


The Top 10

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES *in Lake Erie*



Invasive species are plants and animals that come into an area that is outside of where they originally lived. In Lake Erie, some invasive species have been introduced accidentally from ballast water from cargo ships, some have come in through canals, and some have even been brought in on purpose as food or decoration.

Invasive species are often aggressive and may not have any natural predators in their new environment, so they tend to spread or reproduce quickly and push out other native plants or animals.

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES



Zebra Mussel

How They Got Here: Ballast water

What They Do: Zebra mussels like to live in big groups and can clog up pipes and engines by growing inside them. They attach to surfaces by using little Velcro-like hairs called byssal threads. Their shells are very sharp and can cut your feet, especially if a lot of them wash up on the beach.

How to Control Them: Clean and dry your equipment anytime you're using it in the water. If you have a boat, make sure to remove any plants or animals from it before taking it home. Only drain your boat or bait bucket on land so tiny mussel larva can't get into a new, uninfested place.

Quagga Mussel

How They Got Here: Ballast water

What They Do: Quagga mussels are the bigger, more aggressive cousins of zebra mussels and do the same kind of damage. They have pushed out their cousins in some parts of the lake, like the Western Basin.

How to Control Them: Just like with zebra mussels, clean and dry your equipment after using it, and be sure to carefully inspect your boat to remove plants and animals before taking it home. When you drain your boat or bait bucket, do it on land.



Round Goby

How They Got Here: Ballast water

What They Do: Round gobies are aggressive little fish that like to eat the eggs of much bigger fish, especially smallmouth bass. One good thing about them: they also eat zebra and quagga mussels, but not enough to keep the mussel population under control.

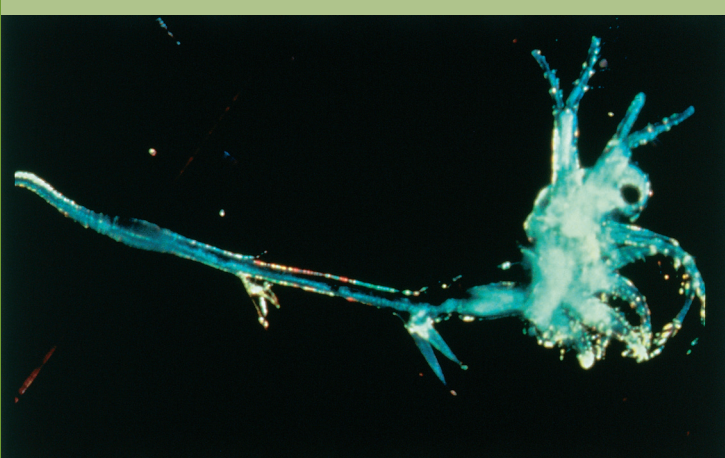
How to Control Them: If you like to fish, make sure you're not using round gobies as bait and empty your bait bucket on land. Don't take them out of their environment, not even to put them in your aquarium at home.

Spiny European Water Flea

How They Got Here: Ballast water

What They Do: Spiny water fleas are the bigger of the two invasive water fleas. They have long, barbed tails that allow them to hook together and clog up fishing lines and nets. They also eat other, smaller zooplankton, which is bad news because a lot of baby fish can't swallow those long, sharp tails.

How to Control Them: It's hard to control them because they're so tiny—1 cm long!—and just a few of them in the water can make enough babies to take over a new place. You can slow them down, though, by cleaning off your fishing gear and boats.



Fishhook Water Flea

How They Got Here: Ballast water

What They Do: Fishhook water fleas do the same kind of damage as spiny water fleas and can be controlled the same way.

How to Control Them: Like with spiny water fleas, their size makes them hard to control, but washing and drying your equipment and boats can slow their spread.





Sea Lamprey

How They Got Here: Welland and Erie Barge Canals

What They Do: Sea lampreys can kill or injure native fish by clamping onto them and sucking out their body fluids. This either kills the fish or leaves it with a nasty scar. They especially love lake trout, burbot, and white fish.

How to Control Them: Scientists are using chemicals called lampricides to kill sea lampreys when they are young and catching them to sterilize the males—“fixing” them so they can’t have babies, like your pet dog or cat.

White Perch

How They Got Here: Welland and Erie Barge Canals

What They Do: White perch love to eat the eggs of other fish, especially walleye and white bass. This is probably part of the reason why the number of baby walleye every year has gone down.

How to Control Them: If you catch a white perch, you should eat it or dispose of it properly. Do not release it back into the water where you caught it or into a different body of water.



Eurasian Watermilfoil

How They Got Here: Ship ballast and aquarium trade, introduced in the early 1900s

What They Do: Just one little piece of Eurasian watermilfoil can grow a new plant, so they can spread very rapidly, sometimes covering a small lake from shore to shore and making it difficult to row a boat or fish. Native plants that need sunlight get blocked out and die, which can change the whole ecosystem, effecting birds and fish, too.

How to Control Them: Some bugs and fish like to eat watermilfoil, so scientists are using them to keep the plant under control. Be sure to clean your equipment and boats carefully to make sure no plant fragments are hanging on. Even a small plant fragment can start a new infestation.

Purple Loosestrife

How They Got Here: In ship ballast before water was used in the 1800s; intentionally introduced as an herbal remedy and ornamental plant from Europe

What They Do: The pretty purple loosestrife can produce 2.5 million seeds each year, so they spread rapidly, pushing out native plants and reducing habitat for animals. It can even invade farmers’ crops and pasture land.

How to Control Them: Small populations of 50 plants or less can be pulled or dug out by hand, but new plants can even grow from broken roots. Galerucella beetles like to eat their leaves, flowers, and roots, keeping them under control in some places.



Common Carp

How They Got Here: Intentionally introduced as a food source from Europe and Asia in the 1800s

What They Do: Carp like to root around in shallow areas, uprooting plants that ducks like to eat and other fish use to hide. This makes the water very muddy, which can keep other plants from getting enough sunlight to grow.

How to Control Them: Common carp live in every county in Ohio. Young carp look a lot like common bait fish, so be sure to drain your bait bucket on land.

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