margin is thick. The umbones are very nearly terminal and the

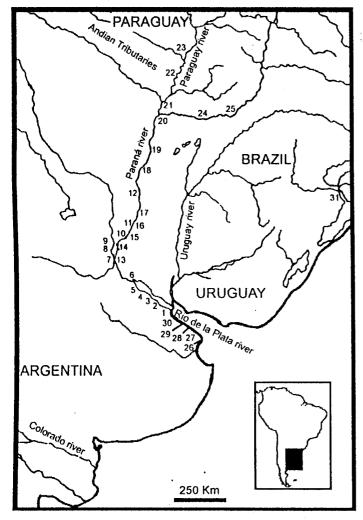


Figure 2. The Plata (4 sub-basins: Río de la Plata river; Uruguay river; Parana-Paraguay rivers and Andean tributaries) and Colorado River Basins, 1 to 31: Localities where L. fortunei is found.

1	Campana	16	Santa Elena
2	Baradero	17	La Paz
3	San Pedro	18	Esquina
4	Ramallo	19	Goya
5	San Nicolás	20	Corrientes
6	Villa Constitución	21	Isla del Cerrito
7	Rosario	22	Formosa
8	San Lorenzo	23	Asunción
9	Coronda	24	Ituzaingo
10	Santa Fe	25	Posadas
11	Helvecia	26	Punta Piedras
12	San Javier	27	Punta Indio
13	Victoria	28	Magdalena
14	Diamante	29	Bagliardi Beach
15	Paraná	30	Anchorena
_		31	Lago Guaiba

dorsal ligamental margin is straight or, at most, only slightly curved. The ventral margin of the shell is the most variable feature and in different specimens varied between the two extremes of being either straight or distinctly arcuate. There are no hinge teeth and no byssal notch. The shells are yellow-brown. In places with transparent water, for example in northern Argentina, they look golden; so it is called "golden mussel".

The golden mussel is epifaunal. It attaches to every natural hard substrate available (from trunks and aquatic plants to compact silt-sand) or artificial ones (piers, tubes, walls, etc.). Its eurioic status allows a quick and effective distribution in body waters.

The following features of the golden mussel make it an invasive species:

- its high biotic potential. In 1991, when it was first detected in Bagliardi Beach (Fig.2), its density was 4 to 5 individuals / m2. Today in the same environment, its density is approximately 150,000 ind./ m2;
  - · the absence of competition;
- · being the only epifaunal bivalve to achieve these high densities:
- · the problems caused both to natural and human environments.

biofouling problems caused by L. fortunei in South America are similar to those described for Dreissena polymorpha, "zebra mussel", in the Northern Hemisphere (Darrigran and Ezcurra de Drago, in press).

Impacts of this species are felt in both human and natural environments. The Plata Basin is one of the most important hydrographic systems in South America (Fig.2), with a drainage area of nearly 3 million km2, formed by 4 sub-basins. Its rivers flow through tropical, subtropical and temperate areas. It includes forests, grasslands (the Pampa) and mountains (the Andes) and covers 5 countries, 4 of which take part in the economic system called

Since its introduction, the golden mussel has greatly extended its distribution, and despite the important problems that it causes, people are not aware of the environmental impact.

The increase of the spatial distribution within these years, may be summarized as following:

- It invaded two of the four sub-basins (Fig.2). In 1991 it inhabited only the Río de la Plata; currently it is also in the sub-basin of the Paraná and Paraguay rivers.
- In 1995, on the Paraná river it was recorded up to the locality of Zárate (Buenos Aires province). Currently it reaches the city of Posadas, in Misiones province.
- Until 1995 it was recorded in a single country, Argentina, Currently it also inhabits Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil (Fig. 2).

In sum, the golden mussel has moved forward over 240 km per year, since its introduction. From 1991 to the present, it has settled in approximately 1,100 km along the Plata Basin.

