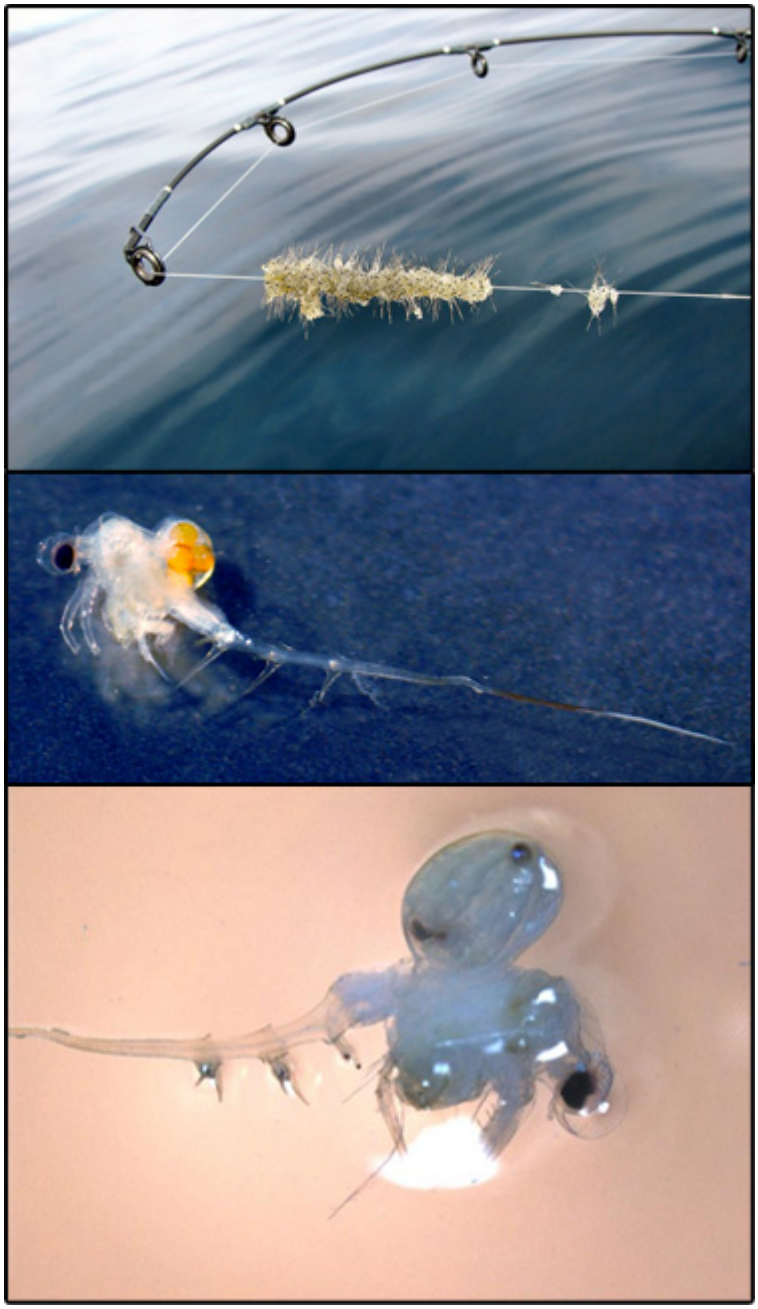
MISIN Midwest Invasive Species Information Network

Spiny waterflea

Bythotrephes longimanus



Description

Likely introduced in ballast water; discovered in Lake Ontario in 1982; spread to all Great Lakes and some inland lakes.

Identification

Tiny (1/2 in.) and translucent with a long, sharply barbed tail spine; dark eyespot is prominent; large numbers form clumps (with black spots) that look/feel like gelatin or wet cotton.

Habitat

Native to northern Europe. Prefer deep lakes, reservoirs, shallow water, large rivers and oxbows.

Reproduction

Can produce both by parthenogenetic (cloning) and gamogenetic (sexual) reproduction. Parthenogenetic reproduction occurs throughout the whole life cycle, while gamogenesis occurs at the end of a growing season and results in the formation of resting eggs capable of surviving

Source: MISIN. 2024. Midwest Invasive Species Information Network. Michigan State University - Applied Spatial Ecology and Technical Services Laboratory. Available online at https://www.misin.msu.edu/facts/detail.php?id=231.

unfavourable conditions.

Impact

Spiny waterfleas collect on fishing gear, especially lines and downrigger cables, lowering the quality of recreational fishing and charter trips. It jams the first eyelet of fishing rods, often resulting in the loss of a hooked fish. It also clumps can damage the drag on some reels and disrupts food web of the aquatic ecosystem.

Similar

Fishhook waterflea (Cercopagis pengoi).

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Spread by angling and boating gear contaminated with adults carrying eggs. Bait and bait water should not be transported to other water bodies. Remove gelatinous blobs or cotton-like material from gear and examine lines at swivel, lure and down-rigger connections as well as nets and anchor ropes. Rinse boat and equipment with hot water (>40 degrees Celsius), high pressure spray or drying boat and equipment for at least 5 days before re-entering water.

Credits

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