

THIS INVASIVE SPECIES HAS BEEN FOUND IN LAKE GEORGE, BUT IS NOT WIDESPREAD

ZEBRA MUSSELS

Zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) are an invasive mollusk found in Lake George that can affect every organism within the lake. Zebra mussels are amazing filter feeders. Its main food source is the same as juvenile fish; they filter phytoplankton, zooplankton, and detritus from the water thereby stripping the water column of a food source. Since zebra mussels were first discovered in Lake George in 1999, zebra mussels have been found in eight new colonies, but a large breeding population is not known to have become established.

Scientific evidence suggests that the calcium levels within Lake George are not suitable to support mussel growth to adult stage. However, the increased amount of runoff from development may alter the conditions and enable full colonization in the future.

Zebra mussels can impact humans.



Zebra Mussels are found nearby in Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. A few infestations have been found in Lake George.

They clog water intake pipes, and attach to docks, the hulls of boats and to any hard underwater surface. They produce sharp shells that can wash up onto sandy beaches, thus altering property values and recreational practices. Dense colonies could also destroy important historical shipwrecks in the lake.

Zebra mussels get their name from the dark brown-black and white stripes on its shells. They are D shaped and typically the size of a fingernail, but may reach two inches in length. Zebra mussels are native to Eastern Europe and Asia, primarily the Black and Caspian seas. They secrete durable elastic strands called byssal fibers, which

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Zebra Mussels

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can glue the mussel to hard objects.

A zebra mussel starts its life as newly hatched larvae called veligers. These veligers are tiny and will drift near the surface of the water. As they grow they settle to the bottom and will attach to a non-toxic hard surface. During the short (3 week) veliger stage, they are often introduced into new bodies of water through boat bilges, live wells, bait buckets, scuba equipment and kayak floatation compartments.

An adult zebra mussel requires sufficient levels of calcium to form its shell. The adults prefer waters rich in algae, are found in depths of 6 to 30 feet, and can live for 2 to 5 years. The adults can filter one liter of water every 24 hours, release millions of eggs and sperm throughout the summer, and can survive out of water for up to two weeks in moist conditions. Boats and trailers are the primary means of introduction of adult zebra mussels. Currently, zebra mussels are widespread in Lake Champlain and the Hudson River.

An effective way to permanently eliminate infestations has not been found; emphasis must be on prevention. [Here are the best ways to prevent the spread of zebra mussels to Lake George.](#)



Zebra Mussels can affect every organism that lives within the lake.

- Drain all bilge water, live wells; bait buckets and any other water from equipment, engine or boats before leaving a body of water;
- Inspect boat hull, trailer, prop, anchor, etc., and scrape off any suspected mussels;
- Wash boat hull, trailer, etc., before moving to a different body of water.; and,
- Dry your boat and trailer in the sun for 5 to 7 days before moving between bodies of water.

We need your help to protect Lake George from invasive species.

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