



**WESTERN
AUSTRALIAN
MUSEUM**

Attention editor/chief of staff

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WA's "little disc of happiness" makes top five in global mollusc competition

Australians are invited to vote for rare full moon clam found only along our southern coast.

A tiny clam that lives under rocks in shallow and subtidal Western Australian bays is now competing on the world stage.

The moon clam, *Ehippodonta lunata*, has been named a Top Five finalist in the international Mollusc of the Year competition, with public voting open from **13 to 25 April**.

The annual global competition celebrates the remarkable diversity of molluscs, from snails and slugs to clams and octopus, highlighting their unique characteristics and fascination worldwide.

Found only along Australia's temperate southern coastline, this minute species lives a hidden life within sponge tubes lining the underside of rocks in often shallow habitats near seagrass. Unlike other clams, it has remodelled its protective shells into delicate sensory "wings" lined with papillae (muscle-driven projections that expand and retract).

The female moon clam glides across the seafloor with her shells open, possibly carrying a tiny male on her back, a behaviour rarely seen in other clams.

Dr Lisa Kirkendale, Head of Aquatic Zoology at the WA Museum, describes the first time she found a healthy population as unforgettable.

"I flipped over a rock in a subtidal bay, and they were scattered underneath like mini snowflakes on a yellow sponge," she said.

"They're little discs of happiness. You don't expect something so small to bring such joy, yet they reveal something special about how life can exist within two valves."

Originally from Canada, Dr Kirkendale says working in Western Australia is a dream for scientists driven by discovery.

"This species exists nowhere else in the world. Western Australia's marine biodiversity is exceptional, and this little clam is a wonderful example of that," she said.

The winner of International Mollusc of the Year is decided by public vote. The prize is whole genome sequencing of the winning species, providing valuable scientific insight, along with the global recognition that comes with the title.

"This is a chance for Australians to support a uniquely Australian species," Dr Kirkendale said.

"If you love our coastlines and our biodiversity, cast a vote for our moon clam."

Voting opens 13 April and closes 25 April 2026.

Cast your vote [here](#).

Learn about the *Ehippodonta lunata* [here](#).

Learn more about the competition: <https://www.unitasmalacologica.org/mollusc-of-the-year-2026.html>

Interviews available upon request.

High-Resolution images can be downloaded via the Dropbox Link:
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/966ic1pkp7o568civ7i6x/ANoWCslQ0xqg5xs3-Z7pvrE?rlkey=b44lsz52bm057mri2kriircur&st=81wmj2at&dl=0>

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