



Boating Basics

WITH DAN ARMITAGE

Evasive Action



One minute my fishing rod's tip was throbbing with a rhythmic beat set by my lure wobbling 15 feet below; the next, the graphite stick whipped upright in its holder, the line trailing limply in our wake.

"Told you you'd need to spool with superbraid," said my fishing partner. "You just got mussel-cut."

At \$12 a pop for each lost lure, I learned fast — and I didn't hesitate to borrow enough of my buddy's superbraid to fashion a 10-foot leader to place between my vulnerable monofilament line and my replacement crankbait. With that protective terminal rig, I didn't experience another break-off, but did get eye to eye with what had taught me the expensive lesson.

DRAGGING BOTTOM

During one trolling pass, my lure snagged, then popped free with something it had wrested from the bottom. When I reeled in the lure, its forward treble hook was imbedded in a thick layer of pistachio-sized Zebra mussels that had completely encrusted an aluminum can.

My companion explained that the Midwest reservoir had become infested with the invasive species, and the mussels now coated almost everything they could latch onto.



When I complained about the lure lost to the bivalve's razor shells, my buddy snorted, "At least we're not getting clobbered by bigheads."

BEWARE FLYING CARP

My friend was referring to another invasive species infesting some Mississippi River tribes: the bigheaded carp. The fish are startled by fast-approaching powerboats and many times react by leaping into the air — often into the path of the watercraft. If you think colliding with a cicada at 40 mph hurts, think about getting smacked with a 2-pound carp.

These are just two of the invasive aquatics that pose threats. Ironically, it is watercraft owners who are guilty of spreading many of these pests. Many of these nonnative invaders originally found their way into U.S. waters courtesy of ballast water discharged by ocean-going ships. They are being spread in similar fashion, only this time by smaller boats. Zebra mussels were likely introduced to my local lake via the

bilge or cooling system water, bait bucket, or trailer of a boater whose boat, pail or bunk were exposed while boating in infested waters. By not taking preventive measures to rid his rig

of mussels, he transferred the pests to other waterways.

And it is not just foreign finned and shellfish species that are considered invasive; several varieties of aquatic weeds and plants can get a foothold in certain waters — even choking out native species — after being transferred by boaters who were either ignorant of the problem or uncaring enough to forego basic preventive action to snub their spread.

STOP THE SPREAD

By following these procedures each time we leave any lake, stream or coastal area with our boats, we will not be unknowing "mules" for aquatic hitchhikers:

1 Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting any equipment, including boats and trailers. Thoroughly wash boats and trailers (preferably on site, right after hauling out).

2 Eliminate water from your boat and equipment before transporting it. Boaters should flush their engines, and drain

their bilges, bait buckets and livewells before leaving the site.

3 Clean and dry anything that comes in contact with the water. This includes clothing, fishing tackle, fenders and water toys.

Adding these procedures to your task list may add half an hour or so to your post-trip time at the launch ramp, but knowing that you are not carrying a dangerous hitchhiker back to other waters makes it well worth the effort.

STOP THE HITCHHIKERS



"Aquatic nuisance species" (ANS), "invasives" and "aquatic hitchhikers" are a few of the most popular terms used to describe harmful, nonnative aquatic animals, plants or microscopic organisms — such as Eurasian milfoil and round gobies — that can be transported to other waters via boaters.

The ANS Task Force recommends the preventative steps listed. For more details on the task force and how you can stop the spread of nuisance species, log onto the Features section at TrailerBoats.com.

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