

SNIFFING OUT AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

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FULL TEXT

SULPHUR, Okla., May 11 – The National Park Service's Chickasaw National Recreation Area issued the following press release:

Boaters visiting Chickasaw National Recreation Area's Lake of the Arbuckles may meet a new line of defense in the fight against aquatic invasive species with a nose for detecting them - Raine, a golden retriever, and border collies Wisp and Darby. They can inspect an average sized bass boat in under a minute, far faster than any person can. The dogs are trained to detect several invasive species, including zebra mussels.

"Lake of the Arbuckles is one of a few large lakes in Oklahoma that is not already infested with zebra mussels, and we will do everything we can to keep our lake free of harmful invasive species," says park superintendent Bill Wright. "These types of efforts will not only help us educate people on how to avoid bringing exotic species to the Lake of the Arbuckles, but also help us teach the public some simple practices for protecting all of our region's outdoor recreational areas."

Zebra mussels are freshwater mussels native to the Caspian Sea. Originally brought to the Great Lakes on an international shipping vessel, they have spread to lakes all over the country by hitching rides on recreational boats. One female zebra mussel can produce up to a million young, and the microscopic young can survive up to a year in water. One of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of zebra mussels is to clean, drain and dry out equipment and gear, including bilges and live wells, for a minimum of five days before using them again in a new body of water.

Raine, Wisp, Darby, and their handler will be out and about for three weeks checking boats at the park boat launches before heading to five other parks as part of a summer-long collaboration between the National Park Service, Working Dogs for Conservation, and SP8 Ecological Services to help share the message about how to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Any boats or equipment that fail inspection will be directed to town to clean off their equipment before returning to the lake to launch. Those who come prepared by properly cleaning, draining, and drying their equipment before their visit will be able to launch immediately after inspection.

For more information about Chickasaw National Recreation Area, visit www.nps.gov/chic or call the Travertine Nature Center at (580) 622-7234.

For more information about aquatic invasive species, visit <https://www.nps.gov/chic/planyourvisit/aquatic-invasive-species.htm>

Megan Wilkins, 580/622-7234.

DETAILS

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