



Lake George Association

People Protecting the Lake Since 1885

December 21, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Emily DeBolt
Director of Education
Lake George Association
Phone: (518) 668-5595

There is no 'Off' Season when working with Invasive Species

Lake George, NY – Even though the summer season is over, for those of us who work with invasive species issues, it is on our minds year-round, and the “off” season provides us with a chance to catch our breath and look back at what we have learned over the summer. For starters, this past summer was a bit of a reality check for the Adirondack Park. Despite all the resources going to invasive species prevention, detection, and management, they are still making inroads. As Hilary Smith, Director of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP), shared with us at the November APIPP partners meeting, there was a record occurrence of yellow iris, worsening infestations of phragmites, and new lakes invaded by Eurasian watermilfoil this past summer. The invasion of Lake Placid by variable-leaf milfoil upped its status to an invasive plant for the Park and the first occurrence of brittle naiad in the Park was found as well. There is an increasing demand for management and resources that can't be met.

If you didn't run into a lake steward this past summer, or haven't heard anything about it, the Lake George Lake Steward Program is an invasive species education and spread prevention program. We are not only interested in preventing the spread of new species into Lake George, but we also don't want to send any of our Eurasian watermilfoil to any of our neighbors as well – so it works both ways. The good news is that the lake stewards made 75 “saves” this past summer, finding and removing invasive species from boats that were about to enter Lake George. However, the not so good news is that out of the 3,885 boats that they inspected, 553 of those had been in a body of water other than Lake George within the past 2 weeks. That means that these boats are “at risk” for transporting hitchhikers onboard. Not to mention boats launching at launches where there was not a steward and also boats launching at covered launches at times when the stewards are not on duty. No, the lake stewards cannot protect Lake George from new invasive species all on their own. They are a good first line of defense, but they need back up from all of us.



Lake Steward Monika LaPlante shows one of the samples from this past summer.

Inspecting boats and removing anything they find is really just the day-to-day happenings of the program. The stewards also talk to the boaters about invasive species, and educate them about what they can do to help protect not only Lake George but also all the waterbodies that they visit. This educational piece of the program is really the meat and potatoes of it all. What we are hoping to do is change people's behaviors and make cleaning your boat in between waterbodies as second nature as brushing your teeth when you get up in the morning.

For instance, even with the stewards working this summer, we had a new invasive species found in the lake. Larry Eichler of the Darrin Freshwater Institute identified brittle naiad (*Najas minor*) growing near the launch at Dunham's Bay Marina. We don't know the extent of this plant's growth in the lake yet, but it is a safe bet to say that there probably just isn't one. This plant was also recently identified in Hadlock Pond this summer as well. These are the first occurrences of this invasive species inside the Adirondack Park.

In the fall of 2008, spiny waterflea, an invasive zooplankton that affects the food web and ultimately a lake's fishery, was found in nearby Great Sacandaga Lake. It is tiny, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch long, and could easily be missed by a visual inspection of a boat. We have also just recently found out that spiny waterflea was also found in Pecks Lake to the west of Great Sacandaga in 2008 as well. Currently, there is no known way to remove it from a lake, you can't pull it like you can with milfoil, so know these two lakes right near us are essentially breeding grounds for this unwanted invader. There is also concern that it could move out of the lake through the Hudson River, into the Glens Falls Feeder Canal, and up the Champlain Canal into Lake Champlain. Installing a barrier of some sort in the Glens Feeder Canal is being researched. Lake George is lucky in this aspect; as we are not connected to another body of water that can send us invasive species. It is really the boats at launches that are the source. And this is something that we can all do something about!

