

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



Coordinated by UW-Madison Extension in partnership with the WDNR.



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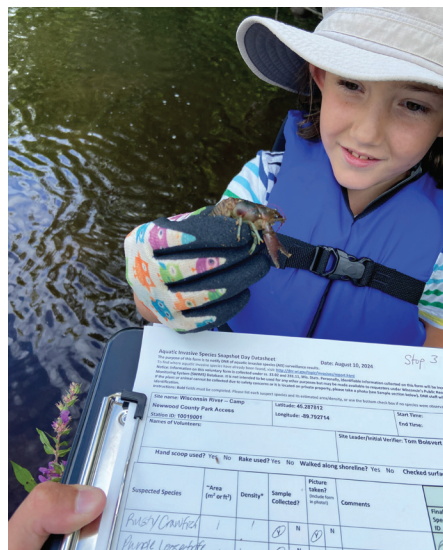
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Introduction

Welcome to Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Snapshot Day!

Snapshot Day is a statewide, one-day event connecting volunteers, water lovers, and local conservation groups in a search for aquatic invasive species (AIS). You can help protect Wisconsin's rivers, lakes, and wetlands from these invasive plants and animals that may negatively impact habitat, wildlife, recreation, and health. This event is coordinated in partnership with the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), local partners, and YOU!

The efforts of passionate volunteers, like you, are vital to the early detection and management of AIS. Snapshot Day volunteers have helped identify new populations of AIS across Wisconsin during and after the event, allowing the WDNR and local conservation partners to manage concerns and protect our waters.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are plants, animals, and pathogens that can cause harm to the economy, environment and/or human health.

This is a free event, and no experience or special equipment is required.

This event is recommended for ages 8 and up; minors must be accompanied by an adult.

What makes a species invasive?

The WDNR defines invasive species as “plants, animals, and pathogens that can cause harm to the economy, environment and/or human health.” Invasive species are often non-native (i.e., not originally from Wisconsin). It is important to remember that not all non-native species are invasive. Invasive species are typically generalists—they can utilize a wide range of resources and survive in a wide variety of environmental conditions.

Faster growth rates or earlier reproductive maturity often help invasive species establish rapidly. They have a very good chance of surviving because they often produce millions of seeds or eggs. Invasive species typically lack predators or diseases to control their growing populations, allowing them to continue breeding, eating, and outcompeting native species in Wisconsin.

Because the exact effects of AIS are often unpredictable, the best method of controlling AIS is preventing their spread in the first place. Thoroughly cleaning gear when moving between water bodies keeps AIS contained. The next best method of control is early detection. Finding an AIS early in its introduction allows us to have a better chance of controlling, and potentially fully removing, the invasive plant or animal.



What happens on Snapshot Day?

You will meet at a local training site of your choosing, hosted by one of our local partners. The day will begin with a short training on how to identify a few target AIS and how to follow search protocols. Volunteers will then travel to critical monitoring sites on rivers, streams, and lakes to look for AIS. Volunteers travel to monitoring sites in their own vehicles or by carpooling with other team members. Carpooling is not required. Site leaders will help identify potential AIS, and findings will be catalogued with the WDNR. Information gathered on Snapshot Day will guide species control and conservation plans.



Snapshot Day Agenda*

- 8:30 AM – 9:00 AM** Sign in at your Snapshot Day location and receive your monitoring site assignments and equipment.
- 9:00 AM – 9:30 AM** Receive a brief training on identifying AIS and how to monitor your sites.
- 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM** Search for AIS at your assigned monitoring sites.
- 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM** Return to your Snapshot Day training location to report your finds!

*Times may vary slightly by location.

Snapshot Day is for everyone!

Whether you're in the water or on the shoreline, taking notes, taking photos, collecting specimens, or helping with decontamination/cleaning, there are ways for you to participate in monitoring for AIS!



Communication and Coordination

Snapshot Day is coordinated centrally by UW–Madison Division of Extension, and your local event will be hosted by a partner organization (i.e., your site leader).

A virtual volunteer training will be held one to two weeks prior to the event, hosted by Extension. The training will review event history and goals, search protocols, what to wear and how to prepare, and more! It will be recorded for those unable to attend live. The virtual training is not meant to replace the day-of training you'll receive from your site leader, but rather to best prepare you for the event.

At least one week before the event, watch for another email from your local site leader that will provide the following details specific to your local event:

- Start time
- Site location maps and driving directions
- Site leader contact information
- Updated information on site conditions and expected weather
- Any information that may be unique to your event



Suggested Items to Bring

- Weather-appropriate clothing
- Sturdy shoes
- If entering the water: grippy shoes that can get wet, or waders if you have them
- Water bottle
- Hat
- Sunscreen
- Bug repellent
- Polarized sunglasses: help reduce glare and see into the water better
- Smartphone/camera: take photos of your findings, get action shots of your teammates
- Binoculars: scan distant shorelines for AIS



What are we looking for?

There are over 20 AIS that volunteers across the state will be searching for. Your site leader will choose only a few locally relevant plants and animals for you and your teammates to search for. Species may include invasive clams, snails, crayfish, aquatic plants, and more!

No experience with AIS identification is required, just bring your enthusiasm and curiosity! Visual ID guides and reference materials will be provided. We also provide baggies to bring back samples for identification.

Tools of the Trade

During your search for AIS at local monitoring sites, you may use one or all of the following tools. Your local site leaders will provide all the tools you'll need!



Rope Rake

A rope rake is two rake heads tied together and attached to about 35 feet of rope. It is tossed into the water and used to retrieve plants, and animals clinging to plants, from afar that you wouldn't be able to see from the shoreline or a dock.



