

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



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EXTENSION
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Notes: The Web site is by the Division of Molluscs, Museum of Biological Diversity, part of Ohio State's Department of Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology. Sources also included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, <http://www.fws.gov/news/mussels.html>; the University of Vermont ("Fun With Freshwater Mussels"), <http://www.uvm.edu/%7epass/tignor/mussels/>; the Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society, <http://ellipse.inhs.uiuc.edu/FMCS/>; and *Field Guide to Freshwater Mussels of the Midwest* by the Illinois Natural History Survey, <http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/cbd/collections/mollusk/fieldguide.html>. FYI: "Mollusk" is sometimes spelled "mollusc," especially in England.

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Q. Dear Twig: How many kinds of clams are there?

A. Well, "clam," in general, means a **bivalve mollusk**. That's a mollusk with a **two-part shell**. If you lump all the bivalve mollusks on Earth all together — the **clams, mussels, oysters and scallops** — they add up to about **15,000 species**.

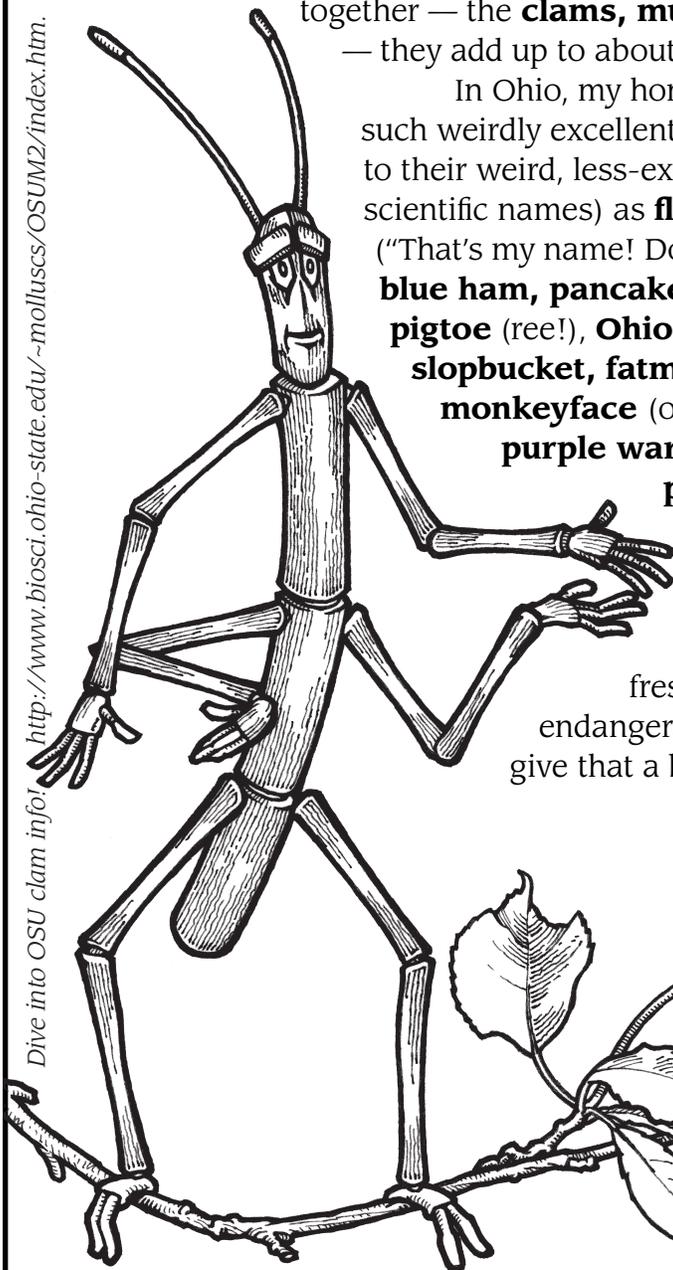
In Ohio, my home, the clams/mussels go by such weirdly excellent common names (as opposed to their weird, less-excellent, but-more-accurate scientific names) as **fluter, creeper, peewee** ("That's my name! Don't wear it out!"), **sheepnose, blue ham, pancake, hogshell, ring pink, pink pigtoe** (ree!), **Ohio pigtoe** (ree, ree!), **snuffbox, slobucket, fatmucket, heelsplitter** (ooch!), **monkeyface** (oop!), **strange floater, purple wartyback** and **orange-foot pimpleback**.

I tip my cap to this bivalve biodiversity! But also I see that it needs our help. Some 70 percent of America's freshwater mussels are declining, endangered or extinct. Which stinks. I give that a blue-ham salute.

Clammily,

Twig

Dive into OSU clam info! <http://www.biosci.ohio-state.edu/~molluscs/OSUM2/index.htm>.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).