

Otsego Lake group warns of new invasive mussel

https://www.thedailystar.com/news/local_news/otsego-lake-group-warns-of-new-invasive-mussel/article_057aa955-4918-502d-906a-6946d8ef7d8c.html

- By Greg Klein Staff Writer
- Sep 17, 2020 Updated Sep 26, 2020



Greg Klein | The Daily Star An unidentified boat speeds past Kingfisher Tower during the Otsego Lake Association's Fourth of July Boat Parade. OLA announced Sunday, Sept. 13, that invasive quagga mussels have been found in the lake for the first time.

Otsego Lake has a new invasive species, quagga mussels, according to a Facebook post by the Otsego Lake Association.

"Random sample taken in Otsego Lake, and it is with sad news, that the lake now has an invasive species," according to the post from Sunday, Sept. 13. "These mussels assist the zebra mussels, another invasive species. The quagga mussels like the cold waters, and can be found in the deepest parts of the lake, unlike the zebra mussels. Quagga mussels will disrupt the food chain. Our lake is at risk for hazardous algae

blooms, which are hazardous to humans and animals and when this occurs, there is no swimming allowed."

SUNY Oneonta Biological Field Station Director Willard Harman said the discovery is a cause for concern but not for panic.

"It can change the dynamic of the fisheries," he said. "It certainly has been happening in the Great Lakes, but you can't leave it at that simple an explanation because there are plenty of quagga in the Great Lakes, but there are certainly still fish in the Great Lakes, too."

In general, Harman said, the quagga can affect the food supply in the middle and top layers of a water body in a negative way while also increasing the food supply at the bottom of a lake.

However, because the quagga thrive in deeper and colder water, it can be a more pervasive threat than the zebra mussels, Harman said. Otsego Lake is a deep-water lake with only a small layer of shallow water around it, he said, which means it is a much better habitat for quagga mussels than it is for zebra mussels.

"The area a zebra mussel can live in is just a thin layer," Harman said. "Quagga mussels can be anywhere."

According to the United State Department of Agriculture's National Invasive Species Information Center, quagga mussels come from the Dnieper River basin in Ukraine. The mussels first appeared in the United States in 1989 in the Great Lakes and spread through ballast water discharge.

Quagga "alters (the) food web by filtering water and removing plankton," according to the USDA.

The lake association release said boat owners can stop the spread of quagga and zebra mussels by being "diligent about having ALL watercraft ... washed BEFORE entering the lake and to remind visitors, renters, family members and friends to bring their boats to the village (Cooperstown) to have their boats properly washed."

The state Department of Environmental Conservation has offered similar guidelines to boat owners to help stop the spread of invasive mussels, including: checking boats and fishing equipment for invasive species; cleaning any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting equipment; draining all water holding compartments including ballast tanks, live well and bilge areas before leaving a lake area; drying boats, trailers and all equipment before use in another water body; disinfecting anything that came into contact with water if it cannot be dried before reuse; and visiting a decontamination station before and after using a water body.

Go to tinyurl.com/yyxgorme for more information.

Greg Klein, staff writer, can be reached at gklein@thedailystar.com or 607-441-7218.