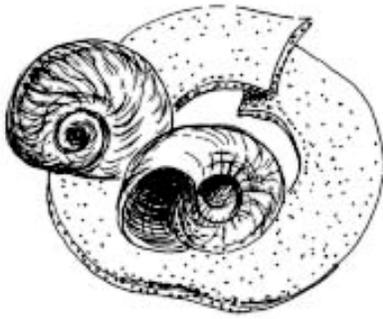


## N.C. Plant and Animal Species Fact Sheets

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### **Moon snail** (*Polinices duplicatus*)

#### **Introduction**

It moves along the sand on the motion of millions of tiny cilia on the bottom of its expansive foot. Moon snails are a univalve or gastropod mollusk which means they only have one shell.

#### **What do they look like?**

They have a single spiral shell which makes them a gastropod. Their shell is smooth and gray to tan. The dark whorl gives it an eye-like appearance. A similar northern species is often called a "Shark Eye."

#### **How big are they?**

1/4" to 5" (0.5 cm - 13cm) in diameter

#### **Where do they live?**

They move about the ocean and sandy estuary bottom.

#### **Who eats them?**

Moon snails are eaten by seastars, oyster drill, fish. To avoid predators they can withdraw completely into their shell. The animal pulls in its body squeezing out the water and has a hard operculum covering on the outer surface. It cannot stay in its shell for long this way because it is such a tight fit that it cannot breathe.

#### **What do they eat?**

This is a predator who searches for shellfish to eat. It drills through the shell using its radula and releases an acidic substance that softens the shell, it then sucks out the body of the clam. It has been known to eat up to 4 clams a day. They eat both bivalve and univalve mollusks including other moon snails.

#### **How do they reproduce?**

Eggs of moon snails are laid in a gelatinous material mixed with sand that wraps around the shell of the parent thus giving them the shape of collars. In time, the egg case crumbles and the larvae are released into the water.

#### **People Interactions**

Not a commercially edible species, most people will just collect their shells washed on the beach or collect shells with one perfect hole in them, a leftover from the earlier prey of the moon snail.

### **EstuaryLive**

[www.EstuaryLive.org](http://www.EstuaryLive.org)

North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve

[www.ncnerr.org](http://www.ncnerr.org) or tel. 252.728.2170

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program

<http://www.apnep.org/> or tel. 252.946.6481

Carolina Estuarine Reserve Foundation

[www.cerf.us](http://www.cerf.us)



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