

# CHINESE MYSTERY SNAIL

(*Cipangopaludina chinensis*)

Chinese mystery snails are believed to have been introduced to North America in 1890 as a food source. Now they are an invasive aquatic pest, and can easily hitchhike on boats and spread from one waterbody to another.

In the Severn Sound area, they are known to occur in Orr Lake, Bass Lake, and Honey Harbour.



Adult Chinese mystery snail. *Photo: SSEA*

## IDENTIFICATION

- Chinese mystery snail adults are up to 6.5 cm (2.5") long - larger than native snails
- Usually brownish to olive green in colour
- 7-8 whorls on their shell
- Operculum or "trap door" at the opening of the shell is not present on native snails
- The Banded mystery snail, which is also invasive, is smaller and has reddish-brown spiral bands on its shell

## IMPACTS

Chinese mystery snail populations can reach large densities up to 40 snails per square meter<sup>1</sup>.

Due to its large size and ability to protect itself from predators, the Chinese mystery snail can out-compete native snails for food and shelter. This can lead to a decline in populations of native snail species, which can affect the wildlife that depend on them for food, such as birds and fish.

This species can also be a threat to human health and infrastructure:

- they can carry and transmit parasites to people and wildlife
- their large size means that they can clog water intake pipes when in large numbers.

The Chinese mystery snail can change water chemistry by altering nitrogen and phosphorus levels in water bodies<sup>1</sup>. This can have negative impacts on the environment and native aquatic plants and wildlife.

<sup>1</sup> *Global Invasive Species Database (2020) Species profile: Cipangopaludina chinensis. Downloaded from [www.iucngisd.org/gisd/speciesname/Cipangopaludina%20Chinensis](http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/speciesname/Cipangopaludina%20Chinensis) in July 2020*

<sup>2</sup> *DiGasparro, Mackenzie (Invasive Species Centre), personal communication, August 2020*

A dissected Chinese mystery snail shell. Photo: SSEA



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Prevent invasive species from spreading and establishing in new places.

- Chinese mystery snails can be attached to boats and trailers and be found inside of live wells, ballasts, motors, bilge, and transoms. Always drain your boat on land and wash any water equipment with high pressure hot water or let it dry in the sun for 5 days before taking it to another body of water.
- Never dump aquarium plants, fish, or animals like Chinese mystery snails into the natural environment.

If you find invasive snails, wear gloves when handling them, take photographs of them at different angles and with a size comparison, and then report them. Do not release them back into the wild – the best practice is to bag them tightly and put them in a freezer; once frozen, dispose of them in the trash<sup>2</sup>.

### Prevention

- Before moving to another waterbody, wash your boat, trailer, and water equipment with hot pressurized water OR dry it in the sun for at least five days

### Reporting

- Report sightings to SSEA and/or the toll-free invading species hotline (1-800-563-7711) or online to [www.eddmaps.org/ontario](http://www.eddmaps.org/ontario)

### Eradication

- Tightly bag any collected snails and freeze them; once frozen, dispose of bags in the trash<sup>2</sup>

To learn more about the Chinese mystery snail and other invasive species, watch videos on [SSEA's YouTube channel](#).

To report an invasive species in the Severn Sound area, email us at: [InvasiveSpecies@SevernSound.ca](mailto:InvasiveSpecies@SevernSound.ca)

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