

THIS INVASIVE SPECIES IS NOW FOUND IN LAKE GEORGE.

# SPINY WATER FLEA

UPDATED FEBRUARY 2014

Spiny water flea (*Bythotrephes longimanus*) a zooplankton crustacean that is native to Europe and Asia, has been introduced to Lake George and could decimate fish and zooplankton populations by altering the structure of the lake's food web. Spiny water flea were first introduced to the Great Lakes by the dumping of ballast water. It invaded Lake Ontario in 1982, Lake Heron in 1984 and the rest of the Great Lakes by 1987. The continued spread could have detrimental effects on food web stability in many freshwater lakes.

Adult spiny water flea range in size from 1/4 - 5/8 of an inch long. They have a single long tail that contains three sets of barbs on it. The barbs protect it from predators. Spiny water fleas have one large eye, which is usually black or red and 4 pairs of legs.



Spiny water flea, has been introduced into Lake George can alter the structure of the food web.

A majority of the population is female and is capable of asexual reproduction as well as sexual reproduction. Spiny water flea reproduce quickly, up to 10 offspring female "clones" every 2 weeks will be produced during the active stage from spring till early fall. The eggs that are produced can resist drying, freezing, being eaten by fish, and can remain dormant for long periods of time. Eggs, over winter and will hatch in the spring when the water temperature reaches 52 degrees.

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# Spiny Water Flea

## LAKE GEORGE FACT SHEET

Adult spiny water flea eat zooplankton including daphnia and phytoplankton, which are an important food source to native fish. Adults will resemble a gelatinous mass on fishing equipment, or anchor lines. They have been known to clog eyelets of fishing rods thereby making landing a fish difficult. Spiny water flea can eliminate zooplankton species within a body of water and out compete species of fish for food. Only some larger fish are able to feed on them. The spiny water flea could have negative effects on smelt, perch and juvenile fish populations.

Spiny water flea are spread by attaching themselves to fishing lines, anchor ropes, fishing nets, canoes and kayaks as well as water found within bait buckets, live wells, and bilge water of boats. Currently there is no successful means of control or eradication of the spiny water flea, prevention is the only method to stop the spread.



Spiny water flea foul fishing equipment, making the landing of fish difficult.

- **Check equipment:** Remove all gelatinous material from fishing lines, boats, trailers and equipment.
- **Drain equipment:** Be sure to drain water from bait buckets, live wells, and bilge before moving to another body of water.
- **Dry equipment:** Be sure to dry equipment for a minimum of 48 hours, 5 days is recommended.
- **Disinfect equipment:** All equipment, bilge areas, live wells and bait buckets should be disinfected.

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