

Aquatic Invasive Species Update Washington & Waukesha Counties



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Invasive Species of the Month: Rusty Crayfish: Small but Destructive!

by: Mia Meister

There are 8 crayfish species found in Wisconsin. Of the 8, the rusty and red swamp crayfish are the 2 invasive species. It is important for boaters and concerned citizens to take action against these invasive freshwater crustaceans.

Characteristics

- Rusty-colored spots on each side of their back.
- Large, smooth claws are known to range from grayish green to reddish brown.
- Black rings at the end of their claws.

How Rusty Crayfish Became Invasive

- Rusty crayfish are believed to have spread in Wisconsin mainly from fisherman using them as bait.
- They can spread from people dumping aquariums into lakes and rivers.
- Teachers can unknowingly spread invasive crayfish by using crayfish in classrooms and then releasing them into the wild.
- They are a very aggressive species, so predators often do not eat them.
- These crayfish reproduce quickly, and females lay between 80-575 eggs.

Adverse Effects

- Rusty crayfish are opportunistic feeders, meaning they consume almost anything they can get their claws on.
- Erosion increases and water quality decreases due to aquatic plants being depleted.
- Invasive aquatic plants such as Eurasian watermilfoil increase when rusty crayfish uproot native plants.
- Rusty crayfish are harmful to fish spawning areas and reduce shelter for native species.

Preventative Steps

- Do not dump aquarium species into lakes, ponds and streams
- Do not use crayfish as bait (it is against WI law).
- Throw unwanted bait in the trash.
- Inspect your boat and remove all attached aquatic plants, animals, and mud before leaving a boat launch.
- Drain all water from your boat and equipment.

Citizen Lake Monitoring Network

Interested in the health of your lake?

You can be part of a network throughout Wisconsin that monitors lake health. Volunteers in this program measure water clarity using a Secchi Disc. Water clarity reflects the lake's overall water quality. The collection of Secchi Disc measurements can help identify your lake's current health and potential long-term changes in water clarity. Water clarity plays an important role in determining the types of plants and animals that a lake can support.

Volunteers are provided with the equipment and training needed to successfully monitor their lake. Taking a Secchi Disc measurement is simple and quick. The 8-inch disc is lowered through the water until the disc can no longer be seen and the depth recorded. Secchi Disc measurements are made every 10 to 14 days throughout the open water season.

You can see if your lake is currently being monitored at:

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/lakes/clmn>. Just click on Graphs & Data by County, then find your county/lake and click "Details" next to your lake name. then on the year under "Annual Reports". Other types of reports and graphics are available as well, and you can view reports from any year that your lake has participated in CLMN!

If your lake is not being currently monitored, consider joining the CLMN! Contact me for more information!

Lake of the Month

Pretty Lake in Waukesha County

Area: 65 acres
Maximum Depth: 31 feet
Bottom 60% sand, 0% gravel, 0% rock, 40% muck
Hydrologic Lake Type: seepage



AIS: **Banded Mystery Snail, Eurasian Water-Milfoil**

AIS Efforts:

Since 2019, Pretty Lake has been running its own Diver Assisted Suction Harvester (DASH) to remove tons of invasive Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) from the lake. In 2021, 24,000 pounds of EWM were removed from the lake. Pretty Lake built their own DASH boat, which greatly reduced the overall cost of using a DASH method to control invasive aquatic plants. More information on their efforts is found here:

