

Summary: Alison Tarter, Unionoida (Freshwater Mussels)

In 2017 Alison Tarter was funded for “*Freshwater mussel biodiversity survey within the Big Thicket National Preserve*” with funds to come from TCEQ mitigation monies. The original budget had to be revised to comply with TCEQ limitations. \$12,480 was approved. This work built on past ToD researchers and was part of study conducted for a Master’s thesis at Texas State University under the guidance of Dr. Astrid N. Schwalb.

Natural disasters impacted flooding causing high water levels. In 2018 Tarter filed a No Cost Extension that was approved. Once water levels became safe, Tarter was able to continue the survey safely. Texas State University did not permit her to inventory alone. Mona Halvorsen assisted as did gyninid researcher, Edward Realzola.

Outreach was quality. For a short period of time, Tarter was employed by the Big Thicket Association as the Environmental Educator. She guided student field trips including several for Kountze High School. She presented a Science Café, and various media releases were published.

Tarter successfully completed her thesis:

“Distribution of Unionid Mussels in the Big Thicket Region of Texas”

All required documentation and data were submitted to the NPS and ToD as required. The 2017 project is now closed.

In 2018 Tarter submitted a second proposal, “*Freshwater mussel biodiversity survey and evaluation of population response to catastrophic flooding within the Big Thicket National Preserve (part2).*”

It was approved for funding for \$12,480 to again be in line with TCEQ guidelines. The project was completed and all funds expended, Summer 2022.

Submitted by: Mary Catherine Johnston, Oct. 28, 2020 edited Oct. 22, 2022.

In 2026, ToD Chair Mary C. Johnston and Intern, Natalia Doiron, reviewed records. The documented 32 species is the result of combined studies by Boensch, May, Burgess, Neil Ford, David Ford, and Symond.

Tarter previously assisted Johnston with the final count as the nomenclature of standard changes complicated the listing of species names. The 32 reflects accurate listing of names.

Tarter hesitated to include *Strophitus undulatus* in the list as she did not feel it was verified. ToD chose to include it as it had been identified in a previous study by another researcher.

Submitted by: Mary C. Johnston, April 2026