

## Freshwater Mussels

### *Velesunio ambiguus*



#### Water Quality

Freshwater mussels are equally comfortable in tropical or cold water.

They are not fussy about the type of water they live in, they have a wide temperature tolerance, as long as it is relatively unpolluted and oxygen rich.

Freshwater Mussels are an interesting natural way to help filter the water in your aquarium or fishbowl. Mussels feed by filtering the water, removing tiny particles such as detritus and single cell algae ("green water"), thereby helping keep the water clear and clean.

#### Feeding

Feeding and breathing is accomplished by sucking water and micro-organisms in through openings between the shells. The result of this is extremely clear water as the mussel acts as a living filter. The gills are situated inside the bivalves.

#### General Information

There are many species of Freshwater mussels and they make interesting aquarium subjects. They are protected by two shells (Bivalves) hinged by a tough, elastic membrane. They move about by protruding a broad, tongue-shaped muscle (the foot) into the sand, then pulling themselves slowly forward. This process may dislodge plants in newly set up aquariums.

They are best known in the aquarium hobby for their role in protecting and incubating eggs of the popular Bitterling, which lay their eggs in the breathing opening of the mussel.

They are not fussy about the type of water they live in, as long as it is not polluted - anything your fish are comfortable in should be fine for a Mussel.

Mussels like to partially bury themselves in the aquarium substrate, leaving themselves only partly exposed – therefore using a fine sand or gravel is preferable to using a coarse gravel substrate.

If medicating a tank containing Mussels, it is best to temporarily remove the Mussels to another aquarium or holding container, as Mussels have a lower tolerance than fish to fish medications (especially copper). Return them to the tank when the medication has been completed and the treatment has been neutralised (eg by water changes or using activated carbon).