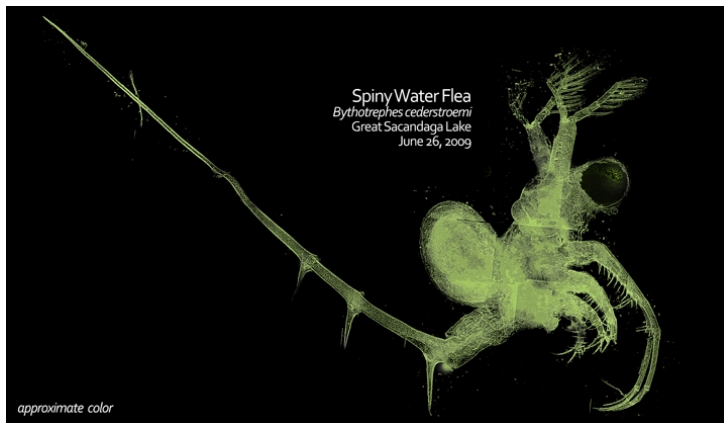


Photo by Darrin Fresh Water Institute.

If you can't let your boat dry for 2 weeks, a proper cleaning is very important. You can go to www.ProtectYourWaters.net for details on how to properly clean your boat or any equipment that comes in contact with the water. Not all invasive species are big clumps of plants that you can pick off your trailer. The spiny waterflea is tiny, and the juvenile stage of a zebra mussel, called a veliger, is microscopic. You might have even heard of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia – better known as VHS, an invasive fish virus. You definitely can't see a virus. I recently attended a talk by Paul Bowser, PhD, a professor of aquatic animal medicine in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University. He shared with us that around 28 freshwater fish species seem to be susceptible, there is no treatment for the virus, and it is considered the most serious fish disease world-wide right now. Smallmouth bass, rainbow trout, walleye, and other fish have all fallen victim to it just to name a few. It was first found in Lake Ontario in 2005 and has since been spreading in the Great Lakes region. It has been found in New York in the St. Lawrence River, Skaneateles Lake, the Seneca-Cayuga Canal, and Conesus Lake. Most of this you can read about on the DEC website, but here is what Dr. Bowser shared with us that I hadn't heard before. The virus can last for several weeks in the water, and it tends to persist longer in colder and cleaner water. So even if everyone followed the new baitfish regulations that the NYSDEC enacted to try to stop the spread of this virus it could still spread in the water!

I recently had the chance to speak with some colleagues that also run lake steward programs at the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) Conference in Hartford, CT. Eric Holmlund runs the Paul Smiths Watershed Stewardship Program, which had stewards on 8 lakes this past summer. Meg Modley heads up the Lake Steward Program for Lake Champlain, which covered 9 launches on the lake. Between all three of our programs, over 17,000 boats were inspected, around 40,000 people were educated about invasive species and how to help stop their spread, and just under 500 “saves” of removing an invasive species from a boat were made.

If you work in this field, it can be easy to get overwhelmed by all the constant threats of new invasions and to forget about the victories we have and the positive messages that are out there. And by now you might be wondering the very same thing yourself. Chances are that the lake stewards aren't going to be able to catch a virus in the water. But if we all clean our boats, and educate our friends and neighbors about cleaning their boats as well, we can do our part. Especially if you are an owner of a marina or launch, you have the ability to make sure that only clean boats are launched at your facility. Everyone can also keep an eye out for new or unusual plants growing along their

shoreline. Every summer APIPP runs training programs for volunteers to learn how to monitor their shorelines for invasive plants. And DFWI has an aquatic plant identification program so if you have a plant that you think may be Eurasian watermilfoil, you can drop it off and they will identify it for you. And if you don't have a brick hanging off your dock, you should, so that you can help keep an eye on the zebra mussels in the lake and help in their early detection and removal. If we all work together to spread the word about invasive species and how we can help stop their spread, we really can make a difference. And that is good news.

The LGA is a not-for-profit membership organization of people interested in working together to protect, conserve, and improve the beauty and quality of the Lake George Basin. For more information, contact the LGA at (518) 668-3558 or check out LGA on the web at www.lakegeorgeassociation.org.



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™

Prevent the transport of nuisance species.
Clean all recreational equipment.
www.ProtectYourWaters.net

When you leave a body of water:

- Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting equipment.
- Eliminate water from equipment before transporting.
- Clean and dry anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.).
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.