



Menetus dilatatus (Gould 1841)

bugle sprite



Taxonomy & Systematics. The Planorbidae is the most diverse family of basommatophoran pulmonates, including hundreds of species in perhaps 30-40 genera worldwide. The gill has been lost, leaving respiration to occur across the entire mantle cavity, as is true for pulmonates in general. The ability of pulmonate snails to enfold an air bubble within this cavity can be seen as an adaptation to the colonization of warm or stagnant freshwaters, where the concentration of dissolved oxygen may be reduced.

Planorbids are hermaphroditic, as is also true for pulmonates in general; typically capable of self-fertilization and laying eggs in circular egg masses with a tough outer covering. But the sinistral, typically planispiral axis of shell coiling, together with other derived aspects of their anatomy, suggests that the Planorbidae may be among the most recently-evolved of the basommatophoran pulmonates.

The specific nomen "*brogniartianus*" is a synonym of *M. dilatatus*. Baker split the genus *Menetus* into a typical subgenus *Menetus* (s.s.) and a subgenus *Micromenetus*, moving *dilatatus*, *brogniartianus*, and three other nominal species into *Micromenetus*. A recent initiative to raise Baker's subgenus *Micromenetus* to the full genus level was neither justified nor justifiable, although VDGIF followed.

Habitat & Distribution. *Menetus dilatatus* is among the most widespread gastropods in our study area, commonly found in ponds, swamps, and the quiet margins of rivers throughout the Piedmont and Coastal Plain, extending sporadically into the Blue Ridge, especially on vegetation and woody debris. Populations seem to be able to tolerate more acidic water quality, and may be found in darker creeks and swamps in the lowcountry. Elsewhere *M. dilatatus* ranges broadly through the eastern U.S. from Florida and Texas north to Maine but not (surprisingly) into Canada.

Ecology & Life History. Jokinen reported three generations per year in a Connecticut population of *M. dilatatus*, the first generation reproducing iteroparously, the next two semelparous. Her larger-scale survey suggested that populations of the species tended to inhabit poor or peripheral environments, perhaps evidence of a Stress-tolerating life history adaptation.

Conservation Status. NatureServe G5/S5 - Secure.

