

Periwinkle snails are considered an indicator species, meaning that if they are healthy, their environment is healthy! Scientists often use periwinkle snails to examine the health of the Elizabeth River.



## Marsh Periwinkle

### *Littoraria irrorata*

**Common Names:** Periwinkle, marsh snail

**Size:** The largest shell size recorded was 1.15 inches

**Lifespan:** About 5 years

**Habitat:** Low-lying tidal marshes on the stalks of marsh grasses (preferring smooth cordgrass). On the Dominion Energy Learning Barge students get up close and personal with periwinkle snails! But *shhhh*, they only come out of their shell if it's quiet.

**Range:** Found on the Atlantic coast from Maine to Texas.

**Diet:** Periwinkles like to graze on the algae that forms on the wetland grasses and ground by the river. As the tide goes up, the periwinkles move up the wetland grasses, and as the tide goes down, the periwinkles go down the grass eating all the algae.



**Appearance:** A cone-shaped shell that usually measures about an inch long with regular grooves that swirl up to the point. They are usually a light gray or tan color

**Predators:** Periwinkles are small creatures so many other animals eat them. Their major predators are fish, blue crabs, and turtles. They are also edible for humans! Just cook them first.

**Voice:** Periwinkles communicate using different chemicals that let other snails know what is their territory and helps them find a friend.

**What can you do?** Participate in Wetlands in the Classroom and plant wetland grasses.

## On-Line Resources

[https://www.chesapeakebay.net/S=0/fieldguide/critter/marsh\\_periwinkle](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/S=0/fieldguide/critter/marsh_periwinkle)

[https://animaldiversity.org/site/accounts/information/Littorina\\_irrorata.htm](https://animaldiversity.org/site/accounts/information/Littorina_irrorata.htm)

[http://cwc.lumcon.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/poster\\_snail.pdf](http://cwc.lumcon.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/poster_snail.pdf)



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