

WESTERN WATERSHEDS At Risk

Springsnails in the Western U.S.



DIVERSE AND IMPORTANT

- Springsnails are a unique group of small freshwater snails found only in western North America
- They are found in cold and hot springs, big rivers, small creeks, lakes, wetlands, and marshes
- Nearly 120 species of springsnails are known, they are one of the most diverse groups of animals
- Springsnails are the building blocks of a healthy environment
- They feed native fish, including trout and sturgeon, birds, and other wildlife
- They recycle plant and animal waste and maintain water quality
- They have been described as “the little things that run the world”

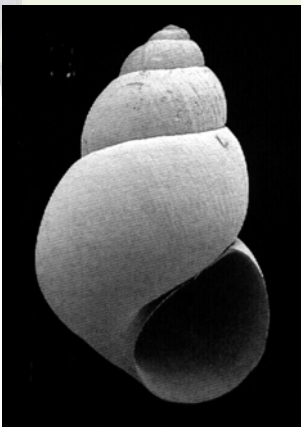


Photo Hershler and Liu 2004

Typical springsnail.

INDICATORS OF WATER QUALITY

- Springsnails are considered excellent indicators of watershed health
- Because they have adapted to the natural conditions of the waters they inhabit, springsnails are extremely sensitive to changes in water quality
- The health of springsnail populations provides windows into the health of watersheds

PROTECTING WATERSHEDS

- Springsnails are the most threatened groups of animals in the west, a symptom of poor water quality and degraded watersheds.
- Four springsnail species have gone extinct, three are currently listed as endangered species because they are on the brink of extinction, eight are candidates for protection as endangered species.
- Scientists have found nearly every spring-snail species has suffered declines, habitat loss, or face a number of threats.
- Protecting springsnails protects the watersheds they depend on for survival.
- Strong protection is needed to save these small, yet invaluable creatures and their watersheds.

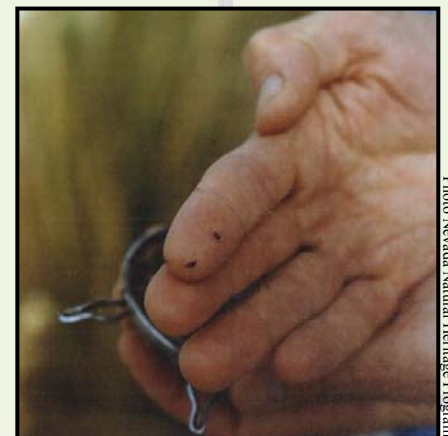


Photo Nevada Natural Heritage Program

What spring-snails lack in size, they make up for in their contribution to watershed health.

