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Quagga Mussel Update – Lake Powell

Biologist talks about threat in Colorado

Page, Ariz. -- So far, so good.

More than halfway through the boating season—and despite being surrounded by quagga- and zebra-mussel-infested waters outside of Utah—there is no indication that the devastating mussels have made their way into Lake Powell.

Biologists say **cleaning, draining** and **drying** your boat are the keys to keeping it that way.

Clean, drain and dry

An estimated 100,000 boats launch into Lake Powell every year. The most direct way for mussels to enter the lake is to hitch a ride on one of these boats.

The National Park Service and the states of Utah and Arizona recognized the mussel threat years ago. Vessels entering the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area have been screened for a decade. Boaters are questioned about where their boat has been and how long it's been out of the water.

“Both questions help us determine whether the boat might be carrying mussels,” says Wayne Gustaveson, aquatic project leader for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. “This screening process has prevented mussels from establishing themselves in the lake.”

Gustaveson encourages you to **clean, drain** and **dry** your boat and any other equipment that touches the water.

Specifically, he encourages you to:

- **Clean** plants, fish, mussels and mud from your boat;
- **Drain** the water from all areas of your boat and equipment;
- **Dry** your boat and equipment in the sun before using it again. In the summer, let it dry for at least 7 days in the sun. In the spring and fall, dry it for 18 days in the sun. In the winter, leave your equipment out for 3 straight days in temperatures that do not rise above 32 degrees during any of the days. Leaving it out for 3 days should be enough to kill any mussels that are on your equipment.

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You can also have a professional boat washer clean your boat and trailer, and flush your motor, bilge and live wells, with scalding hot water.

The water must be at least 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Unfortunately, there are very few boat washers in Utah that have equipment that can heat water to 140 degrees. But the DWR does have 26 decontamination units that can heat water to that temperature. Most of these units are located at Utah state parks that have a reservoir or a lake.

“Cleaning, draining and drying your boat and equipment is something all of us can do,” says Larry Dalton, aquatic invasive species coordinator for the UDWR. “Drying your boat and equipment is just as effective as washing it with water that’s 140 degrees.”

New threat in Colorado

While the screening process and help from boaters have kept mussels out of the lake, a new threat was discovered this summer. Mussel larvae were found in Lake Granby in Colorado.

Lake Granby is at the headwaters of the Colorado River. Biologists are hoping the mussels don’t make their way down the river and into the lake.

“In 2007, a few mussel larvae were reported at Lake Powell,” Gustaveson says. “The good news is, we haven’t found any mussel larvae or adults in the lake since that initial report.”

Gustaveson says it’s possible that mussel larvae do not always establish a reproducing population. “We’re hoping the environment in Granby is harsh enough that the mussels won’t be able to establish a population,” he says.

Gustaveson says to invade Lake Powell, a reproducing mussel population would first have to establish itself at Lake Granby. Then the mussel larvae would have to work their way down river, through the 500 miles of inhospitable water conditions that characterize the Colorado River from Lake Granby to Lake Powell.

“I don’t think it would be easy for fragile mussel larvae to survive the long trip. It may take years for mussels from Granby to work their way down the river and into Lake Powell alive,” Gustaveson says. “Therefore, the presence or absence of mussels in Lake Granby is irrelevant to the ongoing mussel prevention program at Lake Powell. We’ll continue to check boats to make sure they’re mussel free before launching.

“No matter which lake boaters have had their boat on, they must clean, drain and dry their boat before they launch it onto another lake,” Gustaveson says. “That’s the new standard all boaters must practice to halt the spread of invasive species in the West.”

To learn more about quagga mussels, visit www.wildlife.utah.gov/news/07-03/quagga.php.

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Contact: Wayne Gustaveson, DWR Lake Powell Project Leader (928) 645-2392 or Mark Hadley, DWR Public Information Specialist (801) 538-4737

Watch the Weather

Dove hunts opens Sept. 1

If you want to know how many doves will be in Utah this hunting season, watch the weather forecasts between now and Sept. 1.

Weather affects mourning and white-winged doves more than any migratory game bird in Utah.

“As the days get shorter in mid-August, doves start to leave the state, no matter what the weather is doing,” says Tom Aldrich, migratory game bird coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources.

