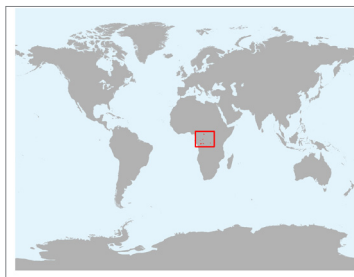




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Geographical range

Amazing Species: *Chelidonopsis hirundo*

Chelidonopsis hirundo is currently ranked as 'Least Concern' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. This freshwater mussel is endemic to the Congo River basin. Although this bivalve has a large area of occurrence, it is best known nowadays only from its shells in museum collections. However, live specimens were found in 2006 near Brazzaville by “pollywogging” the soft sediments overlaying the hard sand of Malebo Pool.

We know of no specific threats to *Chelidonopsis hirundo*. However, Malebo Pool itself is threatened by changes to the surrounding catchment due to mining and deforestation, and general conservation efforts in the upper Congo basin continue to be impacted by civil unrest. Because the larvae of freshwater mussels are obligate parasites (i.e., require a suitable host to complete its life cycle) of freshwater fishes, overfishing is also a potential threat.

The greatest threat to *Chelidonopsis hirundo*, and the more than 80 other freshwater mussels in Africa, is ignorance of species distributions, life histories and evolutionary relationships. Especially needed are studies to determine the host fish of species like *Chelidonopsis hirundo*, to better understand the ecological relationships among freshwater mussels and other aquatic organisms.

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