Since the introduction of the golden mussel in the Río de la Plata, the group for research on invasive molluscs of the Universidad Nacional de La Plata which I lead, carries on investigations on population dynamics, their impact on native species (Darrigran, et al, 1998); distribution (Darrigran and Ezcurra de Drago, in press); reproductive biology (Darrigran, et al. 1998; Darrigran, et al. 1999); larval development (Ezcurra de Drago, et al. MS); indi-

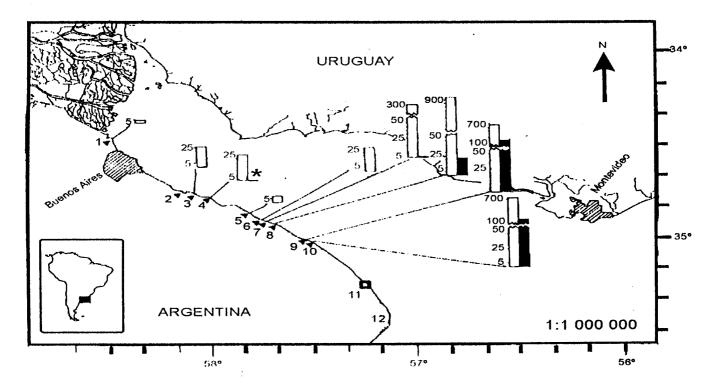


Figure 3. Distribution of the genus Corbicula in the Argentine coast of the Río de la Plata. Bar diagrams represent number of individuals / m+. Black bars: C. largillierti; White bars: C. fluminea. \*: presence of C. fluminea.+: occasional presence of C. fluminea. (modified from Darrigran, 1992b)

vidual growth (Maroñas, et al. MS) and predation (Penchaszadeh, et al., in press). These researches aim to supply the necessary information for their prevention and control.

Fouling problems already caused by the golden mussel in South America were detected in the industries established along the Río de la Plata and Paraná rivers; mainly in the water intakes of plants for drinking water, industries and electric power plants.

The major problems caused by larval invasion, settlement and maturity, into water distribution systems (Nalepa and Schoelesser, 1993) are generally similar to problems which have already been detected in Argentina (marked with (X))

- \* (X) Reduction of pipe diameter
- (X) Blockage of the pipeline
- (X) Decreased water velocity caused by friction (turbulent flows).
  - \* (X) Accumulation of empty shells
  - \* Contamination of water pipelines by mass mortality
  - \* (X) Filter occlusion

All these macrofouling problems were, up to the invasion of golden mussel, exclusive to the marine environment and absent in freshwaters of South America.

From a biological-environmental standpoint, in order to prevent and control the golden mussel, its strong adaptive-reproductive capacity must be considered. In the present distribution it passed through a temperate to a sub-tropical climate and is going to a tropical one. In addition to the changes of biological rhythm in populations when invading new natural environments, typical features of the human environment (the use, water velocity, system structure, etc.) must be taken into account.

These traits, similar to those of the zebra mussel in the Northern Hemisphere, are the reason why there is not a single effective method for prevention / control. On the contrary, it is necessary to have a dynamic assemblage of methods that reflect the particular natural and human environment.

The impact of the golden mussel is not restricted to economic impacts alone. Among the problems related to the presence of the invasive bivalve, the quick change in the benthic community, favoring the presence of Oligochaeta and Hirudinea, as well as the displacement of

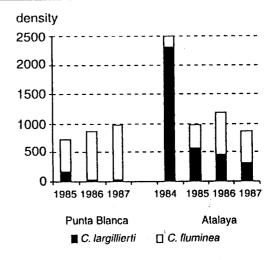


Figure 4. Densities of C. fluminea (white bars) and C. largillierti (black bars) in two coastal localities of the Río de la Plata. (taken from Darrigran, 1991).

indigenous species of molluscs (Darrigran, et al. 1998), is mentioned. Before the introduction of the golden mussel in Bagliardi Beach, three gastropods were commonly found: Heleobia piscium (d'Orbigny), Chilina fluminea (Maton), and Gundlachia concentrica (d'Orbigny). Since the introduction of the invasive bivalve, Ch. fluminea and G. concentrica have become rare.

Another example of the impacts on the malacofauna of the area is the settlement of the golden mussel on native bivalves, i.e. *Anodontites trapesialis* (Lamarck) and on the invasive bivalve *Corbicula fluminea*. These kinds of impacts on the benthic fauna are similar to those caused by *D. polymorpha* on native bivalves of the Northern Hemisphere.

Relative to native fish species, different authors (Penchaszadeh, et al, in press; Montalto et al, 1999) mentioned the presence of *L. fortunei* as a new element in the diet of these species and it constitutes the main food items for *Leporinus obtusidens* (Anostomidea).

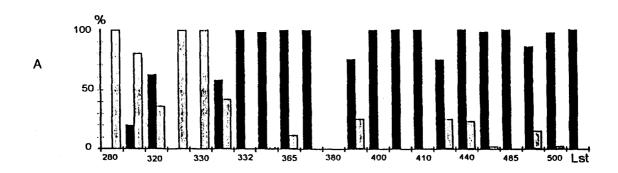
Since the introduction of *L. fortunei* in South America, this species has demonstrated great dispersal ability. This trait, combined with the large volume of trade among Asia, South America and North America, emphasizes Ricciardi's (1998) assertion of the need for better and more effective ballast-water controls.

