

**Testimony of the Connecticut Audubon Society to the Environment Committee of the
Connecticut General Assembly in support of
Raised H.B. No. 6384 AN ACT CONCERNING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES'
EFFECTS ON LAKES AND RELATED FUNDING.**

February 10, 2021



Aquatic invasive species are a serious issue that Connecticut needs to address. While we have not seen the details of this proposed legislation it is critically important that additional focus and resources are devoted to this important issue. State agencies, municipalities and lake authorities lack the resources to adequately address the ever increasing threat of *Hydrilla*, Eurasian watermilfoil and other aquatic invasive species. These invasive species threaten Connecticut's important and lucrative outdoor recreation industry and have a negative affect real estate prices and the quality of life in our state. We suggest that the legislation address not only lakes, but also rivers and other waterways and wetlands.

Invasive aquatic species are already impacting water quality and the environmental health of Connecticut water bodies at a cost of millions of dollars annually. The effort to date has been in combating current aquatic invasive plants such as milfoil, fanwort, water chestnut, toxic algae, zebra mussels and *Phragmites* but yet another invasive species, *Hydrilla*, has become an increasing threat to the environmental health of our waterways, already infecting Coventry Lake and spreading from there to the Connecticut River. *Hydrilla* is native to Asia and has come into our waterways via the aquarium trade where it is transported into new waters by boats and trailers. Experience in other states has shown that *Hydrilla* is the most damaging invasive aquatic weed in the United States, outcompeting native species and creating a monoculture. It has proven difficult to control and prompt action is crucial if we are to be successful in its control. We need to act boldly to educate the public on effective prevention measures and take action to control this threat to valuable Connecticut habitats. Vermont, Maine and many other states have well established and effective legislative aquatic invasive species models in place, as well as on the ground practices to prevent / remediate aquatic invasive species (to the extent feasible - physically and economically).

We have observed as changes to the lake ecology of invasive species impacted lakes; in some cases in a very disturbing way. If you've ever been in an aquarium store and seen an aquarium packed full of aquatic vegetation for sale, it is an effective model of what lakes look like after aquatic invasives take over.

To Quote Dr. Williams, a member of our policy committee: "I have an example for a relatively isolated (in CT terms) lake. About 30 years ago the lake was a beautiful and vibrant aquatic ecosystem. In a relatively short number of years it has been completely transformed into a dense tangle of invasive vegetation that alters the wildlife that live there and the ways the lake can be enjoyed."

Thank you for the opportunity to lend our support to this important proposal. Thank you very much for your consideration. Respectfully submitted,



Patrick M. Comins, Executive Director

Founded in 1898, the Connecticut Audubon Society is an independent organization that conserves Connecticut's environment through science-based education and advocacy focused on the state's bird populations and habitats. We own and manage 20 preserves covering almost 3,300 acres in all areas of the state, and we work with landowners to help them manage their land for the benefit of birds and other wildlife.