

Invasive Species Update – Sighting of Spiny Waterflea

For some time now, the Lake Wahnapiatae Homeowners and Campers Association has been concerned with the risk of invasive species entering the lake. We have been monitoring what has been happening to other lakes in the region and have coordinated several initiatives to try and reduce the risks. Some of these initiatives include efforts to increase awareness through new invasive species signs at Tony's Marina and Rocky's as well as a pilot project to promote hull cleaning by making a power washer available to all boaters launching from Rocky's (in collaboration with NorthStar Recreation, Rocky's, Wahnapiatae First Nations and the City of Greater Sudbury).

It now appears that one of the invaders may have made its way into the lake. While fishing for lake trout in late August, we observed what appears to be spiny waterfleas attached to our fishing line and rod guides. I had seen spiny waterfleas years ago in Lake Ontario and what we observed on our lines here on Wahnapiatae looked very similar. We did take a picture (attached) but did not think of keeping a sample. The picture however matches very closely the spiny waterflea photos found on the *Ontario Invasive Species Awareness Program* website:



<http://www.invadingspecies.com/invaders/invertebrates/spiny-and-fishhook-waterflea/>

We have reported the sighting to the City of Greater Sudbury, to the MNRF and through the Ontario Invasive Species Program website's online reporting tool. The MNRF has also advised us that they will also be checking to see if spiny waterfleas were present in the samples they collected this summer during their broad-scale monitoring program.

Although they are not harmful to humans, the introduction of spiny waterfleas could have an important impact on our lake. According to the Invasive Species website:

- *“Spiny and fishhook waterfleas are small aquatic predators native to Eurasia. Both waterfleas are species of zooplankton and both were introduced to the Great Lakes in ballast water from ocean-going ships in the 1980's and 1990's. “*
- *“Spiny waterflea has now been found in all the Great Lakes and in more than 100 inland lakes in Ontario”* (note, City of Sudbury website reports that to date spiny waterfleas have been confirmed in 2 area lakes, Panache and Nepahwin).

- *“Researchers believe that spiny waterfleas are the greatest threat to the biodiversity and structure of native zooplankton communities on the Canadian Shield since acid rain.”*
- *“Because their main diet is zooplankton..... spiny waterflea introductions result in an average 30 to 40 per cent decline in native populations of zooplankton.... which reduces food supplies for small fish and the young of sport fish such as bass, walleye and yellow perch...” As a result, their introduction can have a negative impact on most native fish populations.*
- *“They are not a good food source for small fish, which have difficulty consuming them because of their spine, or larger fish that prey on them but receive little nutritional value as the spines are indigestible and accumulate in stomachs.”*
- *“A few animals can quickly multiply into a large populationare easily spread between waterbodies on boats, trailers, angling equipment, bait buckets, live wells, bilge waters, etc....”*

Unfortunately, once they enter a waterbody, nothing can be done to remove them. Their presence in the lake however does create the risk that those boating and fishing on Wahnapiatae may inadvertently spread them to other waterbodies. It is now very important that everyone using the lake understand the risks and their responsibility to take appropriate precautions to reduce this risk. The Ontario Invasive Species Program website offers the following recommendations to reduce these risks:

- *Learn how to identify spiny and fishhook waterfleas and how to prevent accidentally spreading these invasive species.*
- *Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment after each use. Remove all plants, animals and mud before moving to a new waterbody.*
- *Drain water from your motor, live well, bilge and transom wells while on land.*
- *Rinse all recreational equipment with high pressure (>250 psi) or hot (50°C / 122°F) water OR let it dry in the sun for at least five days.*
- *If you’ve seen an invasive waterflea or other invasive species in the wild, please contact the toll-free Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711, or [report a sighting online](#).*

On behalf of the LWHCA, the Stewardship Committee will continue to monitor developments. To date, at least 2 other members have reported similar sightings. Anyone who has seen what they believe is spiny waterfleas is asked to contact us at our email address; home.campers.association@gmail.com and to provide any details you may have such as date and location of sighting as well as any photos. Also, if anyone does come across spiny waterfleas and can take a sample, please keep it in a water filled jar and keep it refrigerated and please contact me at 705 969 9485. We will then try to have the sample sent for official identification.

There are many other invasive species out there that can threaten the health of our lake such as zebra mussels, round goby, milfoil, etc... so even though it may be too late to stop spiny waterfleas, we need everyone’s help to reduce the chances that they will be joined by others.

Daniel Picard