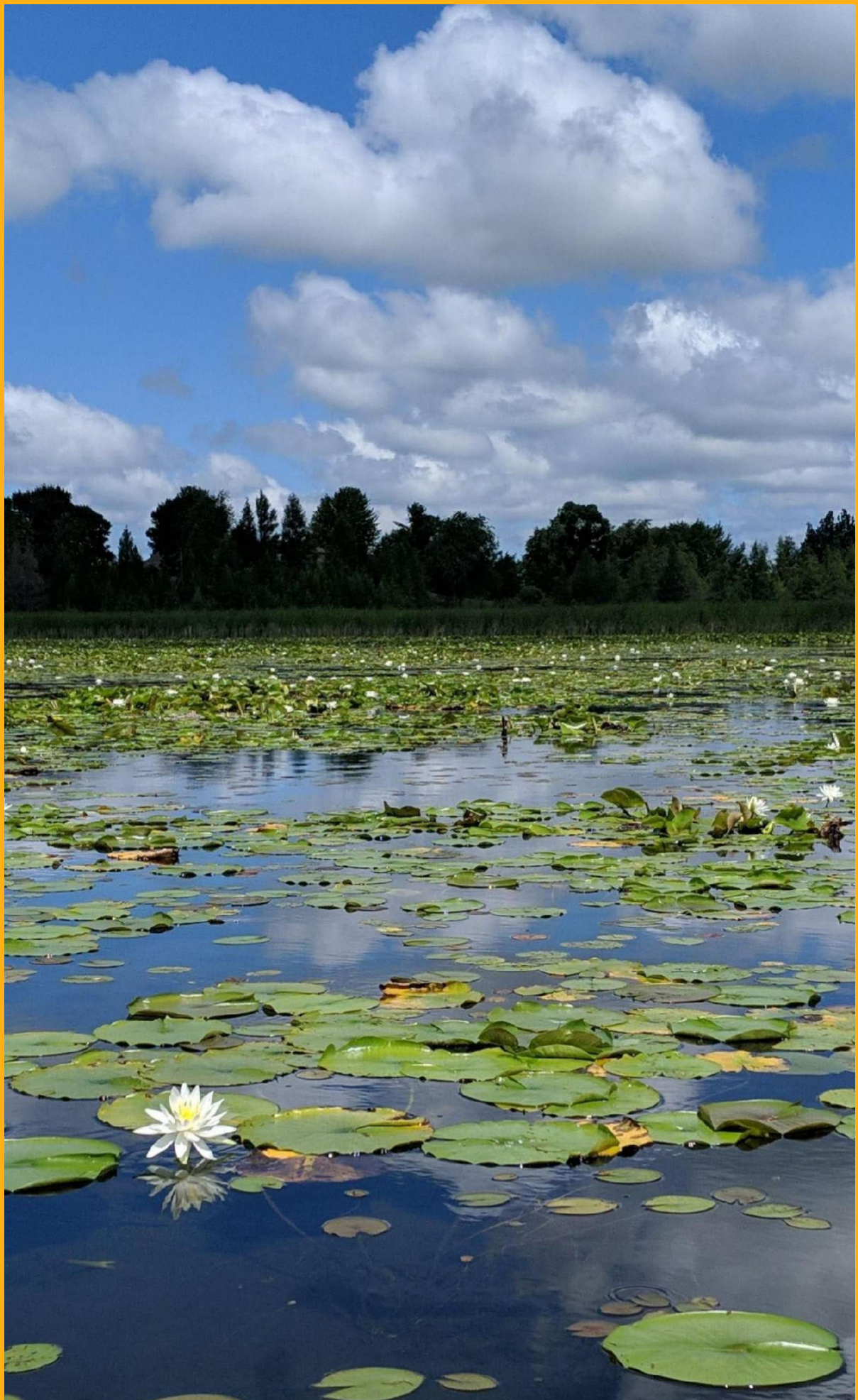
<https://www.prettylakewi.com/lake-ecology/>

DASH works like an underwater vacuum with the diver working the plant from the lake bottom and the suction system drawing the weed from the lake. The diver selectively removes the invasive plants and leaves the native plants to regrow. Many lake groups have used DASH to successfully control aquatic plant infestations. However, it is very time and labor intensive and is most effective on small infestations and areas of the lake with scattered areas of invasive aquatic plants. To utilize DASH in Wisconsin, you do need a permit. Information on the permit can be found here:

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/construction/mechanizedAPM.html>

Apparent advantages are associated with this method include:

- 1) lower potential to release plant fragments when compared to mechanical harvesting, raking, and hand-pulling, thereby reducing spread and growth of invasive plants like EWM
- 2) increased selectivity of plant removal when compared to mechanical techniques and hand raking which in turn reduces native plants loss; and
- 3) lower potential for disturbing fish habitat.



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The Aquatic Invasive Species Program is a cooperative effort between Washington & Waukesha Counties, supported by grant funds from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and a number of generous local lake groups working to control the spread of AIS. Thank you for your support!

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