



## STUDENT VERSION A

### SNAILS IN A TIDE POOL

Lisa Driskell

Department of Computer Science,  
Mathematics, and Statistics  
Colorado Mesa University  
Grand Junction CO USA

Audrey Malagon

Department of Mathematics and  
Computer Science  
Virginia Wesleyan College  
Norfolk VA USA

#### STATEMENT

After the tide rises and then falls, tide pools that occasionally trap mollusks and other organisms are left in the sand or rocks. Because the volume of the tide pool is small, the sun heats the tide pool at a much faster rate than it heats the ocean. Mollusks are ectothermic organisms, which means their body temperature matches the temperature of their environment. Thus, the temperature of the mollusk starts at the initial water temperature of the ocean. After the tide recedes and leaves a tide pool and snail behind, the snail warms along with the water in the tide pool. Typically snails remain in a tide pool for approximately 3 to 4 hours without any new water being added to cool the pool. The purpose of this project is to use differential equations to model a snail's temperature change and to determine whether it reaches its upper lethal body temperature while in the tide pool.

#### Part I. Modeling Water Temperature in a Tide Pool

The data in Table 1 includes water temperature recorded from a simulated tide pool with mud snails. Our goal is to create a model for how the water temperature  $T$  changes with time. The water may not change at a perfectly constant rate, but one model we want to use is one in which  $\frac{dT}{dt}$  is constant.

1. Use Excel or a graphing calculator to plot the data.
2. Assuming the water temperature changes at a constant rate  $w$ , give an appropriate value for  $w$  based on the data in Table 1. Justify your value in your lab report.

$t$ (minutes)	$T$ (degrees Celsius)
0	28.7
7	31.1
12	31.9
19	32.7
32	34.2
37	34.7
43	34.9
53	35.4
60	35.8

**Table 1.** Tide pool water temperatures,  $T$ , as recorded from a simulated tide pool.

3. Use the value  $w$  you found, along with the initial value given in the table, to solve the initial value problem below.

$$\frac{dT}{dt} = w, \quad T(0) = T_0$$

where  $T(t)$  is the temperature of the tide pool water in degrees Celsius at time  $t$  in minutes.

4. Plot your solution  $T = T(t)$  with the data and include this plot along with the function  $T = T(t)$  in your lab report.

Is the equation you gave for  $T$  a reasonable model for water temperature based on the data? What other models might work? Write ideas here with your group and include a summary of this discussion in your lab report.

## Part II. Modeling the Body Temperature of a Snail

According to [2], the upper lethal body temperature of an amphibious snail is between 40 and 45 degrees Celsius. NOAA weather data shows that typical water temperatures in the summer months for the mid-Atlantic coast range from 23.9 to 29.4 degrees Celsius [1]. For this part, we will assume the snail's body temperature matches the surrounding water temperature in the tide pool and use  $S = S(t)$  to denote the internal temperature of the snail in degrees Celsius at time  $t$  in minutes.

1. Create a model for the snail's temperature,  $S(t)$ , using information from Part I and include in your lab report.
2. Find the amount of time it will take for the snail's temperature to reach the range of the upper lethal body temperature according to your model and include this in your lab report.

3. Using the same rate  $w$  from Part I, find the maximum initial water temperature  $T_0$  that will allow a snail to survive in a 4-hour tide pool. (Pay attention to units.) Does the maximum allowable  $T_0$  fall into the range of typical water temperatures for the mid-Atlantic coast? Discuss the implications of your findings in your lab report.

Do you think it is realistic to assume the snail's body temperature would be the same as the water temperature? Why or why not? Write a section of your lab report that answers these questions.

### Part III. Modeling Snail Temperature with Shell Insulation

Most mollusks have shells for protection which may also provide some insulation from the heat of the water. As a result, their internal temperature may change at a different rate than the water. In 2015, biology and mathematics faculty at the SIMIODE East Developer's workshop (held at Virginia Wesleyan College in Norfolk, VA on the mid-Atlantic coast) collected snails and measured their body temperatures along with water temperature in a simulated tide pool. They found that during each temperature reading (after the initial reading), the temperature of the snail was cooler than the surrounding water. According to Newton's Law of Cooling (or heating up here!), the rate of change of the temperature of the snail is proportional to the difference between the temperature of the water and the temperature of the snail. Here we will create a new model for  $\frac{dS}{dt}$  which accounts for the insulating factor of the shell.

1. Create a differential equation for the snail's temperature  $S = S(t)$  using  $\frac{dS}{dt}$  and Newton's Law of Cooling. Use the the water temperature model,  $T$ , from Part I and constant of proportionality  $k$ .
2. Solve your (linear) differential equation, recalling that the initial temperature of the snail may be assumed to be the same as the initial temperature of the water.
3. During the snail experiment, it was determined that after 51 minutes the temperature of the snail was 33.6 degrees Celsius. Use this information to determine  $k$ . This should involve solving an algebraic equation that you can't do by hand; you may use WolframAlpha.com or a computer algebra system for assistance in determining a value for  $k$ .
4. Graph  $S(t)$  along with  $T(t)$ . How does the snail's temperature compare to the water temperature? Is the shell providing significant insulation? How long can the mollusk remain in the tide pool before it reaches its upper lethal body temperature? Does the snail reach its upper lethal body temperature before new cool water arrives at the tide pool?
5. Review the assumptions you used to build the model for  $\frac{dS}{dt}$ . Do you still believe these assumptions are realistic?

In your report, give your model for  $\frac{dS}{dt}$  with both its analytic and graphical solutions. Write paragraphs that answer all questions. Specifically, be sure to describe how the temperature of the snail changes in comparison to the temperature of the water and to discuss the validity of your model so far.

#### Part IV. Analysis of Models and Further Questions

In Part III we examined the validity of our model and here we explore alternative models.

1. Discuss whether or not it is realistic to assume that water temperature increases at a constant rate for the entire duration of the tide pool. Consider all factors that might affect water temperature.
2. Create a non-constant model for water temperature in a tide pool during the afternoon before the next tide based on the data in Part I. How does changing your temperature model affect the differential equation for  $\frac{dS}{dt}$ ? Is it still a linear differential equation? (You do not need to solve for  $S$  using the new model.)
3. Suppose the water temperature in the tide pool levels off after a certain time. What conditions on  $T(t)$  would be needed for the snail to survive in this case? Sketch by hand a graph of  $T(t)$  and  $S(t)$  in this scenario, keeping in mind Newton's Law of Cooling.

Write a section of your lab report that includes the answers to these questions

#### REFERENCES

- [1] National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. 2016. *Water Temperature Table of All Coastal Regions*. Available at [https://www.nodc.noaa.gov/dsdt/cwtg/all\\_meanT.html](https://www.nodc.noaa.gov/dsdt/cwtg/all_meanT.html). Accessed August 2016.
- [2] Burky, Albert J., Pacheco, and Eugenia Pereyra. 1972. Temperature, Water, and Respiratory Regimes of a an amphibious snail *Pomacea Urceus (Muller)* from the Venezuelan Savannah. *Biological Bulletin*. 143:304-316.