

Didymo, the Demon of the Stream

Imagine wildfire under water. Didymo (a.k.a. "rock snot") or its scientific name *Didymosphenia geminata*, is an aggressive aquatic alga that has invaded 49 out of 50 states and is on six out of seven continents. I wondered where it came from and how it spreads, so I found out.

Now, down to what it is. I know that it is a diatom, a two chambered, single cell organism that can't be seen with the naked eye. It grows into a stalk. . It dies off in the winter, but starts back in spring. Didymo uses the oxygen that river bottom insects and plants need to survive. These are the bugs that fish like to eat. It is almost impossible to kill, so check, clean and dry your gear after you fish to stop didymo from spreading.

It has historic records, so it is not an unknown species in the USA. If you are wondering where it came from, I'm your guy. It was not found in the east coast of USA before 1990's. It was also in Europe, Asia, and Norway. I have discovered that the European version was brought to Canada in the 1800's. I believe mutations may have occurred with European and Canadian versions of these algae. There are different versions on each continent so mutations have occurred. With people traveling this may form a super alga that is able to destroy complete rivers in days. It has invaded New Brunswick, Quebec, and New Zealand.

It spreads so quickly because of its microscopic size. The plant will let a cell go and it will attach itself to a rock. The cell will split into two, those two to four and so on. Felt waders are spread open when stepped on, trapping the diatom inside. If it gets on boots, boats, waders, or pets and they go to anywhere, they will spread Didymo. You can unknowingly spread Didymo from place to place.

Where it came from, affects how rapidly it spreads. The people in America travel much more than Indian people do, so it travels rapidly where people travel widely.

This is all the info I can give you for this is all I know. Remember to check, clean, and dry your gear.

Bibliography

Nielsen, John. "rock snot hitches ride on fishing gear." *npr*. 31 Dec. 2007. Web. 2 Nov. 2009.

"Rock Snot." *Living on Earth: Rock Snot*. Living on Earth, 7 Aug. 2009. Web. 2 Nov. 2009