Tipping the Balance: Aquatic Nuisances in Vermont's Lakes

Chambly Canal ↑

Québec

Canada
- - - - - - - - -
United States

New York

Vermont

You Are Here
Poultney
Mettowee
Watershed
★

Champlain Canal ↓

Lake Champlain Basin Program

Poultney Mettowee Watershed Partnership

Since its introduction from Eurasia to New York State in 1874, European Water Chestnut has made itself at home in Northeastern waterways. Its thick vegetative mats hinder boat travel, shade out native vegetation, and decrease dissolved oxygen for aquatic animals as they decay each autumn. Other "aquatic nuisance species," as these invasive, nonnative aquatic plants and animals are called, are altering the ecological balance of Vermont's lakes and wetlands, including purple loosestrife, Eurasian Watermilfoil, Zebra Mussels, and Alewives. *(Photo courtesy Sherry Crawford.)*
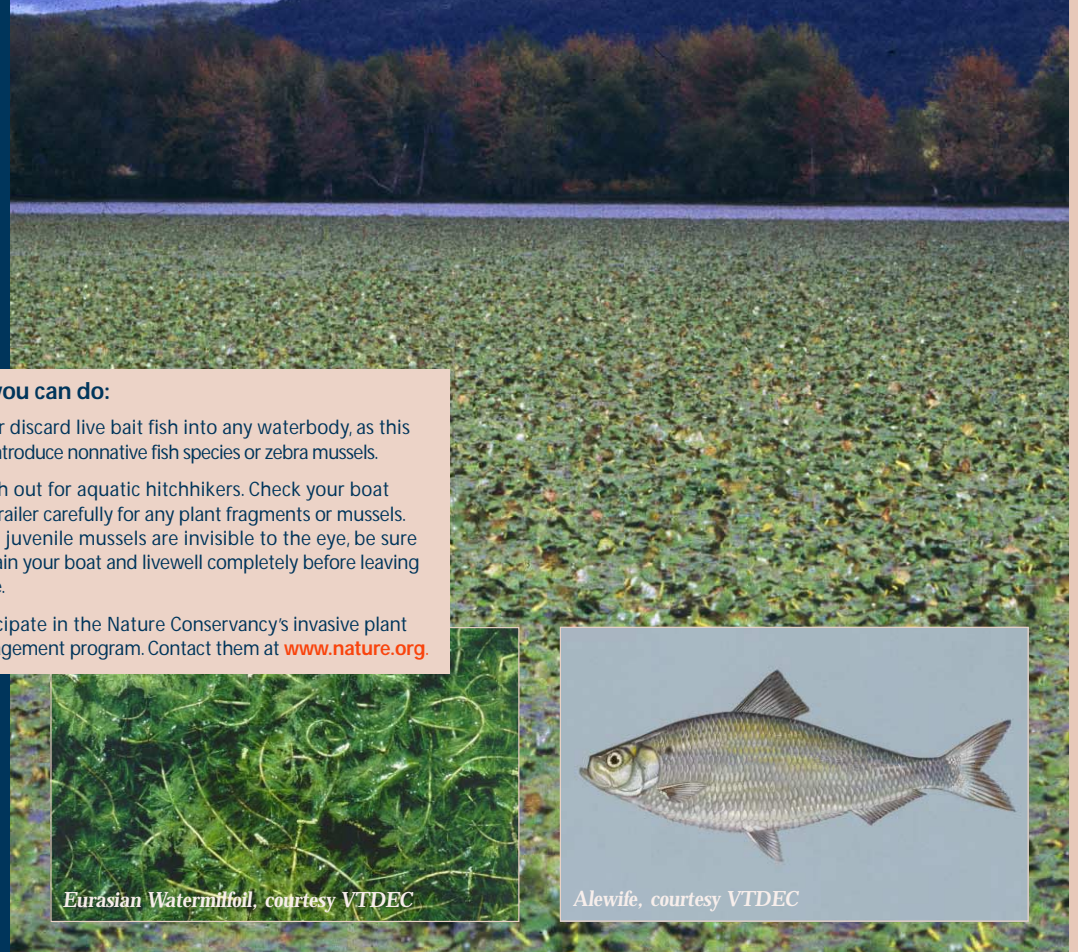
Footloose in a Foreign Land

When a nonnative plant or animal enters an ecosystem, the delicate balance among native community members, which has evolved over thousands of years, abruptly shifts. Often, the new arrival lacks the predators that kept its population in check in its native ecosystem. In its Eurasian home, purple loosestrife is food to more than 100 insect species. Without those natural predators, purple loosestrife spreads unfettered through wetlands, where it out-competes native cattails and sedges, which many wildlife species depend on for food and shelter. (Photo courtesy VTDEC.)

What you can do:

- Never discard live bait fish into any waterbody, as this can introduce nonnative fish species or zebra mussels.

- Watch out for aquatic hitchhikers. Check your boat and trailer carefully for any plant fragments or mussels. Since juvenile mussels are invisible to the eye, be sure to drain your boat and livewell completely before leaving a lake.

- Participate in the Nature Conservancy's invasive plant management program. Contact them at **www.nature.org**.

Aquatic Hitchhikers

The growth and spread of Eurasian watermilfoil is a threat to all our lakes and ponds. Once Eurasian water-milfoil has infested a lake there is no known way to eradicate it. (Photo courtesy VTDEC.)

Eurasian Watermilfoil, courtesy VTDEC

Alewife, courtesy VTDEC