

A Brief Glossary of Molluscan Terms
Compiled by Bruce Neville

Bivalve. A member of the second most speciose class of Mollusca, generally bearing a shell of two valves, left and right, and lacking a radula. Commonly called clams, mussels, oysters, scallops, cockles, shipworms, etc. Formerly called **pelecypods** (class Pelecypoda).

Cephalopoda. The third dominant class of Mollusca, generally without a true shell, though various internal hard structures may be present, highly specialized anatomically for mobility. Commonly called octopuses, squids, cuttles, nautiluses.

Columella. The axis, real or imaginary, around and along which a gastropod shell grows.

Dextral. Right-handed, with the aperture on the right when the spire is at the top. Most gastropods are dextral.

Gastropod. A member of the largest class of Mollusca, often bearing a shell of one valve and an operculum. Commonly called snails, slugs, limpets, conchs, whelks, sea hares, nudibranchs, etc.

Mantle. The organ that secretes the shell.

Mollusk (or **mollusc**). A member of the second largest phylum of animals, generally with a non-segmented body divided into head, foot, and visceral regions; often bearing a shell secreted by a mantle; and having a radula.

Operculum. A horny or calcareous pad that partially or completely closes the aperture of some gastropods.

Periostracum. The proteinaceous layer covering the exterior of some mollusk shells.

Protoconch. The larval shell of the veliger, often remains as the tip of the adult shell. Also called **prodissoconch** in bivalves.

Radula. A ribbon of teeth, unique to mollusks, used to procure food.

Sinistral. Left-handed, with the aperture on the left when the spire is at the top.

Trochophore. A top-shaped pelagic larval stage common to many invertebrate phyla, including mollusks.

Valve. A "piece" of a mollusk's shell, generally numbering one, two, eight, or zero.

Veliger. A pelagic larval stage unique to mollusks with a larval shell and a two-lobed swimming structure, the velum.

A Brief Bibliography of Useful Shell Books

Unfortunately, there are no good current guides to terrestrial or freshwater mollusks of the United States or Texas.

Abbott, R. T. (1972). *Kingdom of the seashell*. New York: Crown.

General, well-illustrated overview of mollusk biology. Out of print, but easy to find at used book stores.

Abbott, R. T. (1986). *Seashells of North America: a guide to field identification* (Rev. ed.). New York: Golden.

A good beginning guide to marine shells found on the beaches of the U.S. and Canada.

Andrews, J. (1992). *A field guide to shells of the Texas coast*. Houston: Gulf.

Out of print, but a good beginner's guide to Texas seashells.

Dance, S. P. (1966). *Shell collecting, an illustrated history*. London: Faber and Faber.

A fun read on the history of man's interactions with mollusks.

Howells, R. G., Neck, R. W., & Murray, H. D. (1996). *Freshwater mussels of Texas*. Austin, Tex.: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Inland Fisheries Division.

All Texas species of freshwater mussels illustrated, with range maps, status, etc.

Huber, M. (2010). *Compendium of bivalves*. Hackenheim: ConchBooks.

A worldwide survey of bivalve diversity, for more serious collectors--not cheap!

Robin, A. (2008). *Encyclopedia of marine gastropods*. Paris; Hackenheim, Germany: Xenophora; ConchBooks.

A worldwide survey of gastropod diversity, for more serious collectors--not cheap!

Tunnell, J. W., Jr., Andrews, J., Barrera, N. C., & Moretzsohn, F. (2010). *Encyclopedia of Texas seashells: identification, ecology, distribution, and history* (1st ed.). College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press.

A complete reference to the marine mollusks of the Texas waters, with good opening chapters on mollusk biology.

And a Few Websites

Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, Sanibel, FL: <http://www.shellmuseum.org/>

The Cephalopod Page: <http://www.thecephalopodpage.org/>

Cone Snail Eating a Clown Fish (Youtube video): http://youtu.be/opwGG9_oOjA

Houston Conchology Society: <http://www.houstonshellclub.com/>

Johnson, Dan. Biota of Houston , TX and Vicinty: http://www.dan-johnson.net/biota/houston_biota.html

Joseph Britton Freshwater Mussel Collection: <http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/JOSEPH/>

Shapeshifting Octopus (Youtube video): <http://youtu.be/PmDTtkZlMwM>

Snail Radula (Youtube video): <http://youtu.be/mLVDwlrSq5U>

