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Contact Information

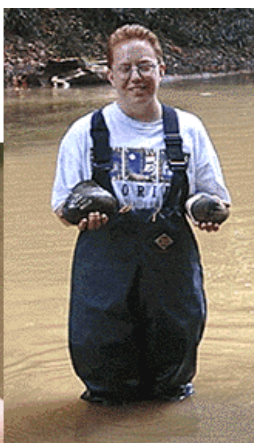
**Eastern Region
Regional Office**626 East Wisconsin Ave
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414.297.3600 (voice)
414.297.3678 (TTY for
the hearing impaired)**Office Hours**M-F 8:00-4:30p CST
Closed on all Federal
holidays.**Stay Connected!**[Contact Us](#)**Little Muskingum River Aquatic Survey****Here Fishy, Fishy, Fishy....**

Did you ever wonder what lurked in those little creeks you drive past each day? Most people are surprised to find out that all kinds of fish, bugs, mussels, and salamanders live just out of our view!

The USDA Forest Service has teamed up with the Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves to find out just what kinds of aquatic animals live in the Wayne National Forest streams in Washington and Monroe Counties. The Forest Service and Division of Natural Areas are sharing the cost and expertise needed to catalog the different animals in the Little Muskingum River, and in the little creeks flowing into the Ohio River.

*Freshwater mussels come in
all shapes, sizes and colors.*

*Megan Stalnecker, an Otterbein College student, holds
two mussels found in the Little Muskingum River.*



The streams found in the Marietta area are some of the cleanest streams on the whole Wayne National Forest. Many anglers know about the good fishing to be had in these streams, but few people know that these streams also provide habitat for rare fish, mussels, and salamanders.

Both agencies are committed to the protection and conservation of rare species, and projects like this enable

biologists to learn more about species' distributions and populations.

Freshwater Mussels

Some call them clams, others know them as mussels. The fact is, they come in all shapes, colors and sizes. These animals live their entire lives on the bottom of creeks and rivers. Each mussel has two siphons which are used to feed and breath. They feed on small particles of organic material floating in the water, and they move only small distances.

Because of the way they feed and breath, mussels are very susceptible to pollution, including silt-laden waters.



Dr. Mike Hoggarth, a professor at Otterbein College, is shown here wading pools and riffles looking for live mussels. To find the secretive mussels, he often crawls on his hands and knees along the edge of pools. He will run his hands through the sediments until he touches a mussel. Oregon State University student Michelle LaRue shows off one of the tiny mussels he found in a mucky section of the Little Muskingum River.

At the end of the day, Dr. Mike Hoggarth tallies all of the kinds of mussels found in the sampling reach. He keeps track of the numbers and types of live mussels found, and documents the kinds of shells he found washed up on sand and gravel bars. Some shells he finds on the gravel bars are kept and turned in to The Ohio State University Museum.



Fish



Don Rice, the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves Zoologist, is heading up the fish sampling part of the project. He records the types and numbers of fish captured in the sampling reach, and then returns the fish to the stream.

Most people are surprised to find that there are probably 50-60 different kinds of fish in streams like the Little Muskingum. Of course there are the popular gamefish like smallmouth bass, sauger, and muskie... but there are also many kinds of minnows, suckers, darters, and shiners.

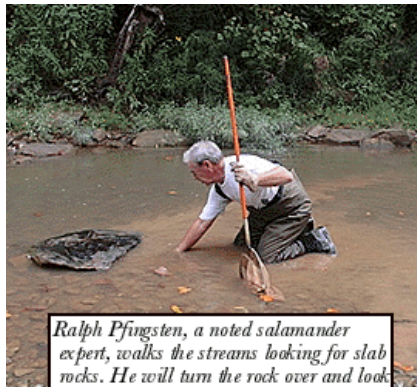
Electrofishing gear is used to collect fish from the streams. The operator releases a switch which allows electricity to flow into the water. Fish are stunned, netted and placed in a livewell. The electricity only stuns the fish long enough to capture them.



Don Rice, Ottawa graduate Megan Hynd and Ottawa student Megan Devito use a seine to capture fish in the shallow riffle areas.

Hellbenders

Hellbenders are giant aquatic salamanders which are very secretive. They are very rare in Ohio, in fact only one has ever been found in the Little Muskingum River.



Ralph Pfingsten, a noted salamander expert, walks the streams looking for slab rocks. He will turn the rock over and look for hellbenders. He must be very careful since hellbenders have been known to bite.