Garden Rake

Garden rakes with handles are used to retrieve plants seen from the shoreline or a dock but are just out of reach.



Hand Scoop

Hand scoops are used to scoop and sift sediment, which is especially helpful when looking for small animals such as snails and clams. Scoops are often homemade out of used plastic coffee or juice containers. If you would like to build your own hand scoop to bring and use, instructions are at the end of this manual.

Monitoring Protocol

For each monitoring site you visit, you will stop at 3–5 locations and do the following for at least 30 seconds per stop. More than 30 seconds may be necessary in areas of heavy vegetation.



LOOK

Scan the shoreline for AIS.



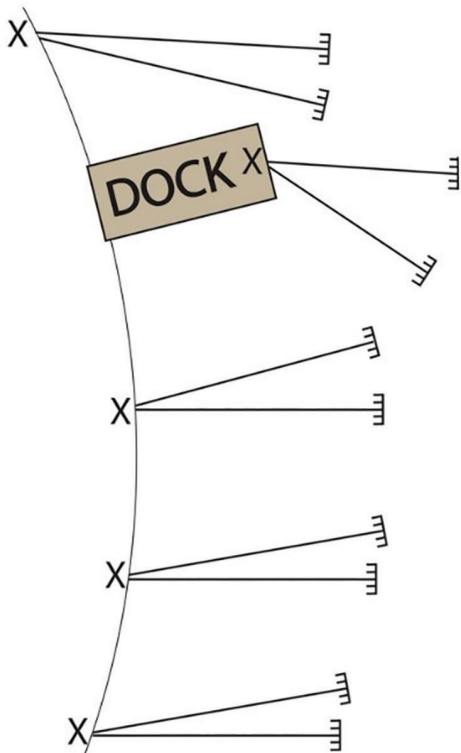
RAKE

Toss or drag a rake across the bottom of the water body to collect submerged vegetation. Try to toss/drag the rake once more left-oriented, and then once more right-oriented.



SCOOP

Use a hand scoop to collect sediment and look for aquatic critters.



Try to space stopping points evenly across the public access point you are monitoring. Monitoring along 50–100 feet of shoreline is a good goal, but this may need to be modified based on the site you visit. Narrow sites only need 3 stopping points. Prioritize searching at docks, even if they are not evenly spaced.



Your site leader will provide you with a data sheet to fill out as you search for AIS at each site.

Collect specimens of interest as you go and place them in the provided baggies. Your site leader will help you to identify your findings.



Safety

Use caution when entering a body of water. Do not enter water if—

- There is a fast current.
- There is any chance of overtopping your waders.
- The banks are too steep.
- You are uncomfortable doing so.

Once in the water, watch your step and watch for rocks or holes. You may wear a life jacket.

Remember, only do what you are comfortable doing. There are many ways you can help on Snapshot Day without entering the water:

- Take photos of invasive species and your group in action.
- Fill out data sheets and help time your monitoring partners.
- Bag and label specimens.
- Clean equipment and shoes to avoid spreading invasive species.



Preventing the Spread of AIS: Gear Cleaning

While we are having fun during Snapshot Day, it is important that our monitoring activities don't contribute to AIS spread. Site leaders will provide spray bottles and other supplies for cleaning your monitoring equipment and footwear between monitoring sites.

Once you return to your vehicle after each monitoring each site, you should follow these basic steps to clean off shoes, boots, waders, clothing, and sampling equipment, using the provided materials:

1. Rinse equipment and gear with water or water/bleach mix.
2. Scrub equipment with boot brushes, working to remove all mud, debris, seeds, etc.
3. Rinse again and dry with towels.



Snapshot Day Contacts

If you have questions before or after the event, please contact us at wav@extension.wisc.edu.

If you are willing, send us photos you took during the event for us to use to recruit new Snapshot Day volunteers in the future!



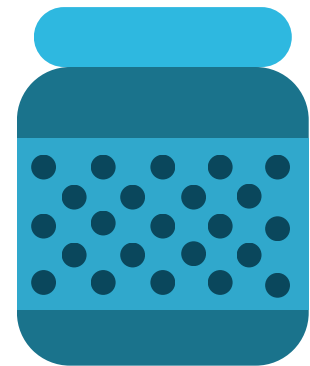
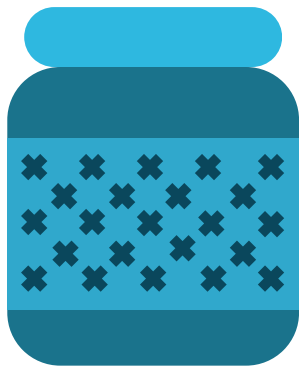
Appendix: DIY Hand Scoop Instructions

To create your own hand scoop to sample areas with loose substrate, you will need:

- One 1-pound plastic coffee can, preferably with a handle (could also use a milk jug with the top third cut off or a plastic juice carton)
- Drill
- 3/8-inch drill bit (recommended, can be slightly larger or smaller)
- Permanent marker

Building instructions:

- Take the coffee can and make Xs on the face of the can in a grid pattern as shown below.
- Drill 3/8-inch holes in the coffee can to allow water to drain from the sediment as you bring it out of the water.



The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.

You may request an interpreter, materials in an alternative language or format, or other services to make Snapshot Day more accessible, by contacting UW–Madison Extension’s Water Action Volunteers program at wav@extension.wisc.edu. There are no added costs for these services. Make requests as early as possible, ideally three weeks ahead of time.

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