

## Nuisance species a growing problem

PRATT — Many boaters, anglers, and other lake users have heard the news that zebra mussels are thriving in El Dorado Reservoir and the Walnut River in Kansas. Recently, several new lakes in the region have become infested with zebra mussels, including Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri; Skiatook, Oologah, Kaw, and Keystone lakes in Oklahoma; and Base Lake on Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. Visitors to these lakes need to help prevent the spread of zebra mussels when moving from one lake to another.

Zebra mussels are small freshwater mollusks that typically have a dark and white (zebra-like) pattern on their shells. This highly prolific species will rapidly attach to and cover any hard structure in the water. Once attached, zebra mussels are difficult to remove.

Zebra mussels also cause problems by competing for food with young fish and native mussels. Although zebra mussels often make water clearer, the clear water can lead to conditions that create toxic algae blooms that can kill fish. The clear water can also allow ultraviolet rays to damage fish eggs.

In El Dorado Reservoir, adult zebra mussels can be easily found attached to rocks along the shoreline.

Zebra mussel larvae are free-floating and microscopic, which enables aquatic users to unknowingly transport them between water bodies. Once zebra mussels become established, they are nearly impossible to eradicate. All aquatic users — especially boaters — must drain and clean their equipment before launching in a new lake or stream.

The zebra mussel is just one species that poses a threat to the aquatic resources of Kansas. The Department of Wildlife and Parks urges all aquatic resource users to become informed of aquatic nuisance species (ANS), Asian carp, New Zealand mudsnails, Eurasian watermilfoil, and white perch. The following simple precautions may help control these organisms:

- Learn to identify aquatic nuisance species;
- Empty bait buckets on dry land, not into the lake;
- Inspect aquatic recreational equipment (boats, trailers, anchors, duck decoys, water toys — anything that holds water) and remove any visible organisms and vegetation;
- Wash equipment with 104-degree water (typical car wash hot water rinse), a 10-percent chlorine and water solution, or dry for at least five days to remove or kill species that are not visible;
- Never move fish caught from one body of water to another;
- Do not release aquarium pets; if your family gets tired of its aquarium or aquatic pets, do not release anything from the aquarium (water, plants, fish, or animals) into or near a body of water or storm drain; if you cannot find a home for the aquatic life in your aquarium, bury them; dump the water into the toilet or yard, far away from storm drains; and
- Contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks at 620-342-0658 if you find any aquatic nuisance species.

The KDWP website, [www.kdwp.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.ks.us), contains a wealth of information on identifying and preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species.



Lynn Harper of Norton used a jumbo shiner to catch his 8 pound, 15 ounce, 27 1/2 inch flathead catfish on May 28.

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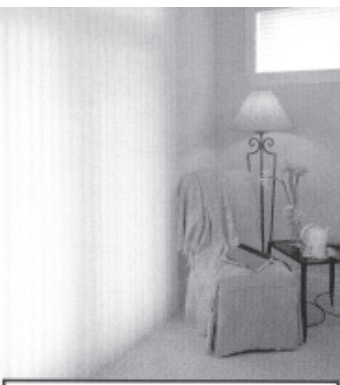
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