

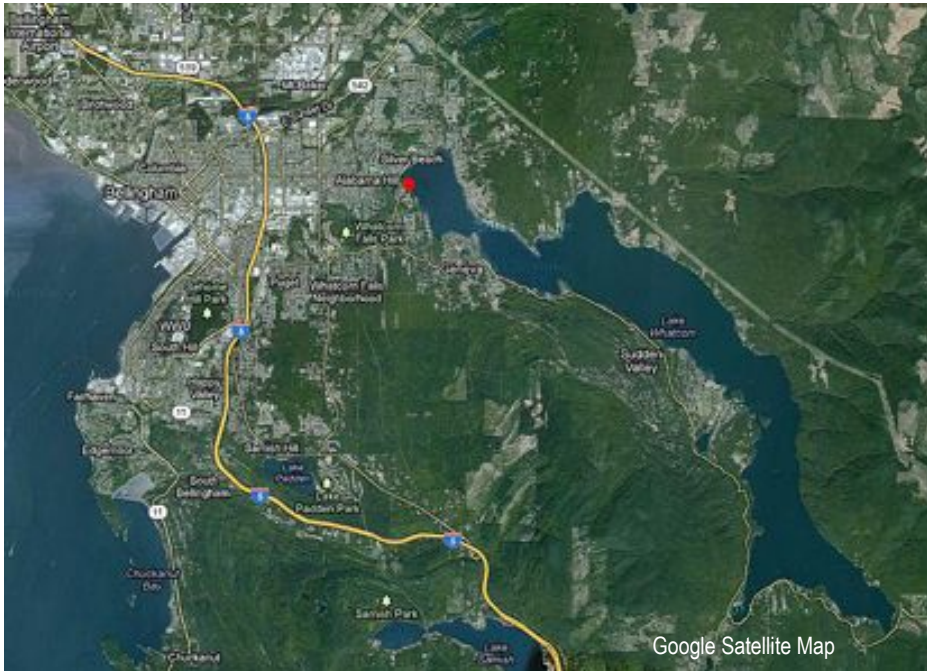
The invasive Asian clam, *Corbicula fluminea*, found living in Lake Whatcom by George P. Holm



Linda Schroeder photo

Corbicula fluminea (Muller, 1774) - newly discovered in Lake Whatcom, Whatcom County, WA. The clams pictured here were found near the boat ramp at Bloedel Donovan Park on the lake. Linda Schroeder gathered them when she went to check out the new discovery.

If there was an annual award in the Pacific Northwest for “Invasive Mollusk Species of the Year”, then the title for 2011 would have to go to *Corbicula fluminea* (Müller, 1774). In July the species was discovered living in the Fraser River in Richmond, British Columbia. Then in September, it was found sixty miles to the south, in the north part of Lake Whatcom, Whatcom County, Washington. This is the first incidence of this species for Whatcom County.



Google Satellite Map

Satellite view of Lake Whatcom and its proximity to the City of Bellingham. The red dot is Bloedel Donovan Park where the demonstration boat inspection was held. Live Asian clams were found there and at three other sites on either side of the park. That part of the lake is what is referred to as Basin 1 in the Incident Report.

On September 17 of this year, a Bellingham resident, whose property is on Lake Whatcom, brought some unidentified clams he had found on his beach to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) officers who were conducting a demonstration boat inspection at Bloedel Donovan Park. Coincidentally, the event that day was held to educate boaters about the importance of inspecting and decontaminating their boats and trailers before putting them in the water so as to



G. Holm photo

avoid spreading aquatic invasive species such as *C. corbicula*. An onsite WDFW officer, Sergeant Carl Klein, initially identified the clams as the invasive Asian clam, *C. fluminea*, and that was verified after the clams were examined by WDFW staff in Olympia.

The Lake Whatcom watershed is the primary drinking water source for the City of Bellingham and other parts of Whatcom County. The lake is approximately ten miles in length and one mile in width.

Two days after the clams had been shown to the WDFW officer, Bellingham City staff were notified that the clams were Asian clams and a beach survey for them was initiated. Asian clams were found present at two of three sites surveyed that day. Further searching along the lake during the next week found live clams at a total of four sites, and those were all located in the upper half of the lake.

Asian clams were first discovered in the U.S. in the Columbia River near Knappton in Washington in 1938, and since then they have spread to 38 states and the District of Columbia.

The speed with which the staff of the various city and government departments and agencies mobilized to assess the infestation is commendable and shows just how seriously any infestation of this clam must be taken.

References: *Lake Whatcom Aquatic Invasive Species Incident Report*, Notes on Visual Observations of Asian clams in Lake Whatcom. September 17-30, 2011. Lake Whatcom Management Program
<http://www.cob.org/documents/pw/lw/lake-whatcom-incident-report-9-30-2011.pdf>
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