“But cold and rainy weather can really speed the migration up,” he says. “The key to a good dove hunt opener on Sept. 1 is for the weather to stay hot and dry between now and then.”

Dove numbers

DWR biologists have surveyed dove populations along 15 call survey routes for more than 40 years. These routes are scattered across Utah.

Biologists conduct the surveys in May. That’s when the doves start their breeding season. The biologists record the number of doves they see and the number of doves they hear.

This past May, the number of doves the biologists saw was down 13 percent from 2007. The number they heard was down 30 percent.

In the Western Dove Unit, which consists of seven Western states, including Utah, the number of doves seen was down only 2 percent. The number of doves biologists heard was the same as 2007.

“The results from the states in the Western Dove Unit are good news for Utah dove hunters,” Aldrich says. “The birds we hunt in Utah later in the season are mostly birds that are migrating through the state on their way south.”

Aldrich reminds you that no matter how the populations are doing, the weather before and during the hunt is the biggest factor in the number of doves you’ll see in Utah during the season. “Even if the numbers are down a bit, if the weather stays hot and dry, we should still have a good hunt,” he says.

Take your kids hunting

If you have young children that you’d like to get involved in hunting, the dove hunt is a good one to try. “You don’t need a lot of equipment to hunt doves, and the weather during the hunt is usually warm and pleasant,” Aldrich says. “It’s also a fairly easy hunt. You don’t have to hike to the top of a mountain to find doves.”

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Seeds, seeds, seeds

To find doves, Aldrich says you should look for three things: a water source that has cover and shade near it, and lots of wild seed.

“Doves eat mostly seeds,” Aldrich says. “If you can find the seeds they like, you’ll probably find the doves.”

Among the seeds doves eat are wild sunflower seeds and seeds from a variety of weeds and grasses. Aldrich says some of the best weed-producing areas are areas that have been disturbed by road building.

Doves also eat seeds from agricultural crops, such as waste grain that’s left in fields after the grain is harvested. Safflower, wheat and sorghum seeds are especially important to doves.

Reminders

- Make sure you’re registered in the Migratory Game Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP) for the 2008 season. You can register at www.uthip.com
- There’s no limit on the number of Eurasian collared-doves you can take. If you take an Eurasian collared-dove, don’t pluck or breast the bird out until you get home. If wildlife officers can’t identify the bird as an Eurasian-collared dove, the bird will count as part of your 10 bird mourning and white-winged dove bag limit.
- It’s a good idea to wear hunter orange during the dove hunt, especially during the opening weekend. “Doves don’t seem to notice the hunter orange, and wearing it makes you stand out more to other hunters,” Aldrich says.
- Much of Utah’s dove hunting happens on private land. Make sure you get written permission from the landowner before hunting on his or her land.
- It’s usually hot during the dove hunt. Make sure you clean your doves quickly and keep them cool in an ice chest.
- Take good care of your dog. Bring water for it, and be careful about taking your dog into an area that might have rattlesnakes.

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Contact: Mark Hadley, DWR Public Information Specialist (801) 538-4737

Think Cool for Hot Summer Fishing

What's the secret to catching fish when the water gets really warm in the summer?

It's a question anglers frequently ask themselves. For many anglers, the hot months of July and August are the only time they can get their poles out to fish.

So what is the secret to catching fish when the temperature gets hot?

It basically comes down to three things: the species of fish you're after, and where and when you decide to fish.

Species

Like people, fish prefer certain temperatures. In the spring and fall, the temperatures are at the range most of Utah's sportfish prefer. In the spring and fall, you'll usually find fish in and near the surface waters. As the temperature gets warmer, the fish move to areas that have the temperature range they prefer. They often find these temperatures by moving into deeper waters, or into sheltered areas or cool inlets.

When the fish are at or near the surface, they're fairly accessible. When the fish move out of the surface waters, however, you need to use some additional techniques and knowledge about the species you want to catch.

Coldwater fish, such as rainbow, cutthroat and other trout, are the first to move into the surface waters in the spring. They're also the first to move out of the surface waters as the summer progresses. They usually seek water temperatures that are between 55 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

Bass, bluegill and yellow perch are considered warmwater fish because they prefer water temperatures in the 60s and 70s. As trout start to go deep to avoid the warmer surface waters, warmwater fish are just starting to get active.

Location

Location, location, location—it's as important to fishing as it is to real estate sales!

