

Mussel Fossils (Mollusca Pelecypoda)

In Alabama 179 of 307 freshwater mussel species are recorded. With so many rivers and streams in the state, there are many places to fossil hunt. We sometimes find mussel fossils in our creek. Sometimes they appear to be just beginning to fossilize.

Mussels belong to same class as clams, oysters, cockles and scallops; bivalved Mollusks. Dependent on your source, this class may be referred to as Pelecypoda, Bivalva, Bivalvia, Acephala and just for kicks, Lamelibranchia. Why so many names for this class? I guess we wouldn't be sufficiently impressed otherwise. It can be frustrating trying to figure out just what the heck it is you've got 'til you catch on to this little trick.

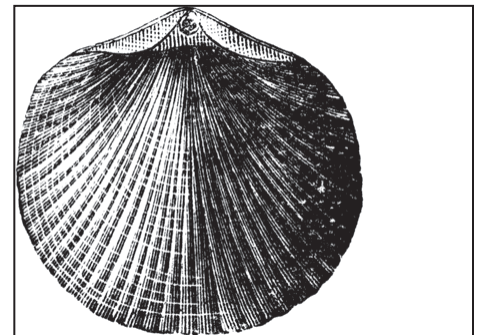
If this isn't enough, a serious fossil hunter should be aware of the difference between bivalved Mollusks (Pelecypods) and Brachiopods, bivalved animals which aren't Mollusks. Well, it's really simple. Brachiopods are unequivocal. Pelecypods are equivalved. To quote Wikipedia on another difference, *In brachiopods, the two valves are on the dorsal and ventral surfaces of the body, while in bivalves, they are on the left and*

right sides.

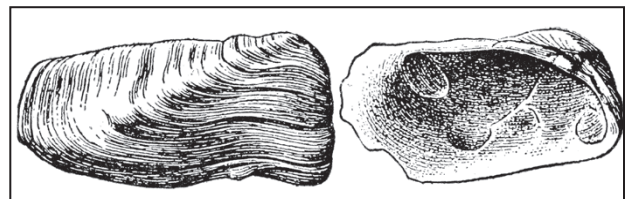
If you care about all this, I'm impressed. If you just want to go look for fossils and don't really give a Lamelibranchia about the technical details...shame on you.

According to Lost Worlds in Alabama Rocks (Lacefield), Mollusk fossils may be found in the Valley and Ridge geologic region and in shales and mudstones of the Red Mountain Formation. Lacefield classifies them as Early Paleozoic.

-Anita Bean



Brachiopod



Pelecypod

*I saw you toss the kites on high
And blow the birds about the sky;
And all around I heard you pass,
Like ladies' skirts across the grass--
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!*

*O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!*

A Child's Garden of Verses
Robert Louis Stevenson

*I saw the different things you did,
But always you yourself you hid.
I felt you push, I heard you call,
I could not see yourself at all--
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!*

*O you that are so strong and cold,
O blower, are you young or old?
Are you a beast of field and tree,
Or just a stronger child than me?*

