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# The Monitor

The newsletter of Wisconsin's Citizen Lake Monitoring Network

## CLMN Seeks Stargazers

Do you enjoy gazing up at the stars above your lake? Residents on a few Wisconsin lakes have been noticing strange stars *below* the water. Is the sky falling? No. But we need your help looking for these stars in the water, produced by an aquatic invasive species that was recently discovered in Wisconsin - starry stonewort (*Nitellopsis obtusa*).

*There are many things that we don't yet understand about starry stonewort's implications for Wisconsin lakes.*

This invasive species of large algae is related to our familiar, native muskgrasses and stoneworts (*Chara* species and others). These species are well-known for creating short meadows of vegetation in lakes across the state, which promote high water clarity and harbor an abundance of aquatic invertebrates and young fishes.

Starry stonewort can grow taller and more densely than many of its Wisconsin-native relatives. It produces an abundance of tiny, star-shaped bulbils, which are starch-filled structures that produce clones of the parent. There are many things that we don't yet understand about starry stonewort's implications for Wisconsin lakes, but here's what we do know:

We know that starry stonewort is native to Europe and Asia. It arrived in the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1970s, but was not documented in Wisconsin until 2014. We now have confirmed populations in five lakes in southeastern Wisconsin, and another population was just announced in central Minnesota. All of these populations occur very close to public boat landings. Additional populations may exist in other Wisconsin lakes, and we need your help to quickly find them.

Michigan has been attempting to control starry stonewort with herbicides for over a decade. Their success has been low. At least two of the lakes in Wisconsin are using diver-assisted suction harvesting (DASH), which can be quicker and more efficient than simple manual removal. The results of these efforts are still being evaluated.



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Star-shaped bulbils (up to 1/4-inch across) are formed on clear filaments at the base of starry stonewort.

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Starry stonewort is a species that has separate male and female individuals. To date, only males have been documented in North America. This means that no “seeds” can be produced, and bulbils or fragments are the only ways by which it can spread from lake to lake.

As we learn more about the impacts of this species and how we can manage it, the best option for Wisconsin lakes is to prevent it from becoming established in the first place. Learn to recognize this species, and report any possible sightings of starry stonewort to your local CLMN Coordinator or DNR Lakes Coordinator. We have posted several helpful resources for learning about starry stonewort at the CLMN website <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/programs/clmn/AIS.aspx>

## Announcements

### Starry Stonewort Identification Video Released

UW-Extension Lakes has produced a video to help citizens and staff distinguish starry stonewort from various native look-alike species. The video is available for free viewing on the *Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring* page of the CLMN website.

<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/programs/clmn/AIS.aspx>

### Sign up for Lake Tides

Do you enjoy reading articles about Wisconsin lakes? *Lake Tides* is a quarterly publication created by the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership, and is available electronically or in hard copy format. View the current newsletter and sign up here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/resources/newsletter/default.aspx>



### Watch out for Blue-green Algal Blooms

Thick blooms of blue-green algae are commonly seen in nutrient-rich waterbodies in August and September. They can cause the water to take on an appearance like pea soup or green paint. These organisms can be harmful to your health or the health of your pets, so don't swim in waters containing blooms of blue-green algae or let your pets drink the water. If you do come in contact with blue-green algae, rinse off with fresh water and towel-dry to minimize your exposure.



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