

# Invasive Zebra and Quagga Mussels

## Life Cycle of Dreissenid Mussels

Zebra and quagga mussels are an **aquatic invasive species** that can be found growing in freshwater lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and wetlands. As adults, these fast growing **bivalves** filter their food out of the surrounding water. One adult zebra mussel can filter up to 1 liter of water each day. By doing so, they can quickly strip the water of the phytoplankton, bacteria, and organic detritus that serves as the base of most aquatic food webs.

Zebra and quagga mussels have a life span of three to nine years. They typically spawn from May to October when the water temperatures are warmer (12°C or higher). Males and female become mature and able to reproduce at ~8-9 mm in size.

Unlike most native North American freshwater mussels, dreissenid mussels do not need a fish host for reproduction and dispersal. Instead, they use external fertilization and water currents to spread their planktonic larvae.

*During each spawning cycle, adult females can release up to 40,000 eggs. They can potentially go through 20 spawning cycles each year, so one female could release up to 1 million eggs per year. One male can release up to 200,000,000 sperm each year.*

