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Parks Affected: Most Reservoir Parks

## New Zealand Mud Snail Fact Sheet



### Important Facts on New Zealand Mud Snails

- The New Zealand mud snail (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*) is a nonnative, invasive organism that competes with native species for resources and may compromise the long-term health of Colorado's aquatic ecosystems. Similar to impacts observed from the zebra mussel in the midwestern U.S., the New Zealand mud snail (NZMS) has the potential to drastically alter aquatic communities in the west.
- The species is a miniscule snail native to the southern hemisphere, which was most likely introduced to the U.S. by human transport.
- Mud snails are 1/8"-1/4" inches in size (but can be as small as a grain of sand), are dark brown in color, and have a cone-shaped shell with five to six whorls.
- The snail inhabits a wide range of aquatic habitats, including streams and reservoirs in the western U.S. In Colorado, the mud snail has been discovered in Boulder Creek and in the South Platte River in Eleven Mile Canyon.
- Mud snails consume food in cobble or gravel substrates or on aquatic vegetation, competing with native invertebrates for space and food resources. Reduction in native insect species diversity or abundance diminishes the availability of this critical resource for fish such as trout. New Zealand mud snails are not a viable food source for native fish and yield as little as 2% of their nutritional value when eaten by trout.
- New Zealand mud snails are capable of rapid population growth. The species reproduces asexually, giving birth to well-developed clones. Just one NZMS can start a whole new colony in a stream or river, by multiplying in astounding numbers, and completely covering stream bottoms. For instance, snail densities have grown from undetectable levels to 10,000-500,000 snails per square yard of streambed in rivers in Yellowstone National Park in just a few years.
- Once they have invaded, NZMS are nearly impossible to contain because they are highly resilient. The snails can survive several days out of water, in a wide range of temperatures, and for days up to weeks on damp to wet materials. They can even pass unscathed through the digestive tracts of fish.

New Zealand mud snails average 1/8" in length.

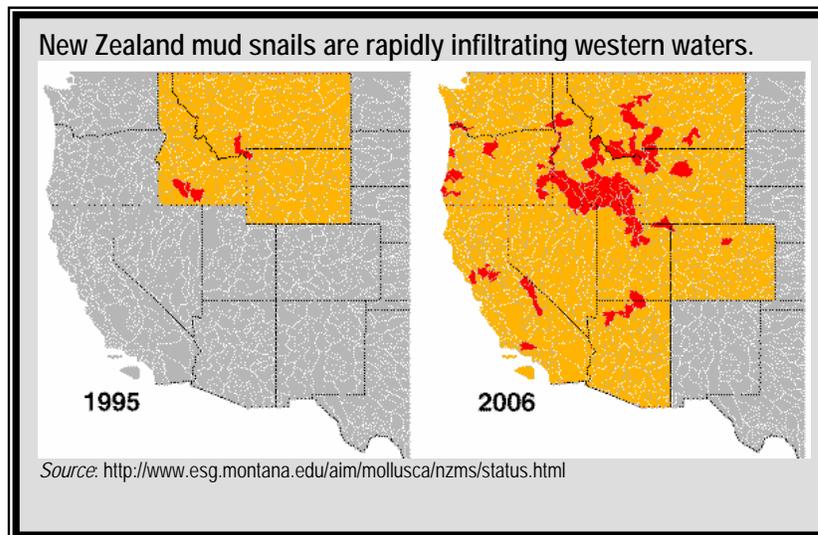


Source: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

- The mud snail invades by “hitchhiking” on boats, rafts, and boots, waders, nets, and other fishing gear. Recreational gear and earth-moving equipment that are not thoroughly dried before their next use also may transport mud snails.

### How You Can Help Prevent the Spread of New Zealand Mud Snails

- Make sure to thoroughly wash waders, boots, tack, and other fishing gear. Wash by soaking in a solution of 50% water and 50% bleach (or other cleaning solution) for five minutes, rinse in clean water, and air dry out of direct sunlight. Freezing overnight also kills the snails.
- Remove all sediment and vegetation from boats, trailers, and fishing gear when moving between waters. Drain boats, equipment, coolers, live bait wells and any holder of water.
- Do not transport any fish from one body of water to another. It is unlawful in Colorado to move and stock live fish without a special license.
- The Colorado Division of Wildlife is trying to limit the spread of the snails to other streams in Colorado through outreach efforts and a NZMS management plan. For more information, contact Robin Knox at (303) 291-7362 or [robin.knox@state.co.us](mailto:robin.knox@state.co.us).



**Sources:** Colorado Division of Wildlife, <http://wildlife.state.us/>  
Montana State University, <http://www.esg.montana.edu/aim/mollusca/nzms/id.html>  
National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/todo/fishing/mudsnail.htm>