

Horned Pondweed Identified at Lake Gaston Spring 2023

Recently a submersed aquatic plant, *Zannichellia palustris* horned pondweed, was found at Lake Gaston. The plant was first noticed in several locations on Lizard Creek in late winter/early spring. It was positively identified by NCSU staff after the LGWCC received a request for assistance from a Lake Gaston resident regarding the presence of an unknown aquatic plant in their cove.

Horned pondweed has not typically been identified in Lake Gaston as it tends to be more of a northern species. It is an underwater grass that can be found in both freshwater and slightly brackish water. Migratory waterfowl will feed on the plant, and it's considered a beneficial species according to NCSU. At Lake Gaston, it was noted in shallow shoreline waters, 1-3 feet in depth and in locations where *Chara*, a native algae, has been found in abundance in recent years. When viewed in the water, horned pondweed can sometimes be confused with other vegetation. A photograph is provided below.

At this time, it's expected that the horned pondweed will likely die off as water temperatures increase and other aquatic plants, such as *Chara*, start to flourish. No additional action is recommended at this time. The LGWCC, LGA and NCSU are aware of its presence in the lake and the annual vegetation survey will help determine if the species continues to be present at Lake Gaston in the future.



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