Corbicula fluminea (Müller, 1774) - *C. largillierti* (Philippi, 1811)

The genus *Corbicula* (Megerle) is another taxon unintentionally introduced into the Neotropical Region exhibiting a quick and continuous expansion. Ituarte (1981) documented the presence of both, *C. largillierti* and *C. fluminea*, first for South America in the Río de la Plata, and estimated the date of introduction as the end of the 1960's and beginning of the 1970's. Veitenher-Mendes (1981), mentioned the first record of this genus in Brazil, and estimated it entered by the beginning of the 1970's. Veitenher-Mendes and Olazarri (1983) reported *Corbicula* sp. in the Uruguay Republic; their first collection was in 1979. The presence of *Corbicula* spp. is also esteemed highly probable in Bolivia and Perú.

Darrigran (1992a) reports that in 1985, *C. fluminea* and *C. largillierti* entered in lotic and lentic environments adjacent to the estuary of the Río de la Plata. Currently the genus *Corbicula* is distributed along the main rivers of the Plata Basin, in Río de la Plata, Paraná and Uruguay rivers (Darrigran, 1992b). In addition, it was found outside the Plata Basin. It has been found in a sandy shore of the Colorado River (39º 01'S – 64º01' W), along the northern border of Patagonia (Cazzaniga, 1997) (Fig.2).

At the beginning of the 1980's (Ituarte, 1981) C.



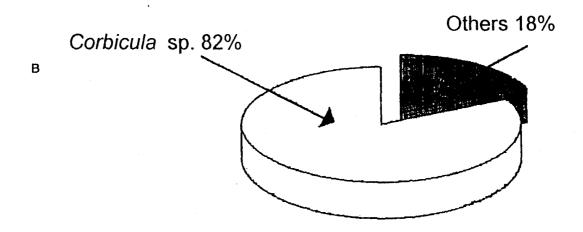


Figure 5. Pterodoras granulosus as a predator of Corbicula spp.

(a) Relationship between size (Lst) of the captured P. granulosus and weight (%) of different items. Corbicula spp.: black bar; other items: white bar.

(b) Percentage of shell weight of Corbicula spp. and of the alimentary items in total contents of the studied fish.

largillierti occupied a continuous strip of the Río de la Plata coast, from its head (33°53'S; 58°25'W) up to Magdalena Beach (35º01'S; 57º31'W), though it was not found in the affluent streams of the Río de la Plata. Likewise, C. fluminea was found only at the north of Buenos Aires Harbor (34º29'S; 58º28'W). Almost a decade later, Darrigran (1992b) reported the change of the distribution of the genus Corbicula in the Argentine coast of the Río de la Plata (Fig. 3). C. fluminea enlarged its distribution along the whole coast up to Punta Indio Beach (35°15'S; 57°08'W), while C. largillierti, formerly present along the whole coast, began to restrict its distribution range. In addition, Darrigran (1992a) said that C. largillierti prevailed in density over C. fluminea in those environments with silty substrate (streams and lentic water bodies, close to the Río de la Plata) which contrast with the typically sandy sediments of the coast of the Río

Such an increase in the distribution of *C. fluminea*, caused a competitive interaction between both species. Darrigran (1991) analyzed the temporal variation of densities of both species when co-inhabiting in two localities from the Argentine coast of the Río de la Plata: Punta Blanca (34°56′S; 57°40′W) and Atalaya Beach (35°00′S; 57°33′W) (Fig.4). Between 1985 and 1988, the density of *C. largillierti* was very low, relative to that of *C. fluminea*. The hypothesis proposed is that *C. fluminea* is competitively better than *C. largillierti*. Currently, C. fluminea is found in lotic and lentic environments associated with the coast of the Río de la Plata. Likewise, *C. largillierti* is found only in some affluent streams, living with *C. fluminea*, with a lower density than the latter.

As well as occurring in the Holarctic Region, there are records of macrofouling caused by *C. fluminea* in the Neotropical Region (recently in south of Brasil).

In natural environments, Darrigran and Colauti (1994) pointed out the impact related to the dietary change of a native fish of the Plata Basin as a result of the invasion of *C. fluminea* (Fig. 5 a and b).

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