

ALERT! Have you seen the Asian Clam in your lake or pond?

Asian clams have recently been found in New Hampshire—in both the Merrimack River (from Bow, south) and in Cobbetts Pond, Windham. New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and Fish and Game Department biologists suspect that the unwanted exotic bivalve may also be lurking in other New Hampshire waterbodies and are calling on the public to report potential sightings.

Asian clams are small—less than 1.5 inches in size —and are relatively round in shape with yellow-green to dark brown colored shells that display a concentric ring pattern. Asian clams are not native to the United States—they originated in the freshwater of southern and eastern Asia and it is believed that they were brought to North America in the 1920s-1930s as a food source. At some point, they escaped and/or were released into the wild.

Because Asian clams can reproduce rapidly and physically attach themselves to objects, they can create several problems, including:

- Altering the aquatic food web by competing with native fish and shellfish for food and habitat.
- Altering nutrient cycling systems within waterbodies potentially causing excessive plant, algal, and/or cyanobacteria growth.
- Clogging water intake pipes.
- Damaging boat engines and cooling systems.
- Fouling sandy bottoms of swimming areas.

Asian clams prefer sandy or gravelly bottom areas, typically in shallow, relatively warm water.

If you think you have discovered Asian clams in a waterbody, please get a sample (place in a covered jar or container along with lake water) or take a photograph and contact the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (Amy.Smagula@des.nh.gov, 603-271-2248) or the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (603-271-3421).

For more information about the Asian Clam, visit des.nh.gov (at the top right-hand side of the page, under the “A-Z List”, click on “Fact Sheets”, then “Lake Biology”, and then “Asian Clam”).

This article was originally published by NH LAKES in July 2012.



Asian Clam. Photos from Lake George Association, New York.