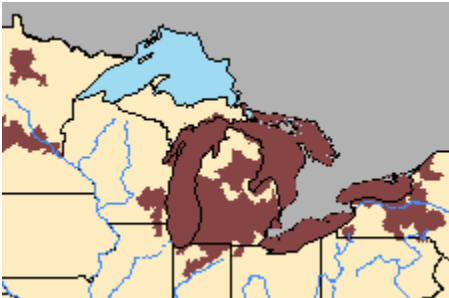


Topic: Starry stonewort

By Bryan Roels, Chippewa Lake Weed Advisory Committee Chairman

August 13, 2019

Recently there has been a Facebook post stating that Starry stonewort has been found in Horsehead Lake and restrictive actions associated with it. I wish I could say that this is a surprise but it isn't. Starry stonewort (Starry) is a very aggressive macro alga that has traveled from lake to lake in Michigan like wild fire. Below is a map of Starry infestation that I showed at the spring public Chippewa Lake Weed Control District Meeting held on April 26, 2019. The dark areas are locations that Starry has been found, that little light area in the middle of the state is where Chippewa Lake is but it is closing in fast.



A little about Starry

Starry is an aggressive invasive macro alga that was brought to the U.S. from Europe or Western Asia into the St. Clair River likely in ballast water in the late 70's. Starry like all other algae gets its nutrients from the water column and not roots. Starry can be difficult to identify in early stages of its' development because it is a close relative to the native Chara found in Chippewa Lake. Later on, Starry forms a white bulbil (see below) which makes it easier to identify.

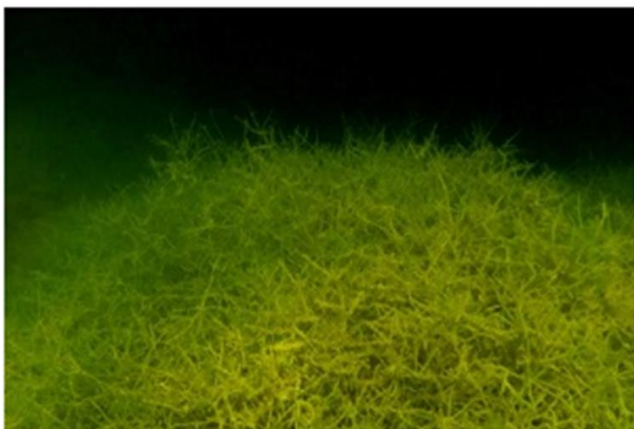
So why the fuss about Starry?

Starry is a major concern across the mid-west because of how fast it can grow, spread and difficult to control. Starry thrives in slow moving waters thrive in depths as deep as 20'. When Starry gets a hold on a lake it can form thick mats up to 33" thick. These mats will out compete native plants and even other invasives such as Eurasian Milfoil and Curly leaf Pond weed. Starry can also prevent fish from spawning because it will grow over the nesting beds. It is such a concern it is rated as one of the more detrimental invasive species to our waterways.

Starry stonewort

Starry stonewort Bulbil (3-6mm wide)

(note: the mat has out competed all other plants)



Can we keep it out of Chippewa Lake?

It is unlikely that we will not see Starry in Chippewa Lake in the near future. We are a public lake and boats are constantly moving from lake to lake which can bring hitchhiking plants with them. This is the reason for the new Michigan law which requires boats to be cleaned, drained (plug removed and live wells drained) and live bait disposed of before moving between lakes. While a great start, it's probably too little too late.




New Boating Law Effective 2019

New requirements to stop the introduction and spread of *Aquatic Invasive Species!*



It's the law:

A person shall **NOT**...

-  Launch or transport watercraft or trailers unless they are free of aquatic organisms, including plants.
-  Transport a watercraft without removing all drain plugs and draining all water from bilges, ballast tanks, and live wells.
-  Release unused bait into the water.



*Violation of the law is a state civil infraction.
Violators may be subject to fines.*

Follow these steps:

- 1. CLEAN** boats, trailers and equipment.
- 2. DRAIN** live wells, bilges and all water.
- 3. DRY** boats and equipment.
- 4. DISPOSE** of unwanted bait in the trash.

www.michigan.gov/invasivespecies

We are not just relying in the new boating law, for a number of years, the volunteer Chippewa Weed Control Team has been monitoring the lake for water quality and for invasive species. In addition, PLM (our lake management company) along with a Chippewa Lake Weed Control Team Member routinely surveys our lake during the boating season looking for invasive plants, and treating as needed. In fact, you may see us out on the lake on Thursday 8/15. We'll be the boat crisscrossing the lake, pulling up and analyzing plant samples. Our goal is that if or when Starry (or any other "new" invasive) is found we can get a corrective action in place as soon as possible before it takes hold.

Let me know if you find this type of information valuable and what lake weed topics you would like to see by sending an email to: Bryan@chippewawatwp.org.

Invasive Species Alert

Starry Stonewort

(*Nitellopsis obtusa*)

Established in Michigan

Identification:

- Whorls of 4-6 branchlets/leaves with blunt tips
- Star-shaped bulbils are produced at the nodes, generally 3-6 mm wide
- Can reach up to 33 inches

Habitat: This submerged annual macroalga invades lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and slow moving rivers. It will inhabit freshwater habitats ranging from 3 feet to 95 feet in depth.

Native Range: Europe and western Asia

U.S. Distribution: Michigan, northern Indiana, southeastern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the northeast United States



Photo Credit: Paul Skawinski



Starry stonewort

Photo by Paul Skawinski



Starry stonewort

Photo by Paul Skawinski

Local Concern: Starry stonewort forms dense mats in lakes and can significantly reduce the diversity of other aquatic plants. Dense mats of vegetation can also impede movement of fish, spawning activity, water flow, and recreational activities.

Native look-alikes and how you can tell them apart from starry stonewort:

✓ **Chara:** Feels scaly and brittle, often smells like a skunk's spray

To report this species, visit www.michigan.gov/invasivespecies for contact information. Report online at www.misin.msu.edu or download the MISIN smartphone app and report it from your phone