

# WHAT ARE AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS?

Aquatic hitchhikers are invasive, non-native plants and animals that threaten our waters and can cause significant environmental and economic damage. They “hitch” rides on boats, trailers, fishing gear, and other equipment and are transported between water bodies unless you take a few simple precautionary measures.

Unlike native plants, which are important to the lake and essential to the basis for all life in the lake, aquatic hitchhikers can spread quickly, overtake native plants, affect fish populations, and make recreational lake activities difficult, if not impossible.

## Reduce the risk of spreading aquatic hitchhikers

### STAY INFORMED

When boating and recreating on Lake Hopatcong and all water bodies, protect our waters by educating yourself about aquatic invasive species prevention and learning what to look for.

### CLEAN. DRAIN. DRY.

**CLEAN** your boat, trailer & equipment after a thorough self-inspection for any visible aquatic plants and species. Be sure to check all water-related equipment including life jackets, rafts, lines, anchors, and fishing gear. Remove and properly dispose of all visible aquatic hitchhikers before leaving. Do not transport aquatic plants or animals. Always wash your boat and equipment after leaving the water body.

**DRAIN** water from your boat, motor, ballast tanks, live well, bait containers, and equipment before leaving the area. Some invasive species, such as spiny water fleas or zebra mussel larvae, are not easily visible. Draining water before leaving will reduce the chance that any remaining plants and animals survive.

**DRY** your boat, motor, trailer, and equipment thoroughly. At least five days of drying is generally recommended during the summer season.

### For More Information

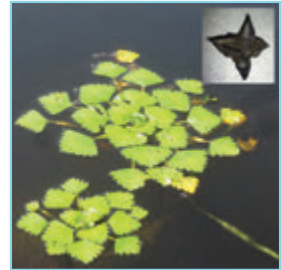
To learn more about aquatic invasive species prevention visit [www.protectyourwaters.net/prevention](http://www.protectyourwaters.net/prevention)

## SAMPLES OF WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### Water Chestnut

Water chestnut has been found in the Jefferson Canals, near Liffy Island and the Landing Channel in Lake Hopatcong. LHF volunteer Water Scouts have hand-pulled and removed hundreds of plants.

*Volunteer to become a Water Scout today, and pick up our “STOP Water Chestnut” brochure, available locally, or download from our website.*



### Spiny Water Flea

Spiny water fleas eat small animals (zooplankton) that are an important food for fish. They can spread by attaching to fishing lines, downriggers, anchor ropes, and fishing nets. Their eggs can remain viable out of water and establish a new infestation, so inspection and removal are recommended.



Photo Credit: Jeff Gunderson, Minnesota Sea Grant

### Zebra Mussel

Zebra mussels attach to plants, boats, and native mussels. They can affect the food webs, block water intakes, and cut swimmers' feet.



Photo Credit: Julie Mida Hinderer, Bugwood.org

### Fanwort

Fanwort is a highly competitive aquatic plant capable of rapid growth and spread. It can displace native plants, hinder recreation use, and decrease water quality.



Photo Credit: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, UCONN, bugwood.org



# LAKE HOPATCONG GUIDE MAP

