European amphipod

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Common Name	European amphipod
Genus & Species	*Echinogammarus ischnus*
Family	Gammaridae
Order	Amphipoda
Class	Crustacea

Diagnosis: This European amphipod has a laterally compressed body that is transparent in color and is typically curled. Three characteristics set this species apart from native amphipods of the Great Lakes; however, these characteristics are not visible to the naked eye. They are the presence of an accessory flagellum on the first pair of antennae, an inner ramus less than half the length of the outer ramus on the third uropod, and basipodite of the fifth pair of walking legs distally narrowed and without a postero-dorsal projection.

Ecology: Reproduction typically occurs from summer through early fall. This species does reproduce sexually with females bearing up to 20 eggs depending on their size. Once young hatch they resemble microscopic versions of the adults and must carry out several molts before reaching maturity between 55 and 65 days. Although the species reproduces sexually, populations tend to be dominated by females. *Echinogammarus ischnus* is capable of filter feeding and has a diet consisting primarily of various macroinvertebrates and detritus.

Habitat & Distribution: This species can be found in both fresh and brackish waters, preferring habitats with hard substrates and shallow depths. Among habitats with moderate current, cobble beaches, armored shorelines, and break walls, *E. ischnus* is likely to be the dominant amphipod. This species native range is the brackish waters of the Black, Azov, and Caspian seas. In the U.S., it was reported initially from the Detroit River in 1995, but was documented from all the Great Lakes and some tributaries (i.e. Niagara River, St. Clair River and St. Lawrence River) within 4 years. Introduction of the species and dispersal is attributed to vessel ballast water.

Status: This species was first documented from Lake Michigan in 1999, but does not appear to have dispersed into the Mississippi River basin as of yet.

USGS Fact Sheets: http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=23