

Virginia Land Snails

Melampus bidentatus Say, 1822

Family: Melampodidae

Common name: Eastern Melampus

Identification

Height: 10-15 mm

Whorls: 5-6

The shell of *Melampus bidentatus* is heavy and ovate-conical in shape (Abbott, 1974). The apex is low, and the whorls are tall and broadly shouldered. The upper shouldered have a microsculpture of incised spiral lines. A narrow aperture runs for most of the whorl height, with 2 lamellae on the inner columella, and 1-4 raised lirae within the outer lip. The shell color is tan or light brown with 3-4 broad, darker brown bands. The animal is reddish-brown.

Ecology

This snail is an amphibious salt-marsh dweller of bays and estuaries. It is an air-breather, or pulmonate, that can survive for extended periods upon vegetation above or beyond the water. It consumes rotten vegetation, especially saltmarsh cordgrass.

In Massachusetts, snails reached reproduction size at 5mm, engaging in a six-week reproductive period in May-July (Apley, 1970). These hermaphroditic snails laid in saltwater an average of 39 gelatinous egg masses, each averaging 850 eggs. Hatching of veligers occurred after 16 days, followed by 2-6 weeks as planktonic larvae. Individual snails lived 3-4 years.

Taxonomy

Synonyms of *Melampus bidentatus* are *M. corneus*, *M. lineatus*, and *M. redfieldi*.

Distribution

Melampus bidentatus lives from the Maritime Provinces of Canada to the Texas Gulf Coast. In Virginia it is reported from coastal counties.

NatureServe Global Rank: G5

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Ken Hotopp 1/2013

Range Map



Photo(s): *Melampus bidentatus* animals and shells by Bill Frank ©.

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