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Be on the Lookout for Aquatic Invasive Species in Alaska



It was recently discovered that the highly invasive zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) were discovered attached to live marimo moss balls and may have been sold at pet or aquarium supply stores in the state. The discovery of zebra mussels in Alaska could prove extremely detrimental to aquatic habitats and fish if these small mollusks found their way into and freshwater body in the state. Marimo moss balls are living organisms sold nationwide to aquarium hobbyists. These balls of algae are often used as decorative items in aquariums or fish tanks. Zebra mussels can attach to the fibers and survive being transported.

Zebra mussels are one of many aquatic invasive species that have been found in Alaska. We want to cover some of these aquatic invasive species in this edition of Reel Times and want to encourage you to take part in helping reduce the spread of these species.

Our “Inspired Young Angler” section features a young man who recently caught a very nice burbot through the ice. We’re happy to celebrate his accomplishment in this edition.

Are you planning on going fishing soon? Don’t forget to [buy your 2021 sport fishing license online](#). While you’re on the water, take a few pictures and share them on social media using #wefishak.

You’ll find us in Instagram [@wefishak](#) and on Facebook [ADF&G - wefishak](#). And be sure to check out our [YouTube channel](#) where we have a growing collection of fishing-related videos.

Get Out and Fish. Together.

Ryan Ragan
Division of Sport Fish
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Highly invasive zebra mussels discovered on aquarium products sold in Alaska

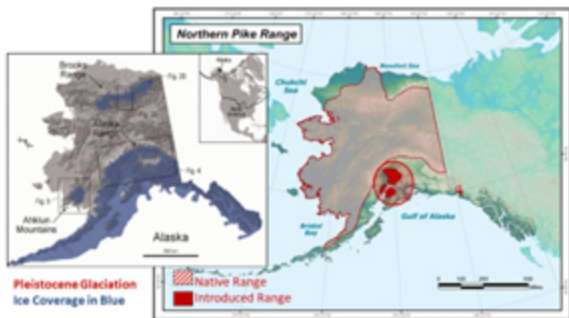


The Imagitarium brand of “marimo” balls shipped under the product name “Betta Buddy Marimo Balls”, “Shrimp Buddy Marimo Balls” (also commonly called “moss” balls) and other products of the living filamentous algae (*Aegagropila linneaei*) were found to have the highly invasive freshwater zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) attached and free floating in packaging. These balls of algae are often used as decorative items in aquariums or fish tanks. Zebra mussels can attach to the fibers and survive being transported.

“Zebra mussels are considered a highly invasive species in Alaska and pose a great threat to the state’s freshwater environments,” Tammy Davis, the ADF&G Invasive Species Coordinator, said. “It could be extremely detrimental to aquatic habits in Alaska if zebra mussels were inadvertently introduced in any freshwater system in the state. It is imperative that we [Read More..](#)

Native vs. Invasive Pike: A Tale of Two Ranges

By Kristine Dunker, Invasive Species Research Biologist, ADF&G Division of Sport Fish



If you follow social media posts about northern pike in Alaska, it is common to read discussions that look something like this: “Northern pike are native here”. “No they’re not”. “Yes they are”. “Nope, not true.” – there is so much confusion about this in Alaska, and rightfully so. Turns out all these statements are correct; it just depends what part of the state the question is asked. This is because northern pike are BOTH native and non-native in Alaska, and their management in different parts of Alaska varies significantly because of this. To understand this better, let us begin with some history.

Northern pike, hereafter pike, have a native circumpolar distribution including northern Europe, Asia, and North America generally above 40° latitude. In Alaska, they naturally occur in waters north and west of the Alaska Mountain Range. However, glaciers during the last ice age locked up Southcentral Alaska south and west of these mountains, and this geologic barrier was pivotal to the development of the freshwater fish communities we know in the state today. Species like pike and Alaska blackfish were restricted to drainages in areas of Alaska that were not covered by these glaciers. Genetic evidence even seems to indicate [Read More..](#)

Pursuing the Water Wolf

By Lee Borden



Deep into the long and icy winter, along the frozen banks of Bristol Bay’s waterways stalks an efficient ambush predator. The water wolf awaits, hiding in the shadows and striking its prey with precision and speed. I’m not describing one of the many wolves, moving in packs and stalking the wilderness of Southwest Alaska. No, this

particular wolf lies in wait in the shallow waters of Bristol Bay. Lurking under the ice ready to strike as soon as an opportunity to secure a meal presents itself. I am speaking of course about the famed northern pike (Esox Lucius). Pike are native to Bristol Bay and flourish in its vast array of rivers and lake drainages and March can be a great time to target them. Pike may reach lengths upwards of 50 inches within some drainages and are among the apex underwater predators of Bristol Bay freshwater drainages. Hunting the water wolf through the frozen lake surface takes a mixture of the right equipment, some knowledge of your surroundings, and the ability to brave the elements of a harsh Southwest Alaskan winter.

There are several tried and true methods for enticing a strike from this voracious predator. Two commonly employed methods that produce results are [Read More..](#)

Pike fishing 101 online seminar



Interested in learning more about how to fish for northern pike? [Check out one of our latest virtual seminars.](#)

Fisheries biologists Parker Bradley and Cody Jacobson cover general information on pike, rules, regulations, techniques, and places to go target pike near Anchorage and the MatSu valley. They even bring in a very special guest for a demonstration on pike fishing with a tip up!

The seminar will be available on Wednesday, March 10 and will remain on YouTube indefinitely.

Elodea in Alaska – Help stop the spread



In September 2010, Fairbanks became ground zero for Alaska’s first invasive, submerged aquatic plant response. US Forest Service biologists detected *Elodea* spp. when they launched a canoe into Chena Slough to ground truth a new aquatic plant guide. With the glossy “Introduction to Common Native & Potential Invasive Freshwater Plants in Alaska” (Fig. 1) in hand, they set out to identify the plants they encountered in the slough. They had not paddled far before they found themselves surrounded by a thick monoculture of a plant with long, fine stems, and three-leaf whorls. Soon it was difficult to maneuver their canoe through the dense forest of weeds. They were surprised and dismayed to find the plant inhibiting their passage was not native to Alaska. Based on the physical characteristics, it was identified as *Elodea canadensis*, commonly known as Canadian waterweed or common waterweed outside of Alaska; here we tend to refer to it as just “*Elodea*”. Chena Lake was the next location the intrepid biologists found the aquatic invader.

The detection of *Elodea* in Fairbanks was alarming for two reasons [Read More..](#)

Inspired Young Angler – Dexton Munoz



Meet Dexon Munoz. Dexon is quite the young angler. Check out that burbot he caught while ice fishing in February. The fish weighed 13 ½ pounds and measured 35 ½ inches! Nice fish, Dexon.

Dexon received a Youth Trophy Fish certificate for his catch. The minimum weight requirement for a Youth category trophy burbot is 6 pounds. Check out our [Trophy Fish program](#).

We asked Dexon to share some of his experiences with us. [Read More..](#)

Field to Plate – Recipe of the month



Wild, Natural & Sustainable®

Recipe of the month: Canned Wild Alaska Salmon Salad Baguettes with Tomato-Basil Mayo

Do you have canned salmon in your home? [Try this delicious recipe for Canned Wild Alaska Salmon Salad Baguettes with Tomato-Basil Mayo](#) from our friends at the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

If you're interested in learning how to can salmon, [check out our video showing how to can salmon](#). Enjoy!

If you have any questions about the Reel Times newsletter, please contact Ryan Ragan at ryan.ragan@alaska.gov



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