Location can mean many things, including the elevation of the water you're fishing, the lake or stream you choose to fish and the type of structure within the water.

Elevation plays a role because it affects the temperature of the water. During the summer, the water and air at high-elevation lakes and streams can be 20 to 30 degrees cooler than they are at waters down in the valley. This factor allows you to use elevation to find a water that has the type of fish you want to catch. For example, if you prefer fishing for coldwater fish, go up in elevation and try fishing a mountain lake or stream.

Selecting the right lake or stream is also important. For example, in northeastern Utah some waters, like Flaming Gorge Reservoir, are very deep. Others, like Pelican Lake, are quite shallow. Trout species in the Gorge can move up or down to find the temperature they prefer. Pelican is a lower elevation, shallow reservoir that's much better suited to warmwater fish, such as bass and bluegill. Red Fleet, Steinaker and Starvation reservoirs are at a similar elevation to Pelican, but they're much deeper waters, so some trout species can thrive in them.

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The location you're looking for can also be within the water itself. Anglers often talk about "structure." Structure is something that adds a third dimension to the underwater landscape. Structure can include logs, brush, rocks, a cliff face, a gravel bar or a weedbed.

As a general rule, if you fish in an area that has structure, you'll find more fish than you will if you fish in an area that doesn't have structure. Structure provides fish with shelter and a safer haven from predators and the weather. If the shelter happens to be a cliff or a rocky drop-off, it can also provide you with easier access to the deeper, cooler waters where the trout hang out.

Finding shade can also be a good tactic for warmwater fish, especially on warm days. A weedbed, a tree along a bank, a dock or your own boat may provide cool shade for fish. Fish that school, such as bluegill and yellow perch, really like shade. Schools of these warmwater fish will seek out these shady areas. If you find the shade, you can be in for some fast fishing, even when it's sunny and hot outside.

Time

The time of day you fish can also play a big role in finding fish. Fish often wait in the deeper water for the heat of the day to pass. Once the temperature cools down, they move into the shallows or surface waters to feed. At night and early in the morning, when the water is the coolest, can be great times to fish. The fish will be actively feeding in the shallower waters, and that will make them more accessible to you.

So what's the secret to catching fish during the hot summer months? First, choose the species you want to catch. Then think cool, and fish early, high or deep.

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Contact: Ron Stewart, DWR Northeastern Region Conservation Outreach Manager
(435) 781-9453

Special Upland Game Hunts

Hunters who are 15 years of age and younger can participate in special chukar and pheasant hunts this fall.

These special youth hunts have been held in Utah for years. They're a great way to introduce young people to upland game hunting.

"Kids really enjoy these hunts," says Dave Olsen, upland game coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources. "They don't have to compete with older hunters for a bird."

Getting qualified for one of the hunts is easy. If you're 15 years of age or younger, and you've completed Utah's Hunter Education course, all you have to do is complete an application and write a one-paragraph essay. The subject of your essay can be "I want to continue the Utah upland game hunting tradition because..." or, "I would like to start my own upland game hunting tradition because..."

Applications due soon

To be considered for one of the youth chukar hunts, the DWR must receive your application and essay no later than Aug. 22. Applications and essays for the youth pheasant hunts are due by Sept. 5.

Applying at www.wildlife.utah.gov/uplandgame is the best and easiest way to apply, but you can also apply with a paper application. Paper applications are available at DWR offices and hunter education centers, and on page 10 of the 2008 – 2009 Utah Upland Game Guidebook.

Hunt dates

The youth chukar hunts will be held Sept. 6 on five state wildlife management areas (WMAs). The youth pheasant hunts will be held Nov. 8 on four state WMAs and one Walk-In Access area.

"We're holding these hunts across Utah," Olsen says. "A hunt should be happening not more than about two hours away from your home."

The WMAs and the Walk-In Access area will be closed to all other hunters on the day the youth hunts are held.

Getting youth excited about upland game hunting

"The number of young people who hunt in Utah has been declining for years," Olsen says. "We're hoping these youth hunts will help reverse that trend by getting young people into the field and letting them experience what it's like to take an upland game bird."

"The hunts also give us a chance to teach young people how to be responsible and ethical hunters."

For more information about the hunts, call the nearest DWR office or see pages 8 and 9 of the 2008 – 2009 Utah Upland Game Guidebook.

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