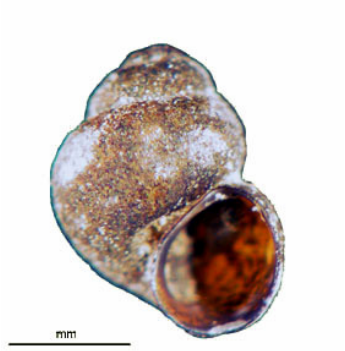
Fontigens morrisoni
Hershler, Holsinger, & Hubricht 1990

a springsnail



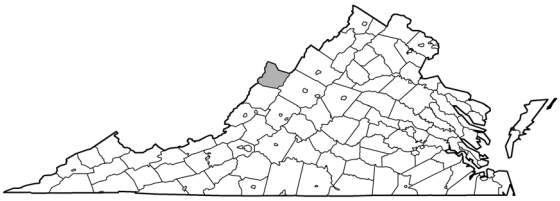
Taxonomy & Systematics. The Hydrobiidae is a diverse group in the worldwide Superfamily Rissoacea - prosobranch gastropods typically small in body size, shallow or even amphibious in their habit, bearing cusps around the base of their median radular tooth. Sexes are separate in almost all cases, eggs being laid singly and attached in a spare capsule to solid substrates. The penis arises from the neck. Hydrobiids are distinguished from their two sister groups in freshwater, the Bithyniidae and the Pomatiopsidae, by the calcareous operculum of the former and the amphibious life habit of the latter.

Like other members of the hydrobiid subfamily Fontigentinae, *F. morrisoni* bears a rather striking triply-ducted penis. *Fontigens morrisoni* is among the rarer and more obscure of the nine species monographed by Hershler and colleagues. The shell (adult length 2 - 3 mm) is relatively broader and more triangular than those born by the other Virginia *Fontigens*.

Habitat & Distribution. This small hydrobiid is apparently endemic to Bath and Highland Counties of Virginia. Hershler reported *Fontigens morrisoni* from two springs and two caves in the area, although at least one of the cave localities is obscure. The springs at Mustoe seem to support high densities of *F. morrisoni*, on vegetation and organic debris. But population densities become rapidly attenuated downstream, as though dependent on constant temperature or some other unique aspect of the spring environment.

Ecology & Life History. We are not aware of any good study on the life history of *Fontigens*. But populations typically seem to maintain high densities year round, as though reproduction might be continuous. The springs inhabited by *F. morrisoni* seem to be rich and hard.

Conservation Status. State Endangered
Virginia Wildlife Action Plan Tier I - Critical Conservation Need
NatureServe G1/S1 - Critically Imperiled.



Prepared by Robert T. Dillon, Jr., College of Charleston, SC.