



spiny water flea

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| Common Name | Spiny water flea |
| Genus & Species | <i>Bythotrephes longimanus</i> |
| Family | Cercopagididae |
| Order | Cladocera |
| Class | Branchiopoda |

Diagnosis: *Bythotrephes longimanus* is a cladoceran crustacean (water flea) recognizable with its straight tail spine averaging about 70% of its length. Adult individuals have three to four barbs on the spine while juveniles have only one pair. The animal has one large eye that is usually black or red. It also possesses a pair of swimming antennae and four pairs of legs, of which the first pair is used to catch prey. Mandibles are used for consumption of prey. The spiny water flea is similar to another introduced cladoceran of the same family, the fishhook waterflea *Cercopagis pengoi*, which has a more slender spine featuring a prominent loop-like hook at its end.



Ecology: Reproduction The spiny water flea can reproduce quickly with upwards of ten offspring every two weeks. Since the crustacean is only active from late spring to fall, eggs may lie dormant for the winter and hatch when the body of water has warmed up. The eggs are resilient to weather conditions allowing the eggs to survive extremely cold conditions. Though the majority of the water flea's population is female, it is capable of asexual reproduction as well as sexual reproduction.

Habitat & Distribution: The spiny water flea is native to northern Europe and Asia, and some parts of central Europe. However the water flea has spread in recent years to many areas throughout Europe including some ports and inland lakes outside its natural range. In 1984 the crustacean was found in Lake Huron and soon spread to the other Great Lakes and some inland lakes within the Midwest, including over 60 inland lakes in Ontario. It is thought to have been introduced by untreated ballast water from international ships

Status: Its presence in Lake Michigan makes it a high risk for invasion to the Mississippi Basin. Concern has increased to the impact of this invasive species in the Great lakes region and other areas it might have been accidentally introduced. The spiny water flea, eggs and larvae may be caught up in fishing line, downriggers, fishing nets, and other fishing equipment which has caused the spread of the water flea to inland lakes and rivers.

USGS Fact Sheets: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=162>