

Protect Our Waterfowl Habitat



A Hunter's Guide to Stopping Aquatic Invasive Species

Designed by



wildlife-forever.org



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!



A Wonderful Way of Life...



...Worth Preserving

Hunting and outdoor recreation are some of life's greatest pleasures and pastimes. The health of our natural resources is critical and supports America's outdoor way of life. Recreational users need to be aware of the impacts invasive species have on the environment and their costly effects on our economy.

Waterfowl hunters can help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! and prevent the spread. To conserve our resources, everyone who participates in activities on or near the water need to: **(1) understand and identify invasive threats, (2) know how to prevent further spread, (3) help educate others who enjoy the outdoors, including the next generation.**



Today many areas are under attack by invasive species like zebra/quagga mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, hydrilla, New Zealand mudsnails and phragmites. These "hitchhikers" are foreign invasive and have no native predators. Doing severe damage to wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams, the silent invaders have greatly impacted hunting and fishing. At an estimated annual cost of over \$100 billion in the United States, invasive species are one of the greatest threats to our country's natural resources.



Hunters must take action to preserve habitat and maintain renewable waterfowl populations. All that is required are a few simple steps - before and after spending time on the water. Always **Clean, Drain, and Dry** boats, trailers, gear, dogs and equipment.

Know the Facts...

Zebra/Quagga mussels filter feed extensively on microscopic organisms, called plankton, thereby disrupting the delicate balance of the aquatic ecosystem. Because they eat plankton, critical food for small fish and organisms, zebra/quagga mussels cause problems throughout the food chain. Invaders spread easily. Microscopic larvae called veligers often attach to aquatic plants and hitchhike from un-drained decoys and boat hulls.



Phragmites, is a tall non-native perennial grass that can grow to over 15 feet tall and forms dense stands with both live and dead stems. Leaves are elongated and typically 1-1.5 inches wide. Phragmites form a dense network of roots which can spread several feet each year. Choking out shallow wetlands and waterfowl habitat, phragmites should not be used for camouflage or transported on hunting blinds. Seeds can easily be spread, causing new infestations.



New Zealand mudsnails are small snails (about 1/8 – 1/4 inch long) that have brown or black cone-shaped shells that may attach to waders, boats, and vegetation. They can live out of water for many days, tolerate a broad range of temperature and have no natural predators. Females “clone” themselves, and after four years can produce 100-500,000 snails per square meter, carpeting the bottom of rivers or lakes. Snails can also carry parasites that kill thousands of waterfowl each year when ingested.



Invasive aquatic plants, like **Eurasian watermilfoil** and **hydrilla** also endanger waterfowl habitat. Plants grow rapidly, and can ruin hunting and fishing habitat in a matter of months. Eurasian watermilfoil and hydrilla frequently get wrapped around boat propellers, decoy lines, and cling to trailer axles, bunks and rollers. Always inspect, clean, and remove all vegetation from equipment. New weed beds can start from only small pieces! They can spread by clinging to propellers, trailers, and equipment carrying weeds.

Be a Part of the Solution!

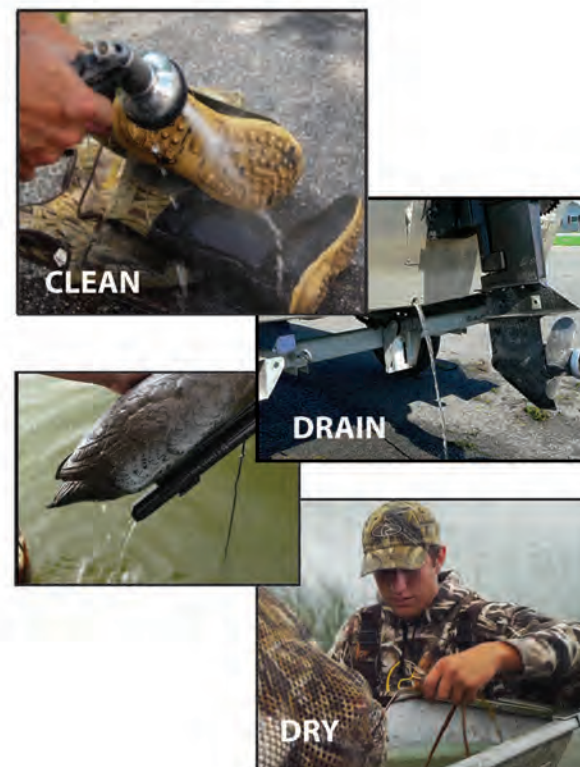
You can help stop the invasion.

BEFORE launching...BEFORE leaving:

✓ **CLEAN watercraft**, waders, trailer, motor and equipment. REMOVE visible plants, organisms and mud before leaving any water access.

✓ **DRAIN water** from decoys, boats, motor and livewells. Pull drain plugs and remove water from all containers. Regulations require this when leaving accesses in many states and provinces..

✓ **DRY everything** at least five days before going to other waters and landings, OR SPRAY/RINSE recreational equipment with high pressure and/or hot water.



It's what you might not see that counts.

The larvae of invasive mussels are often microscopic and therefore invisible. Tiny organisms can live for days in water left in boat hulls, livewells, and decoys. If transported to new waters, they can grow and spread threatening your hunting and fishing. Invasive plants and their seeds can cling to decoy bags, mud, hunting dogs and equipment. Inspect and clean gear before transporting.

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! to protect our waters and waterfowl habitat. Take these simple steps to ensure that your natural resources remain healthy and vibrant for future generations to come.

✓ **CLEAN** ✓ **DRAIN** ✓ **DRY**

This message brought to you by Wildlife Forever.
Join at: www.WildlifeForever.org

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers! learn more at:
www.CleanDrainDry.org

National Invasive Species Information site:
www.InvasiveSpeciesInfo.gov

Report all questionable species to your conservation officer or Department of Natural Resources.



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

Prevent the transport of aquatic invasive species.
Clean all recreational equipment.

www.ProtectYourWaters.net