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## NEWS RELEASE

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## Asian Clam Growth Study Finds Active Reproduction Time Varies

*At one location out of three, clams reproduced up to two months longer*

LAKE GEORGE – A local study of reproduction and growth of Asian clams in Lake George has led to a few answers and even more questions.

The two-year study to better understand the lifecycle of the invasive species was commissioned by the Lake George Association following discussions between members of the Asian Clam Task Force about the lack of “Lake George specific” research in that area.

The study by Darrin Fresh Water Institute scientists Sandra Nierzwicki-Bauer and Jeremy Farrell concluded that at two locations, Asian clams were actively reproducing from mid-June through mid-November. At a third location, reproduction started earlier (mid-May) and ended later (in mid-December) – meaning about two more months of reproductive action at that location.

Nearly 20 percent of the Asian clams collected for the two-year study were reproductively active, and all reproductively active clams were larger than 10 mm (about a third of an inch).

The next step is to find out why the clams were reproductively active longer at the third location – and the LGA and Asian Clam Task Force members are working with DFWI to develop a study to uncover that reason.

“The benefit of this study is that we know more about Asian clams in Lake George than ever before,” said C. Walter Lender, Executive Director of the Lake George Association. “Apparently, the localized environmental conditions at different sites have an effect on how the clams grow and reproduce. That fact could change how we treat for Asian clams in the future, but we aren’t sure exactly what changes we need to make yet.”

(MORE)



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“As with many scientific studies, the questions it raised are as important as the answers it found. We’ll now put more resources into answering the new questions,” Lender said.

The study also concluded that the clams grow between 0.2 mm and 0.3 mm per week during the season. The clams begin reproducing when their size reaches about 10 mm. When released from the parent the clams are virtually microscopic, so most Asian clams would have to survive a winter in Lake George in order to be reproductively active.

Any time the annual Asian clam survey finds a new colony on Lake George it is a concern because when the clams begin reproducing they spread rapidly. Because they are hermaphroditic, they self-replicate. Each reproductively active clam can produce hundreds of offspring per day – reaching densities of up to 8,000 clams per square meter.

Because the clams seem to prefer sandy areas, a volume of 8,000 clams per square meter on a beach area would quickly diminish its usability, and once the clams spread to water intake pipes (of which there are hundreds on Lake George) the clams can easily permanently clog them. Additionally, they are such efficient filter feeders that they consume virtually all of the available microscopic plants and animals, leaving nothing for native species

For Lake George it is important that every effort be made to understand how the Asian clams are reproducing so we can make sound, scientific decisions on methods to slow their growth, stop them from entering the Lake and eradicate the remaining clams from the Lake, if possible.

The DFWI study on growth and reproduction is the first of its kind in the Northeastern US. Previous Asian clam studies in Texas, Montreal and Ireland were informative but not specific to the conditions in Lake George

For the most recent two-year study, scientists collected between 20 and 25 clams a week from three locations: Two in the southern basin and one in the Town of Bolton.

The clams were measured and dissected to determine if they had juveniles in their gills – the mechanism of reproduction – and were then sorted by size to determine the distribution of reproductively active clams.

A 2014 study by the Lake George Park Commission on behalf of the Asian Clam Task Force determined that boat anchors and ropes were one of the primary vectors of transportation for Asian clams in Lake George – and that ensuring vessels and their equipment was “Clean, Drained and Dry” was the best way to ensure that boaters were not unknowingly transporting and transplanting the species.

The Task Force came together in 2010 following the discovery of Asian clams by Farrell during a family outing.