

Bryozoans found in Lake Gaston

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Despite the fact that there are about 5000 living species, with several times that number of fossil species, the Bryozoans remain largely unknown to most people. Bryozoans, or “moss animals,” are aquatic organisms, living for the most part in colonies of interconnected individuals. Bryozoans are one cell animals which are “filter feeders”. They can be a few too many millions of individuals may form one colony. These colonies are often mistaken for fish eggs, and are “jelly like” in texture.

The colonies in Lake Gaston can get as large as a basketball

Most of the Bryozoans in Lake Gaston are found on the stalks of Water Willow. Residents also find it on dock ladders, and I have found the Byozoan on anything that is stationary in the water. Some examples are buoy anchor lines, floating bobbars and outboard motors which haven’t left the dock for the summer.

The jellylike colonies can get so huge they clog public or industrial water intakes. Yet bryozoans produce a remarkable variety of



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Bryozoans are one of many species found in Lake Gaston.

chemical compounds, some of which may find uses in medicine. One compound produced by a common marine bryozoan, the drug bryostatin 1, is currently under serious testing as an anti-cancer drug.

