

Freshwater gold clam (*Corbicula fluminea*)



Biosecurity New Zealand
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

The freshwater gold clam (also called the Asian gold clam or Asian clam) is a small shellfish that reproduces rapidly, forming large groups that can clog water pipes and out-compete native species. It was first found in May 2023 in the Waikato River at Bob's Landing near Lake Karāpiro.

About the clam

This shellfish is native to eastern Asia but has become widespread in North and South America and Europe where it has become a pest, breeding rapidly, forming large groups and clogging up electricity generation plants, irrigation systems and water treatment plants. They can potentially compete with native species for food.

Overseas, the freshwater gold clam has proved difficult to control and eradication has never been achieved.

Corbicula fluminea is an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act, which means you must not knowingly move them or water that might contain them.

Biosecurity New Zealand is partnering with mana whenua, the Waikato River Authority, the Waikato Regional Council, Te Papa Atawhai Department of Conservation and Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand to understand and respond to this incursion.

Help us find the clam

Look out for these unusual shellfish. The adult clams are 2–3cm in length and are typically dirty white, yellow or tan in colour.



Freshwater gold clam
Photo: Tracey Burton, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand

They have an obvious ribbed texture on the shell. These clams are found in freshwater or brackish water (near river mouths), sitting on top of sandy or muddy surfaces, or buried shallowly within them.

You may see their shells partly exposed, or syphons (their breathing tube) sticking out from the sediment. They can also be found among debris, such as leaves, that may have settled on the riverbed.



Freshwater gold clams on the riverbed at Bob's Landing, Waikato River –
Photo: Tracey Burton, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand

If you find freshwater gold clam

- note the location
- take a photo if possible – of the clams and also the area around them
- contact Biosecurity New Zealand on 0800 80 99 66
- or complete the online reporting form at <https://report.mpi.govt.nz/>

Do not eat freshwater gold clam

These small shellfish filter-feed and eat deposits from the river or lake bed. Because of this, they can accumulate toxins in their gut.

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Help stop spread – Check Clean Dry

Before moving:

If you move from parts of the Waikato River where *Corbicula fluminea* has been detected to another area where it has not, or any other freshwater environment such as another lake or river, or any brackish water such as an estuary, you must:

Check – for what is visible

Remove any visible matter, including any clams you can see, along with plant material or mud. Drain all river or lake water.

Clean – for what is not visible

Washdown your gear, vehicle, watercraft, and trailer that has been in contact with river or lake water with tap-water onto grass, beside the waterway or at home and not into a stormwater drain system.

For absorbent surfaces and materials that have been in contact with river or lake water (including carpet on trailers and lifejackets) use an appropriate treatment in the treatment options table (top right).

Treat residual water that always occurs when on-board ballast bladders or tanks have been pumped.

Dry – to be sure

Gear: Allow gear to dry to touch, inside and out, then leave it to dry for at least 48 hours (2 days) before using again.

Watercraft: Dry areas inside the watercraft where water has pooled, for example with an old towel, and then leave the craft to dry for at least 48 hours (2 days). The hull of a watercraft will dry when towed.

Note, these steps will also prevent the spread of other freshwater pest species.

Treatment options for gear made of absorbent material

Hot water

Soak in hot tapwater (55°C) for at least 5 minutes

Diluted bleach

Soak in household bleach in a 10% (1 in 10) ratio with water for 1 hour.

Freezing

Until solid (that is, freeze overnight).

Note: Refer to manufacturers' instructions for any treatments on gear.

Similar-looking species

Small freshwater gold clams may look like native pea-clams or small freshwater mussels (kākahi/kāeō). The key features to look for when distinguishing freshwater gold clams are deep ribbing on the shell, the symmetrical shape and colour.

Smaller kākahi can have a similar golden colour and ridges but are more elongated and asymmetrical.

Native pea-clams are pale, very small (generally less than 6 mm), more circular and without the ribbing of gold clams.



Top: Adult kākahi.

Middle: smaller kākahi.

Bottom, left to right: juvenile kākahi; native pea-clam; juvenile freshwater gold clam.

For more information, including any updates, visit: www.biosecurity.govt.nz/clam